
Students' Perception of Terrorism and Liberal Narrative in Pakistan

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All countries have their specific narratives in order to gather public support on major issues. There are basically three narratives in Pakistan, which have different conceptualization of nation state, definition of the national identity and treatment of religious and ethnic minorities. These narratives in Pakistani politics have different opinions regarding the United States' position in world politics. This study basically attempts to analyse, how opinions of different political parties from liberal spectrum about the United States, influence students' perception of terrorism. The primary aim is to determine, whether liberal narrative in Pakistan about the United States, has any relationship with terrorism or not. There are three mainstream narratives in Pakistani politics, which have different opinion of the United States' position in world politics. The data was collected from four major public sector universities through a survey questionnaire. The target group of the study were university students. Four Public sector universities namely; University of the Punjab, University of Peshawar, Karachi University and University of Baluchistan were selected by using convenient sampling technique in the first stage. The data was analysed through SPSS software by using chi square, standard deviation, and ratio and Phi Creamers values. The findings of the study are against the existing knowledge in the field of International Relations. It has been observed that there is no direct relationship between the liberal narratives about the United States and support for terrorism among students of different ethnic groups in Pakistani universities.

Introduction

Every country has narratives in order to gather public support on major issues. There are basically three narratives in Pakistan, who have different conceptualization of nation state, definition of the national identity and treatment of religious and ethnic minorities [¹]McClure Et, 2015, p3). They also have differences over the governance structure within the country that includes the role of Islam in foreign policy, relationship with neighbouring countries and role of armed forces in domestic politics [²]. The most important difference between the liberal, nationalists and religious narratives is over the definition of national interest that determines the allocation of state resources and³ priorities. The first narrative is associated with pre-partition Muslim League and post-independence federalist forces [⁴]. They acknowledge the relevance of Islam for nation and state building because they rejected secular nationalism of the Congress and provided an alternative path to the Muslims of South Asia based on the basic principles of Islam. However, they did not support the emergence of Pakistan as a theocratic state (Rizvi, 2013). They support a state-centric security first approach to national interest (Walt, 1979). They are in favour of allocating a large chunk of resources for defence at the expense of social developments.

The second narrative is associated with liberal political forces in Pakistan. They strongly recommend that Pakistan should change its preference from security to economy, social development, and pluralism⁵. They demand big share for provinces from federal pool, and to establish long term strategic relationship with the United States, because they believe that close coordination between Islamabad and Washington would promote liberal values in Pakistan that include supremacy of civilian institutions over army and strengthening of democracy (Haqqani, 2016). The third narrative is advocated by religious political parties. They stress upon the role of Islam as fundamental of all foreign and domestic policies. They argue that the promotion and protection of Islam should be at the core of Pakistan's national interest instead of other territorial definition of Pakistan's national interest. They strongly support the conversion of Pakistan into a theocratic state and enforcement of Sharia not only in the affairs of state, but also in the personal lives of individuals (Rizvi, 2013; Haqqani, 2013; & Fair & Shepherd; 2006).

Pakistan has been ruled by military governments directly and indirectly since its inception. The dominance of the army over the other political institutions did not allow them, especially the political parties, to influence national narratives on major domestic and international issues (Fair, Ramsay, & Kull, 2008). Military governments were comfortable with religious political parties from the beginning, because they had same positions on key fundamental issues, but the alliance between them cemented after the Afghan war in 1979 (Cohen, 2004). The military government of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) adopted Islamic principles in letter and spirit in running the affairs of state (Haqqani, 2016). There were alliances between them before Zia, but it reached a new height during his tenure, who was

himself a committed Muslim and totally subscribed to Islamic Ideology (Haqqani, 2005). Religious political parties and organizations did not only become junior partner in implementing sharia inside the country to counter the influence of liberal forces, but also played a significant role during the Afghanistan war (Fair, 2012). Non-state religious forces were in close coordination with the Zia regime to defeat Soviet forces in Afghanistan and install an Islamabad friendly regime in Kabul. The international forces attempted to change Pakistan policy towards extremism and the Taliban, but didn't succeed completely. Pakistan's security establishment was partially forced to give up this policy after the event of 9/11 and work with the United States to restore democratic dispensation in Afghanistan.

There are three mainstream narratives in Pakistani politics, which have different opinion about the United States' position in world politics; its relationship with Muslim countries, support for Israel, strategies in the war against terrorism and relationships with India and Pakistan. This study basically covets to analyse how opinions of different political parties from liberal spectrum influence students' perception of terrorism. This study is primarily aims to determine, whether liberal narrative in Pakistan about the United States, has any relationship with terrorism or not. The key dependent variable is students' perception of terrorism from different ethnic groups in Pakistan. The independent variable is liberal narrative in Pakistani society about the United State. The data has been collected in four primary public sectors universities of Pakistan; Punjab, Karachi, Peshawar and Balochistan on Likert scale and analysed with the help of SPSS.

2 Literature Review

There are different opinions among scholars over the relationship between madrasas, universities and terrorism in Pakistan. Educational institutions in Pakistan, especially madrasas, have been at the target of the United States since 9/11. According to Dr. Rehman, the *madrassas*, which were associated with conservatism, ossification and stagnation of Islam earlier are now seen as hotbeds of militancy in the name of Islam. After 9/11, a number of authors, both western (Singer 2001) and Pakistani (Haqqani 2002), have connected the *madrassas* with militancy. At least three reports of the International Crises Group (ICG) – published 29 July 2002, 20 March 2003 and 16 January 2004 – have taken the nexus between militancy and the *madrassas* as a given (Rahman, 2013).

Madrassas have been considered as the mother of Islamic fundamentalism and extremism in the region. The scholars are divided over the role of madrasas in promoting Islamic fundamentalism. One group of scholars consisting of (Fair C, 2006), (Hefner, R.W 2007), (Asia Report No.36), (Asia Report No.130), (Kronstadt, 2004), and (Lancaster, 2002), are of the opinion that Madrasas in Pakistan are the root causes of terrorism in the region.

There is a bulk of literature on the Madaris students support for terrorism. Many published reports and scholarly articles Gelfand, LaFree, Fahey, and Feinberg (2013) have claimed that the large number of students in Pakistani Madris are important causes of terrorism and suggested various strategies to streamline their curriculum. They claim in their reports and findings that the extremist curriculum taught in Pakistani Madrassah develop the same mind set as that of various terrorist organizations. Some of them (Gelfand et al., 2013) even assert that the Madris in Pakistan are providing foot-soldiers to terrorist organizations. However, there are very few authentic studies that study the relationship between universities students and terrorism. The large number of terrorist incidents by universities students inside and outside Pakistan necessitates a comprehensive research to find out the attitude of University students towards terrorism.

There are several renowned scholars like Christine Fair, Seth Jones, Hussain Haqqani, Ashley Tellis, Bruce Riedel, Ahmed Rashid and Frederic Grare, who regularly publish on political and strategic developments in Pakistan in reputable journals. There is a disturbing consensus among these recognised scholars that different narratives in Pakistan about the United States negatively affect the war against terrorism and extremism. They further claim that radicalisation and extremism is not only present in Madris, but also in Pakistan's higher education institutions (Afzal, 2018). This article analyses how liberal narrative about the United States affect students' perceptions towards terrorism in Pakistan.

2.1 Narratives in Pakistan about the United States:

The three major narratives in Pakistan have different perceptions of United States. The nationalist narrative associated with Pakistan's Muslim League, which has been in historically closed alliance with the security establishment, considers the United States as friend of convenience (Haqqani, 2005). They believe that the United States maintains close relationship with Pakistan, when it does not have other options (Ahmed, 2015). They understand the strategic differences between the two countries on fundamental issues (Yusuf, 2018). The second narrative associated with liberal political forces in Pakistan, wants to establish long term strategic relationship with the United States, because they believe that close coordination between Islamabad and Washington will promote liberal values in Pakistan (Fair & Shepherd, 2006). The third narrative of the religious forces does not have good image of the United States. They believe that the United States, in alliance with India and Israel, wants to create chaos and anarchy in the Islamic world. According to Maliha Afzal, Pakistan's two major Islamist parties, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and the JamiatUlema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F), together currently hold only seventeen of the 342 seats in the National Assembly. Yet political Islamists exercise a powerful influence on the country disproportionate to their electoral strength, serving as coalition partners and providers of political capital to the major parties, whose mandate tends to be weak. The Jamaat maintains close

ties with the establishment, is urban, hierarchical, and scholarly; the Jamiat is a grass-roots influencer through its rural mosques and madrassas (P, 119, 2018).

The Troika is considered the worst enemies of Islam and Pakistan (Rehman, 2016). This group is strongly against cooperation with the United States in the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. They assume that if Pakistan doesn't cooperate with the United States, it will easily be defeated in Afghanistan.

2.2 Liberal narrative about the United States in Pakistan

Liberal, nationalist, and religious are subjective terms. They all have different meanings in different contexts. The author uses them in Pakistani context. The liberal forces in Pakistan may not be as liberal as nationalist in the west, but they still have relatively liberal position on major issues regarding Pakistan's security, economy, and social development. It is important to illustrate their positions on critical issues like strategic alignment, terrorism, drone strikes, security and economic relationship with the US. The liberal forces in Pakistan include some center to left political parties, media groups and some section of civil society. Those political parties, who openly support liberal narrative in Pakistan, include Pakistan's People Party (PPP), Awami National Party (ANP), MuthihidaQuomi Movement (MQM) and some regional ethnic parties. There are thousands of registered and unregistered NGOs but very few of them like Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) are promoting liberal values, who are continuously fighting for human rights and democratic developments in the country (Bajoria, 2008). Jang and Dawn are the biggest media groups that are associated with liberal narrative in Pakistan.

It is important to highlight the fact that some parties may not be openly supporting or opposing a phenomenon or policy due to militant or public backlash, but their positions could be understood from other sources like WikiLeaks, off the record interviews and assembly speeches. The United States' policy of drone strikes in FATA is one of those subjects, which is not openly supported by any party due to controversies surrounding its operation and accuracy. There are strong facts on both sides. It has created fear and chaos among terrorist organization after the assassination of some dangerous terrorists like BaithullahMehsud, Hakim ullahMehsud and MolviFaizUllah(Coll, 2014). On the other hand, there are some disturbing facts regarding civilian casualties and the socio-economic effects of drone strikes in targeted areas (Moorehead, 2017), (Dawn, 2012). The liberal forces in Pakistan supported the use of drone, but only the personality strikes, not the signature one. Personality strikes are those, where the CIA operatives exactly know the name and identity of the accused (Times 2012). Whereas, in signature strikes they could target any individual or group whose activities seem similar to those of terrorists. For example, the CIA also targeted funeral of various terrorist leaders, who were killed in drone strikes with the hope it would be mainly attended by sympathizers and supporters. This strategy was not supported by any party because of high civilian casualties (Lamb & Woods, 2012).

The liberal forces in Pakistan are strong supporter of close economic and military relationship with the United States. They want to have strong economic, cultural and people relationship with the US. They were openly criticized in Pakistani media for defending Kerry-Lugar bill in 2010, which sanctioned \$7 billion in five years for economic assistance without any condition and also put conditions on security assistance (Dawn. 2010). The right wing political parties and military establishment strongly condemned the conditionality clause in the security assistance and forced the government of PPP to persuade the US Congress to withdraw the conditions from the security assistance (Fair, 2015). Some observers believe that Memo gate scandal was created to panelize Pakistan's then Ambassador to the US; Hussain Haqqani for working in collusion with anti-establishment forces in the US Congress at the time of Kerry Luger Bill ((Rogin, 2011).

The liberal parties of Pakistan are the key supporters of the US war against terrorism. According to Iqbal Khan, "The PPP wanted to work together with the international community to eliminate terrorism and extremism from the country" ((Khan, 2012). They oppose the use of militancy and terrorism as tool of foreign policy. They are also the worst victim of domestic terrorism. They have supported the US decision to invade Afghanistan and militarily defeat the Taliban and Al-Qaeda (Hassan, 2002). Taliban and Al-Qaeda were not only threat to American security, but also a threat of equal magnitude to liberal forces in Pakistan. They support the stay of US forces in Afghanistan, and are also in favour of democratic government in Kabul. They consider the current political dispensation in Afghanistan legitimate and urge the international community to defeat the Taliban (Zardari, 2012). They do not subscribe to nationalist and religious forces narratives that the United States is in Afghanistan to counter China, Iran and Pakistan (Khan, 2012).

The liberal forces in Pakistan do not have clear position on the US policy towards India, Middle East, and Iran. These issues do not constitute the top priority of the liberal forces. Liberals do not subscribe to right wing position on India-US relationship that they pose a threat to regional peace and disturbing arms race in South Asia (Khan, 2012). Similarly, liberal forces do not have a clear position on the US-Saudi relationship, because Saudi Arabia is a close friend of Pakistan, but supporter of extremists Ideologies. They also do not have an explicit position on the US policy towards Iran. The liberal forces do not support the use of force against Iran, but want a regime change in Tehran due to its sectarian orientation. The religious forces, unlike their liberal counterparts, have very clear positions on all international issues whether it is the US policies toward Middle East, relationship with India and presence in Afghanistan (Khan, 2012).

3 Methodology

This paper has adopted quantitative research method to find out the effect of liberal narrative about the United States on students' perception toward terrorism. It is a

descriptive study and data was collected from four major public sector universities through survey questionnaires. The target group of the study was university students. Four universities were selected by using convenient sampling technique in the first stage. At the second stage, the total samples of 588 students were selected from these four universities. The distribution of sample students was in such a way that 152 students were selected from University of Balochistan (UOB), 221 students from University of the Punjab (UOP), 112 from University of Peshawar; and 103 students from University of Karachi (UOK). The sample of students consisted of different programs like BA/BSc and MA/MSc programs. The questionnaire consisted of two parts; the first part was about demographic variables and second part contained statements about the perception of terrorism. Responses of the participants were obtained on five point Likert type scale. The questionnaire was pilot tested to check the reliability before conducting research. The value of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.861, which was statistical significant and acceptable.

The principal author visited the institutions personally to collect the data from respondents. After data collection, it was analysed by applying different statistical tools using SPSS. The descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyse the data. The frequencies, mean, and standard deviation were obtained in descriptive and Chi-square test was applied as inferential statistics.

4 Results

This section of the paper presents firstly the respondents profile, average and frequency of their response and perspectives on terrorism and relationship with US; then secondly it also discusses the opinion of different ethnic groups. It shows how different ethnic groups in Pakistani students perceive relationship with the US.

4.1 Respondent Profile

Table 1 and Table 2 show the mean and standard deviations of the responses about the causes of terrorism. All ethnic groups were given almost equal opportunity to express their perceptions. Almost same proportion was seen between the representation of graduate and post graduate students. The highest means were observed on the statements of Administrative reforms FATA and Support friendly relationship with US (3.77 each), and Military operation against TALIBAN (3.70). The lowest mean ($M=2.53$ and 2.76) were observed on the statements that Support US assistance to democratic government in Afghanistan and Support US favor to democratic government in Pakistan, respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of students based on gender, Programs of study, province, ethnicity and universities.

CATEGORY	TYPES	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
GENDER	MALE	281	47.8
	FEMALE	307	52.2
PROGRAM	BA/BSc	276	46.9
	MA/MSc	312	53.1
PROVINCE	BALUCHISTAN	153	26.0
	KPK	81	13.8
	PUNJAB	218	37.1
	SINDH	107	18.2
ETHNICITY	PUNJABI	234	39.8
	PUSHTOON	184	31.3
	BALUCH	61	10.4
	SINDI	27	4.1
	MAHAJIR	82	13.9
UNIVERSITIES	UNIVERSITY OF BALUCHISTAN	152	25.9
	UNIVERSITY OF PUNJAB	221	37.6
	UNIVERSITY OF KARACHI	103	17.5
	UNIVERSITY OF PESHAWAR	112	19.0

This research shows the opinion of different ethnic groups on the issue of terrorism and narrative. The research illustrates whether there are differences between ethnic groups worldview and understanding of issues or not. Their opinion about the nature of relationship with the US are assessed on the basis of friendly relationship with the US, economic and military operations against the Taliban in FATA as per the US demand, drone strikes in tribal areas, peace talk & military operation in FATA with the Taliban. Their opinions were taken on Likert scale ranged from strongly agree/ agree, neutral, disagree/strongly disagree. Opinions of the above mentioned section of students (ethnic groups) is matched with opinion on terrorism place them in different categories; liberal, or non-liberal. The questionnaire was designed in such manner at the beginning to help the research to divided people in different groups and then determine their opinion about terrorism.

Table: 2 Students' perception of the Pak-US relationship

QUESTION	FRIENDLY					ECONOMIC					DRONE STRIKES				
ETHNICITY	PUNJABI	PASHTOON	BALUCH	SINDI	MAJAR	PUNJABI	PASHTOON	BALUCH	SINDI	MAJAR	PUNJABI	PASHTOON	BALUCH	SINDI	MAJAR
OPP/ST OPP	24(10.30)	34(18.5)	3(4.9)	7(25.9)	16(19.5)	58(24.8)	53(28.8)	15(24.6)	8(29.6)	35(42.7)	45(19.20)	53(28.8)	10(16.4)	6(22.2)	29(35.4)
NO PERP	44(18.80)	20(10.9)	5(8.2)	2(7.4)	12(14.6)	77(32.9)	40(21.7)	16(26.2)	6(22.2)	17(20.7)	75(32.1)	27(14.7)	10(16.4)	8(29.6)	8(9.8)
AGREE/ST. AGREE	166(70.90)	130(70.7)	53(86.9)	18(66.7)	54(66.7)	99(42.3)	91(49.2)	30(49.2)	13(48.1)	30(36.6)	114(48.7)	104(56.5)	41(67.2)	13(8.1)	45(54.9)
TOTAL	234(100.0)	184(100.00)	61(100.00)	27(100.0)	82(100.0)	234(100.0)	184(100.0)	61(100.0)	27(100.0)	82(100.0)	234(100.0)	184(100.00)	61(100.00)	27(100.0)	82(100.0)
CHI-Sq	22.704***					16.338**					35.97***				
Cramer's c	0.139					0.118					0.175				

Table: 3 Students' perception of terrorism in FATA

QUESTION	OPERATIONS					PEACE.DEAL				
ETHNICITY	PUNJABI	PASHTON	BALUCH	SINDI	MAJARI	PUNJABI	PASHTON	BALUCH	SINDI	MAJARI
OPP/ST OPP	22(9.40)	34(18.50)	7(11.5)	8(29.8)	17(20.7)	44(18.8)	33(17.90)	16(26.20)	10(37.0)	27(32.9)
NO PERP	76(32.5)	54(29.3)	20(32.8)	1(3.70)	10(12.20)	75(32.10)	55(29.9)	22(36.10)	4(14.8)	11(13.4)
AGREE/ST.AGREE	136(58.1)	96(52.10)	34(55.7)	18(66.7)	55(67.10)	115(49.10)	96(52.20)	23(37.70)	13(48.10)	44(53.7)
TOTAL	234(100.0)	184(100.00)	61(100.00)	27(100.0)	82(100.0)	234(100.0)	184(100.0)	61(100.0)	27(100.0)	82(100.0)
CHI-Sq	30.760*					23.163**				
Cramer's c	0.162					0.14				

Figures in Parenthesis are percentages. Value of Chi-square and Cramer statistic is reported to check whether perception is associated with student's ethnicity and its strength of association. ***, ** and * shows significance at 1%, 5% and 10% respective.

In order to assess the effect of liberal narrative on the perceptions of students from different ethnic groups on the issues of terrorism and US narrative in Pakistan, the data collected from the four different public sectors university students of various ethnic backgrounds, revealed;

1. The behaviour of Pakistani students from different ethnic backgrounds is overwhelmingly influenced by the liberal narrative on the issue of terrorism and relationship with the United States as shown in table 2. There is a significant difference among students as was witnessed among

students perception on friendly relationship between the US with a value of chi-square=22.704 at p-value <0.01 who support, from those who do not support friendly relationship with the US, economic assistance from the US to Pakistan, support of drone strikes, and military operations and peace talk with Taliban. It shows that Pakistani students, unlike the general population are overwhelming liberal in their world view on the issues of terrorism and relationship with the US.

2. The ethnic and demographic landscape of Pakistan is complex, diverse and versatile. The five major ethnic groups living in Pakistan have different opinions from each other on the issues of terrorism and relationship with the United States. The level of support for friendly relationship among Baloch students (86.9%) is much higher than in Muhajirs students (65.9%). Similarly, they have opposing opinion on the issue of terrorism, where the support for military operation in FATA against the Taliban in Muhajirs is (67.1%), whereas in Baloch the support is (55.7%). It shows that there is no direct relationship between narrative about the US and support for terrorism. Baloch students are the biggest supporters of the friendly relationship, but worst critics of the military operations.
3. On the one hand, there are more similarities in the behaviour of Muhajirs and Sindhi students on the issues of terrorism and Pakistan's relation with the US and Pashtuns and Punjabis on the other hand. Muhajirs and Sindis are the biggest supporters of military operations against the Taliban in FATA with the support of (67.1) and (66.7) respectively. Their support for good relationship with the US is relatively weaker than Baloch, Pashtuns and Punjabis on issues of friendly relation, good economic and military relationships and US drone strikes in Pakistan. On the other hands, Pashtuns and Punjabis are relatively having similar positions on the issue of terrorism and US narrative shown in table 2.
4. The most interesting and striking features of the data is the behaviour of Baloch students, which is (86.9%), which is surprisingly different from all other ethnic groups. They are the strongest supporters of friendly relationship with Washington and US drone strikes in FATA, but don't support either peace talk (37.7%) with the Taliban or military operations in FATA as overwhelmingly as the other groups. The major proportion of students who supported this friendly relation was Baloch Students (86.9%) which on the inverse least proportion was that of Muhajir students (65.9%) did not seen in for or of friendly relation with the US.
5. Pashtuns are the different from other students on the issue of terrorism. They are the biggest proponents (52.2%) of peace Talk with the Taliban and the least supporter (52.2%) of the military operation as shown in table 3, but they are one of the strongest supporters of US drone strikes in FATA (56.7%). Similar pattern was seen on the perception about economic relations with the US (chi-squar =16.383; p-value < 0.05) while

just one-third of Muhajir student didn't support economic relation with the US.

5 Conclusion

The behaviour of Pakistani students from different ethnic backgrounds is overwhelmingly influenced by their liberal narrative on the issue of terrorism and relationship with the United States as shown in table 2. There is a significant difference between students who support, and those who do not support friendly relationship with the US, economic assistance from the US to Pakistan, drone strikes, military operations in FATA and peace talk with Taliban. It shows that Pakistani students, unlike the general population, are overwhelming liberal in their world view on the issues of terrorism and relationship with the US. This article also proved through rigorous analysis of the data that there is no direct relationship between liberal narrative about the United States and support for terrorism. The best example concluded from our research is, the behaviour of Baloch and Muhajir students, who were in different end of the spectrum. There is overwhelming support among Baloch students for good relationship with the US, but least support for terrorism, where, in Muhajir community, there was a strong support for counter-terrorism measures but least for good relationship with the US. It proves that Pakistani ethnic groups support for terrorism is independent from the liberal narrative about the US.

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⁵What is most worrying is Pakistan's dismal performance in the social sector: 25 million children out of school (According to AlifAilaan); continuing wide gender gap; poor quality of education and health; gaps in routine immunisation; the worst infant mortality rate in the world; rampant malnutrition and stunted growth in 40pc of the children. These issues do not bother either our political leaders or our intelligentsia. They think that a high growth rate for 10 or so years will automatically solve all our problems (Siddique, 2018).