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Youth Movements as Political Vanguard: From Wandervogel to Islami Jamiat Tulabah

Abstract:

European nationalists and, later, socialists were fully aware of the need to attract idealist youths to their banners. They often did so through hiking, sports and/or romantically (or politically) inspired and “folk”-oriented study groups (e.g., German *Wandervogel*, Czech *Sokol* movement, etc.). With the rise of industrial societies and mass political parties a wide variety of such movements appeared. Apart from the celebrated “non-partisan” *Boy Scouts*, these ranged from cadet corps to those organized to promote religious values (*Tuxis Boys*, *Church Boys’ Brigade*, etc.) and political parties (especially various leftist social-democratic groups). In the wake of World War I, these ended by spawning new movements supporting the “radical left” (e.g., the *Young Communist League* or *Komsomol*) and “radical right” (e.g., Italy’s *Balilla*, the *Hitler Youth*). These usually were highly structured and ideologically dedicated and subsequently provided models for politically sectarian similar organizations around the globe, Pakistan’s *Islami Jamiat Tulabah* included. The paper centers on understanding the role of youth political movements as political vanguards. These youth movements provide youth with organizational structures as well as political and ideological vanguards. Besides following secondary data, this article draws on qualitative research methods such as key informants and in-depth interviews for data collection.

Key words:

youth, youth movements, youth politics, political vanguard, *Wandervogel*, *Islami Jamiat Tulabah*.

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Introduction: what is a “youth” movement?

The first stage of any study is to define clearly just what is being examined. In the case of “youth movements” this may seem self-evident. Various dictionaries, for example, define a “youth” as “a young person, especially a young male, in late adolescence”, and as a stage of development as “the time between childhood and maturity”. For the United Nations, the term denotes persons of both genders ranging in age from roughly 15 to 24 year. And since in developing countries they make up some 85 percent of the population (predicted to rise to 89.5 % by 2525) (Furlong 2012), almost any popular or populist movement may be, *ipso facto*, a “youth movement”.

Both in academic and political discourse youth are perceived as a potential risk or as agents of social change (see for example Banjac 2016; Furlong & Cartmel 2007; Griffin 1993; Sukarieh & Tannock 2014). Recently youth has demonstrated activist role in the form of social mobilization and protests across the world with the examples of Arab Spring in the Middle East or during protests against economic crises in Southern Europe and the recruitment of young people as fighters by *ISIS* and role of youth in yellow vest movement in France. All these incidents point to vulnerability of youth. UN and its agencies such as the UNDP, ILO have recently embraced youth groups as in need of positive empowerment (Kwon 2018).

The first section of article sets out the introduction by drawing on literature on youth and youth movements. Following section lays out methods used in this paper. In the finding section, an overview of the role of youth as political vanguards is unfolded by describing various examples of youth movements across the world. The main body of the article sheds light on how various youth movements play the role of vanguard of revolution for their respective ideologies whither fascist, communist or from Islamist orientation.

Methodology

Besides following secondary data and literature review, qualitative research methods, such as key informants and in-depth interviews were employed for data collection. A sample of 25 respondents was selected through purposive sampling in Lahore which is the capital of Punjab province of Pakistan. Lahore was selected as study area because most of the youth political activism of the *Jamiat* is carried out there. Informed consent was obtained from respondents. Pseudonyms are used in the research where quotes of key informants and respondents are cited.

Nonetheless, due to lack of funding and travel constraints, we were unable to ascertain the primary data from European youth movements and secondary data and literature review is also used during the research.

Findings and discussion

The use of the term “youth movement” usually is reserved for a “political or religious or social reform movement or agitation consisting chiefly of young people”, or in the parlance of the former Soviet Union, for the “struggle of youth to satisfy its socioeconomic and political demands” and/or “youth’s general participation in the political struggle”. But again, the issue of defining “youth” arises since on closer examination, the term is anything but self-explanatory. Indeed, definitions specifying age groups vary significantly from chronological period to period, and even within the same period. Others, meanwhile, follow the model of Benito Mussolini’s fascist *Youth of the Lictors* organization that began inducting children under age 8 as *Figli della Lupa* (*Children of the Wolf*), and finished with *Vanguard Musketeers* at age 17, after which the youth became a *Young Fascist*, a *Black Shirt* or began military service (“National youth groups : Italian fascists” 1998). The Soviet Union’s *All-Union Leninist League of Communist Youth VLKSM* or *Komsomol*) was even more inclusive: its organization included the *Little Octobrists* (age 7-9), *Young Pioneers* (ages 10-14/15), and *Young Communists* (ages 14/15-28), although “functionaries” could be older still (Il’inskii 1981).

These variations regarding definitions of “youth” are underscored by the following review of the types and varieties of “youth movements” throughout history. For although Laquer and others date the German “youth movement” from the founding of the *Wandervogel* (*Wandering Birds*) in c. 1896 (Laqueur 1962), its roots – like those of Western youth societies in general – dating back to the establishment of the first European universities in the 1100s-1200s. At that time students formed themselves into guilds on a regional basis known as *nationes*. At time these guilds enjoyed considerable power, and at times the students (who enjoyed “clerical” privilege) even set the academic calendar and could “fire” unpopular professors. Since in England, for instance, prospective students might finish grammar school (and so be fully proficient in Latin) and ready to enter university at age 12, they were clearly youths (Jenkins 2014).

At German universities some such student corporations, known as the *Studentverbindundung* (or more simply as *Verbindung*), became centres of anti-French nationalism after 1810. So too did the *Turnervereine*

(network of liberal, political gymnastic clubs) founder by “Vater” Freidrich Jahn (1778-1852) in Berlin in 1811 (Viereck 1961), after the failed uprisings of 1848 it put down deep roots among German immigrant communities in North America (Hofmann 1998) and also inspired national gymnast associations elsewhere (e.g., the Czech province of Bohemia). In 1813 members of both types of association volunteered to serve as a *Schwarze Jaeger* (*Black Hunter*) in the Prussian *Lutzow Free Corps* (perhaps 12% of which comprised students and academics) that fought to liberate Germany from Napoleon. The students’ societies remained a force supporting liberal nationalism until the Revolutions of 1848, and many survived until dissolved by Hitler after 1933. The *Wandervogel* comprised nationalist and romantic “adventure” hiking and study groups, known for their black tents and “nests” (hostels), who sought relief in nature from the constraints of modern urban and industrial life. Although many of their traditions were continued after 1909 by the German *Scouting Movement*, after 1919 they were largely subsumed into the heterogeneous federation known as the *Bundische Jugend*, or more simply as the *Bunde*. After the Nazis took power in 1933, almost all were repressed or forced into the strictly controlled and structured *Hitler Jugend*, but both it and the subsequent *Free German Youth* (East Germany’s *Komsomol*) adopted many of the nationalist “outward trappings” (e.g., the *black tent* or *kohte*) of their predecessors (Laqueur 1962).

Until the revolutions of 1848-1852 most European “youth” movements were nationalist and politically liberal in essence. Typical in this respect are those associated with Guiseppe Mazzini (1805-1872), the founder of the secret revolutionary society *La giovine Italia* (*Young Italy*) while in exile in Marsailles in 1831. Despite his failure to spark a popular revolution in his homeland, he a 48 of the now famous (or infamous) *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Then secondly, as a consequence, the youth movements that followed, be they socialist, conservative-nationalist or religiously based, sought to expand beyond the walls of academe. Many, of course, were created deliberately to serve the interests of the new mass political parties of both left and right, while others were formed to alleviate the plight of the ever-increasing numbers of newly urbanized workers needed to toil in the “dark satanic mills” of the industrial age. Needless to say, some sought to fulfill both these, as well as other functions, simultaneously.

Overall, however, three basic types of new youth groups that now emerged: those directly sponsored by a political movement; those which remained devoted to a nationalist, often “irredentist” cause; and those that were allegedly “non-political”, but which sought to promote the “moral”

and physical well-being of the city workers (or the “proletariat”). And sometimes, especially in still “underdeveloped” East Europe and Russia, educated urban youth even focussed on the rural peasantry, despite the contempt of Karl Marx and his followers (Mitrany 1951). Indeed, in some respects the problems facing youthful reformers and radicals of the Russia’s *narodniki* of the mid-1870s were not dissimilar to those confronting their counterparts in countries like Pakistan today (Good & Jones 1991).

Otherwise, the three trends noted can be briefly illustrated organizationally in the following manner. Firstly, the youth movements that openly serve established political parties have ranged from various young socialist groups on the left, through young liberals and young conservatives in the centre, to ultra-nationalist and fascist groups on the right. Among the first are found the various social-democratic movements that united to form the *Social Youth International* in 1907. These then split with the formation of the *Communist International (Comintern)* in 1919 to form the highly structured Marxist-Leninist “vanguard” parties typified by the Soviet *Komsomol*, and after 1945 the similar organizations throughout Communist Eastern Europe and elsewhere. On the right, parallel but equally centralized and structured “vanguard” movements appeared in the form of Mussolini’s *Fascist Youth*, the nazis’ *Hitler Youth*, and similar groups elsewhere. Typical of these latter are those of France which before most were disbanded in 1936, included the violent *Jeunesse Patriotes* and *Action Francaise’s Camelotes du Roi* (founded in 1908), and party still patronizes university youths through *Action francaise etudiante* (Weber & Palevsky 1962). In addition, mention should be made as well of the youth wing of Marine le Pen’s *Front Nationale*.

Secondly, there are the more traditional and non-party nationalist organizations that include the cadet corps found throughout the world, and the *Sokol (Falcon)* movement that was founded in Bohemia and then spread throughout Slavic Europe before World War I (Jones 2004). Interestingly enough, that was based on Father Jahn’s German nationalist *Turnervereine* gymnastic movement, and had the avowed aim of preparing its members to serve in some future national army to liberate Czechs from the German-dominated Austrian Empire. Finally, there are other, more religiously orientated and “non-political” movements that, often acting as *de facto* NGOs, sought to serve urban youth. These include such Christian organizations as the *World Alliance of YWCAs* (f.1895), the *World Student Christian Federation* (f. 1907-1908) with its nation *Student Christian Movements* (Kee, Albu, Lindberg, Frost, & Robert 1998; Muukkonen 2002), and a range of other groups that include the non-denominational *Boys’ Brigade*, the Anglican Church *Lads’ Brigade*, Canada’s

Tuxis Boys, and so on (McFarlan 1982). Deserving of especial note in view of its international success is, of course, Lord Baden-Powell's (also) non-denominational *Boy Scout Movement* (f. 1909), which under his wife expanded to include the *Girl Guides* as well (Jeal 2007; Jones 2004; Nagy 1985).

Many of these youth movements spread into the European colonial empires, and that some have continued to operate in a post-colonial environment (*Dua*³, *Mangaraj*⁴), especially in Muslim countries.

These youth movements were emerging in these countries and they were challenging the dominant social and power structures. A number of examples can be provided from Turkey, Egypt, Libya and Iraq, where army as modern institution played key role in providing leadership for youth movements. *Young Turks* of 1908 were previously employed by Turkish Army who played pivotal role in toppling the Ottoman monarchy, and remained in power until First World War. It was Mustafa Kemal (1881–1938) who came out of this movement in 1923 as a leader to transform Turkey into the modern Republic. Likewise, parts of Middle East, such as Egypt, Libya and Iraq too followed the footsteps of *Young Turks*. They included Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970), Muammar Gaddafi (1942–2011), Saddam Hussein (1937– 2006). Although most of the modern political movements emerge in urban academic environments, *these political change generations* were exceptions for not being part of the academia, yet contributed predominantly in social and political reform movements. Their roles were critical not only during colonial periods but also against neocolonial forces after independence (Roberts 2015).

Furthermore, given the interaction often found between ethnic and religious identities, and of both with emerging national identities, it is not uncommon to find youth and student movements that are openly religious in nature. In Europe, of course, one such was France's ultra-Catholic *Action Francaise*, and beyond Europe, one such is Pakistan's *Islami Jamiat Tulabah (Islamic Society of Students)*.

A significant facet of current surge of Islamist movements is the role of youth in these movements. These youth movements provide Islamist groups with organizational structures as well as political and ideological vanguards. In the following, we will describe Pakistani youth movement which is Islamist in outlook and has presence in major university campuses and colleges. In terms of population demographics, Pakistan

3 <http://www.shareyouressays.com/essays/essay-on-growth-of-youth-unrest-in-india/87368>

4 <http://www.preservearticles.com/201103304814/youth-movement-essay.html>

comes sixth place in the world in terms of population having youth population of approximately 55% who are below 24 years of age (see for example Yousaf, 2014).

IJT or *Islami Jamiat Tulabah (Islamic Society of Students)*, is the student and youth wing of *Jamaat Islami (Islamic Party)*. *Jamaat Islami* is an Islamist party representing political Islam (See for example Esposito 1997; Roy 1994) or Islamism (Derment 2006). *Jamaat Islami* was established in 1941 during the dying days of British rule in India by Syed Abul Ala Maududi (1903-79), whose teachings inspired his followers in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and elsewhere (See Esposito 1992). It is highly structured and organized Islamist and religio-political and vanguard party with the goal to create an Islamic state (*Hukumat-e-ilahiya* or *Kingdome of God*).

The organizational model of *Jamaat* follows European model of politics of 1930s like fascism (Adams 1966) and even more communism (Leerman 1981) and is vanguard party in Islamist context. Its student and youth wing was found on 23 December 1947 in Lahore. *Jami'at*, as the youth student wing is commonly known. The female youth wing of the *IJT*, the *Islami Jamiat Talibat*, emerged in 1969 to counter increasing influence of feminist activist's group at Punjab University, Lahore (Nasr 1992).

IJT also takes inspiration from *Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt* and there are similarities in the organizational structure and ideology of these two Islamist groups. Youth in *Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt* and *Jamaat Islami* of India and Pakistan play pivotal role in the social services by organizing Islamic study circles, sponsoring social services like working during disaster and relief effort, providing subsidized books and arranging recreational trips for new recruits. From its inception, *Youth* in *IJT* serve as a "foot soldiers" or "soldiers' brigade" (see Nasr 1992), fighting for what they perceive as un-Islamic.

As one of the key informant said:

These days it is difficult to be a Muslim even in Muslim majority countries owing to reasons of injustice, western dominance and threat of westernization and secularism. These were the reasons which compelled me to join *IJT*. It made me think that Islam is in danger (Younus, age 20 years).

The youth wing of *Jamaat Islami* plays an activist and sometimes violent role on Pakistani campuses, against left leaning and liberal aca-

demics as well as leftist student groups such as the *Democratic Student Federation (DSF)*, *National Student Federation (NSF)*, *PSF (People Student Federation)* and ethnic based student groups like Pashtuns, Balouch, Muhajirs, Sindhis, Serakis).

Historically, since its emergence and expansion, *Jami'at* expanded its role from campus politics to fight global Jihad during Bangladeshi civil war to Kashmir and Afghanistan. During 1971, *Jami'at* established two paramilitary counter-insurgency organizations, *Al-Badr* and *Al-Shams* to face Bengali nationalists and separatists forces during Bangladeshi civil war.

In terms of its organisation, it is highly structured and well organized. New member or recruit is classified into five ranks: *Hami (supporter)*, *Karkun (worker)*, *Rafiq (friend)*, *Umidvar (candidate members)*, and *Rukun (member)*.

Another respondent added:

Jamiat gives me a platform and sense of belonging to religion. Muslims are far away from true path of *Deen* (religion). I come from a lower middle class background from village in rural Punjab. I have served *Tanzeem* (Organization) several years in various capacities (Majid, 23 years).

Conclusions:

In this article we have tried to show how various European nationalists and, later, socialists and even Islamists tried to attract idealist youths to their banners through hiking, sports and/or romantically (or politically) inspired and “folk”-oriented study groups. With the rise of industrial societies, print capitalism and mass political parties, a wide variety of such youth movements appeared on “radical left” (e.g., the *Young Communist League* or *Komsomol*) and “radical right” (e.g., Italy’s *Balilla*, the *Hitler Youth*) and also within Islamist movements.

The article shows how different youth movements have played the role as political vanguards around the world among respective contexts. Their history and evolution reflects the dynamics of the development of these youth wing as ideological vanguards and highlights the socio-political stimuli that controls their evolution, expansion and future direction. These youth movements are the carriers, vehicles and instruments of corresponding ideologies through various levels of indoctrination at a formative and impressionable juncture of youth. These youth movements provide particular political groups with organizational structure as well as ideological point of references as they provide training grounds for future leadership.

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Инам Улах Легари и Дејвид Џонс

Омладински покрети као политичка авангарда: од *Птица луталица (Wandervogel)* до *Исламског студентског друштва (Islami Jamiat Tulabah)*

Европски националисти и, касније, социјалисти били су потпуно свесни потребе да, под своје барјаке, привуку идеалистичку младеж. То су, обично, чинили кроз планинарске, спортске и/или романтичарски (или политички) надахнуте и „народњачки“ оријентисане студентске групе (нпр. немачке *Птице луталице* и чешки *Соколски покрет*). Са уздицањем индустријских друштава и масовних политичких партија, појавио се широк спектар таквих покрета, у распону од удружења кадета до организација за промоцију религијских вредности (*Таксис дечаџи*, *Црквена дечачка бригада* итд.) и политичких партија (поготово различите левичарске, социјалдемократске групе), поред слављених „ванпартијских“ скаута. Услед Првог светског рата, дошло је до умножавања нових покрета који подржавају „радикалну левицу“ (нпр. *Савез комунистичке омладине или Комсомол*) и „радикалну десницу“ (нпр. италијанска *Балила и Хитлерова омладина*). То су, обично, били добро структурисани, идеолошки посвећени и, затим, пренесени модели сличним политичко-секташким организацијама широм света, укључујући и пакистанско *Исламско студентско друштво (Islami Jamiat Tulabah)*. Овај чланак је усмерен на разумевање омладинских политичких покрета као политичке авангарде. Ови омладински покрети су обезбеђивали младима организациону структуру, као и политичку и идеолошку авангарду. Поред података добијених из секундарних извора, у овом чланку се користе квалитативни истраживачки методи за прикупљање грађе, као што су кључни информанти и дубински интервјуи.

Кључне речи:

омладина, омладински покрети, омладинска политика, политичка авангарда, *Птице луталице (Wandervogel)*, *Исламско студентско друштво (Islami Jamiat Tulabah)*.