Youth and the National Narrative
Education, Terrorism and the Security State in Pakistan

Marie Lall & Tania Saeed

"The authors examine the evolving national narratives and discourses within the framework of ‘security state’, focusing on the youth, education, media and the larger questions of freedom and human rights. Embedded in critical ideas of citizenship, political engagement and state society relations, the book explores the views of Pakistani youth on issues that are likely to define the future path of progress, stability or social disorder. A special strength of the book lies in its empirical approach in understanding the perspectives of the younger generation of Pakistan. It is must read for students, scholars and policy makers engaged in understanding radicalism, Islam and politics in South Asia." Rasul Baksh Rais, Professor of Political Science, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Pakistan

The role of the security establishment in Pakistan has been strengthened in a post-Musharraf era as social institutions are increasingly drawn into the security agenda. Pakistan’s problems are often explained through the lens of ethnic or religious differences, the tense relationship between democracy and the Pakistan military, or geopolitics and terrorism, without taking into account young citizens’ role in questioning the state and the role of the education system.

Based on new research and interviews with more than 1900 Pakistanis aged 16-28 the authors examine young people’s understanding of citizenship, political participation, the state and terrorism in post-Musharraf Pakistan. The authors explore the relationship between the youth and the security state, highlighting how the educational institutions, social media, political activism and the entire nature of the social contract in Pakistan has been increasingly securitized. The focus is on the voices of young Pakistanis, their views on state accountability (or lack thereof), political literacy and participation, and the continued problem of terrorism that is transforming their views of both their country and the world today. With 67% of the country’s population under the age of 30, this book is a unique window into how Pakistan is likely to evolve in the next couple of decades.

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