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# Policy Perspectives on Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan

Editors

Muhammad Saleem Khilji  
Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad  
Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri

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Sustainable Development Policy Institute  
Islamabad



Policy Papers

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## Editors' Note

The 20 years on the 9/11 incidents in the United States, the world has undergone an unprecedented era of terrorism. Being neighbour of Afghanistan and an ally in the war on terror, Pakistan has been among the most hit countries. Pakistan lost thousands of precious lives and properties worth billions of dollars. This two-decade long war has impacted each and every segment of the society in terms of providing a breeding ground for radicalization and negative impact on economy, security situation and cultural values. Religious extremists and non-state actors started creeping in the society and increased their influence exploiting religious sentiments and anger of the people. Gradually the extremism started turning into violent extremism leading to terrorism.

The rising trend of violent extremism in Pakistan is attributed to a host of reasons, which include the successive governments' somewhat flawed policies and practices and options of using force. The path to extremism that was initially linked to madrasas (seminaries) has crossed the barriers by entering into the country's Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). The available literature suggests that now the educated youth seem more inclined towards radicalization as compared to their illiterate counterparts.

Aggression and anger, degeneration of moral and ethical values, hate and envy even within the social milieu, violence and intolerance in the society are quoted in various studies as manifestations of extremist views. The faculty at some HEIs is reported to have been using their religious biases while teaching aiming at tilting students towards extremist views and narratives. There are many other aspects that somehow influenced Pakistani society in terms of religious extremism.

Amid the growing radicalization, Pakistan took number of steps to counter terrorism and countering violent extremism backed by policy frameworks, including some anti-terrorism laws, National Plan of Action 2014 and Paigham-e-Pakistan- a new narrative of peace and harmony with a view to lead Pakistan towards stability and sustainability. Under the Paigham-e-Pakistan and some other initiatives, CVE activities are being held at various universities and colleges across the country where youths are being trained on a narrative of peace, interfaith and inter-sect harmony.

In addition to a lot of policy efforts by the government, Pakistan's civil society, academia and think tanks are greatly contributing to peacebuilding initiatives to prevent people from being lured to violent extremism, the worst form of which is terrorism. The academia and think tanks have been working to come up with policy and evidence backed propositions to countering violent extremism.

In this book, the policy papers, produced by some noted authors hailing from academia on various aspects of P/CVE, have been included as a full compilation. These

10 policy papers cover almost all perspectives on P/CVE work in Pakistan. The very first paper in this book analyzes incumbent CVE and anti-terrorism policies and laws and provides policy recommendations for further improvement. Other policy papers throw light on the recent wave of radicalization, how it is targeting Higher Educational Institutions, the issues being faced by the former combatants' reintegration process and loopholes in our justice system against extremism. The book with these policy papers will be a good reading for policy makers, academia, civil society, media as well as intelligentsia.

In their analyses, the authors have talked about the state of extremism in Pakistan and suggested, in the light of their analysis and findings, short-term and long-term policy measures to overcome this challenge and secure society, especially the youth, from being victims of extremism by keeping them away from this new wave of radicalization. This publication is the outcome of hardcore research carried out in different parts of the country and surely will be a value addition in the contemporary knowledge on violent extremism and countering violent extremism.



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01

## 'COMMUNITYFIRST' Community Resilience and Policy Effectiveness against Violent Extremism in Pakistan

Dr Mohammad Makki

### ABSTRACT

Given the escalating threat posed by Violent Extremism (VE) at the community level, developing 'community resilience' has gained significant importance as a response strategy. However, little is known about the extent to which governments' or policy efforts have augmented community resilience outcomes. Particularly in the context of Pakistan, scholarly efforts to systematically appraise the extent to which governments' CVE initiatives have enhanced community resilience outcomes have been limited. With regards, this policy paper systematically considers National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA — an administrative state-entity to counter violent extremism) — and developed policies [such as NISP 2018 & National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines [NCEPG, 2018) to yield necessary arguments. In doing so, the paper first grapples with the indispensable role of non-government (developmental) actors to ensure community-led approaches to CRVE. It further highlights the challenges associated with empowering sub-national actors and the impediments to the development sector itself, not only in implementing resilience-based projects but also in their overall positioning within the counter-terrorism and P/CVE domain (i.e., policy & programming). Finally, the paper concludes by suggesting some actionable/strategic recommendations illuminating the need for an integrated actors' framework to implement community-centric initiatives concerning building resilience to violent extremism.

**Keywords:** Violent extremism, NACTA, NISP, P/CVE, National Action Plan

### INTRODUCTION

Given the escalating threat posed by Violent Extremism (VE) at the community level, developing 'community resilience' has gained significant importance as a response strategy (Olojo et al. 2020; Salyk-Virk, 2020; Ellis & Abdi, 2017; Weine, 2013; Weine et al., 2013; Van Metre, 2016; Taylor et al., 2017). Indeed, significant contributions made by both the scholars and practitioners have identified various contours of Community Resilience to Violent Extremism (CRVE). However, little is known about the extent to which governments' or policy efforts have augmented community resilience outcomes.

Particularly in the context of Pakistan, scholarly efforts to systematically appraise the extent to which governments' CVE initiatives have enhanced community resilience outcomes have been limited (Makki & Yamin, 2021). Notably, there is a greater need to acknowledge and elucidate the increasingly demonstrated role of non-governmental actors-led community programs — the vanguard — in building CRVE.

Similarly, in the context of Pakistan, we have observed a significant shift towards preventing and countering violent extremism P/CVE, as outlined in the National Internal Security Policy (NISP 2018). Such policies are closely tied to Pakistan's counter-terrorism strategy released in 2014: the National Action Plan (NAP, 2014; see also Sahill, 2018; Makki & Yamin, 2020; Ullah & Baloch, 2019). Yet, at the same time, Pakistan's Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) drive — at an institutional level — continues to support the 'hard' approach (e.g., Mirahmadi et al., 2016; Orakzai, 2019; Shaukat, 2021). Furthermore, it remains reluctant to embrace non-government (development) actors as a part of P/CVE toolkit; hence, impeding the progress from policy-rhetoric into actions. Consequently, the critical component of the drive — i.e., 'resilience building' — has yet to heed calls for a more inclusive approach to accommodate the aforementioned developmental and other sub-national actors (including the role of civil society).

In view of the above, this study aims to bridge the aforementioned gap by examining the several (institutionalized) policy initiatives in Pakistan, which were primarily designed to counter and prevent the menace of violent extremism at the community level. Thereby, the paper systematically considers National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA<sup>1</sup> — an administrative state-entity to counter violent extremism) — and developed policies [such as NISP 2018 & National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines [NCEPG, 2018) to yield necessary arguments. In doing so, the paper first grapples with the indispensable role of non-government (developmental) actors to ensure community-led approaches to CRVE. It further highlights the challenges associated with empowering sub-national actors and the impediments to the development sector itself, not only in implementing resilience-based projects but also in their overall positioning within the counter-terrorism and P/CVE domain (policy & programming). Finally, the paper concludes by suggesting some actionable/strategic recommendations illuminating the need for an integrated actors framework to implement community-centric initiatives concerning building resilience to violent extremism. Considering that resilience-led response to violent extremism is highly context-specific, particular attention is being paid to ensure how the carved policy recommendations can be generalized coherently.

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<sup>1</sup>NACTA was established as an administrative entity under Ministry of Interior in 2008. However, it was reorganized as federal authority vide NACTA Act 2013 to act as a focal national institution and unify state response to counter extremism and terrorism by combining the efforts of law enforcement & intelligence agencies and by formulating and implementing policies & action plans through continuous research, adaptive innovation and ancillary mechanisms' (<https://nacta.gov.pk>).

***Why Emerging Policy Directions: ‘Community’ Matters in Building Resilience to Violent Extremism***

The concept of ‘resilience’ has evidently gained an elemental position in the counter-terrorism and counter violent extremism related- discourse (Salyk-Virk, 2020; Olojo et al., 2020; Östevik, 2020; Ellis & Abdi, 2017; Weine et al., 2013; Van Metre, 2016; Aly & Jacques, 2015; Taylor et al., 2017). The concept primarily advocates for a ‘local turn’ in the literature on both preventing and countering violent extremism. Hence, such a paradigm shift has necessitated the role of ‘soft’ measures (e.g., Silla, 2020; Onapajo & Ozden, 2020). For many scholars and practitioners, the main impetus for ‘resilience building’ derives from the community-led and community-centric approach (Östevik, 2020; Ingram, 2018; Cottee, 2015; Atwood & Jacob, 2019; Lowndes & Thorp, 2012; Ellis & Abdi, 2017). Hence, this perspective has led to significant advancements in the literature; thus, bringing theoretical sophistication to the concept of ‘community resilience’ within the P/CVE discourse. Both the practitioner and scholarly community take the strained argument further and assert that to capture the manifestation and functional dynamics of CRVE, it is essential to grapple with how resilience materializes? Moreover, which factors are cardinal in promoting local resilience against violent extremism?

It is equally important to acknowledge the recent convergence between ‘community’ and ‘policymakers’ towards developing an integrated and dynamic approach for mobilizing and enabling local actors to steer the very idea of CRVE (Östevik, 2020; Olojo et al., 2020; Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016; Lowndes & Thorp, 2012). The underlying assumption of such an approach is that the community provides an organic local-network (i.e., social resources) that connects the actors across the P/CVE space. Such a community-centric approach is analogous to the idea of ‘inclusivity’ to ensure context specific, action-oriented, and sustainable operationalization of CRVE-related agendas (e.g., Lowndes & Thorp, 2012; Peters & Saeed, 2017).

However, the mentioned community-based approach to building community resilience met with stark criticism for its exceedingly simplistic design, which seems to be committed to excluding any other sub-national actors who can play an important role in functionalizing community resilience. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the pivotal role of non-governmental (development) sector or organizations that fundamentally constitute set of widespread community-resources; hence, stimulate micro-meso-level coordination (see e.g., Salyk-Virk, 2020; De Leede, 2019; Kessels & Nemr, 2016; Cortright et al., 2008). Within these organizational contexts, the actors not only respond towards the developmental needs, but also practice social interaction — (tangibly) — which further strengthen the idea of collectivity and a sense of community. In addition, the widespread role of development sector also offers concrete cases to be observed in vulnerable or post-conflict societies. Therefore, it is important to

acknowledge that, in addition to state or institutional fora, the non-governmental organizations have remarkable ability to respond to conflict-related crises — i.e. in humanitarian crises, rehabilitation phase, and post-conflict societies. Furthermore, with regards to the community-based approaches, the sector does not produce or manifest the community per se; instead, it captures and mobilize the community resources for effective project implementation. Therefore, at the policy and/or institutional level, there is a greater need to recognize, encourage and establish a network of non-governmental actors at the local level to confront the menace of violent extremism.

***Program and Policy Approaches: Resilience and Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan***

The dynamics behind Pakistan's counter-terrorism and counter violent extremism related efforts have been primarily propelled by increasing terrorist attacks and the urbanization of violent extremism. Therefore, for a significant period of time, the country lacked any comprehensive approach and institutional or policy infrastructure to counter the menace of violent extremism. Later this reflected what became the primary defect in the state's approach against the threat: i.e., an exclusive focus on 'hard' measures. Consequently, Pakistan's counter-terrorism and counter violent extremism efforts remained principally within the confines of the military. At the policy level, it took several years to develop a strategic concept of P/CVE; that is highly multidimensional in nature (e.g., Heydemann, 2014; Makki & Yamin, 2021).

In view of the above, the major development was the revised version of the National Internal Security Policy (NISP-II), released in 2018. It gave a new life to NISP-I, which was first released in 2014 (NISP, 2014). Indeed, NISP-II (NISP, 2018) re-established the threat of terrorism and violent extremism as highly transnational and coordinated in nature; hence, necessitated the role of 'hard' measures (such as military operations in erstwhile FATA, border management, targeted intelligence-based operations, LEAs capacity-building etc.). Interestingly, the policy also brought to the fore the role of 'soft' measures to prevent and counter the menace of violent extremism and terrorism. And, in doing so, it recognized the multifacetedity of the issues embedded within the structural determinants (such as socio-economic, political, regional, identity and ideological-based). Hence, the policy recognized the significance of understanding what drives (violent) extremism in order to be able to address the root causes. Similarly, NISP (2018, p. 24) considered youth as a vulnerable and 'at risk' and a vulnerable segment of society. It further suggested several themes such as: supporting community actions, the role of mosques and madrassas, lack of social justice and the rule of law, and exclusionary identity narrative.

In January 2018, NACTA produced 'National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines' (NCEPG, 2018). The guidelines aim to present a pathway towards "an inclusive, connected, peaceful, and harmonious society" (p. 3). Rather than viewing (violent)

extremism as a static phenomenon or mere constituted by anti-state elements/actors, the NCEPG identified several ‘casual’ factors which build a “conducive environment for breeding extremist ideologies” (p. 5). Based upon the strategy called CONNECT, the guidelines aim to revive the lost people-to-people and people-to-state contacts. Overall, the policy also had a blueprint to streamline and institutionalize the counter-measures and intra-departmental collaborations under a single framework.

Particular emphasis was also put on ‘citizen engagement’ to prevent violent extremism and ensure sustainable peace. With regards, NCEPG proposed ‘Ilaqa committee Baraye Aman wa Behbud’ (local area committees for peace and welfare). The role of these committees was envisioned at a very local, union-council or district level. The policy document emphasized providing necessary support to the local authorities to develop programmes and committees to tackle violent extremism actively. More importantly, the committees were planned to be integrated within the existing local-government administration. Three main pillars of the local area committee were: (i) localized mapping of issues and solutions; (ii) citizen engagement projects; and (iii) dispute resolution. In general, the strategy clearly had a community aspect in its approach. The UK adopted a similar approach (under CONTEST strategy) through appointing ‘prevent engagement’ police officers, providing necessary support to the vulnerable groups in a particular spatial designated area. However, in the context of Pakistan, we did not observe this policy rolling out at the national level to build community resilience through engaging local authorities, per se.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In a broader perspective, the evolution of Pakistan’s counter-terrorism journey does exhibit a shift towards the key aspects of preventing and countering violent extremism. For instance, the policy showed a tendency towards accommodating localized or community-led approaches. Nevertheless, persistent challenges continue to impede the effectiveness of NCEPG and NISP II. Three years after the policy documents, it is difficult to claim that NACTA — as an authority — has tangibly contributed towards P/CVE. So as for scholars and P/CVE practitioners are concerned, it is extremely difficult to convince them that such policies (indeed commendable) have added value to the countering toolkit(s).

Since 2014, NACTA’s role in P/CVE has been considerably heightened and centralized. But without wholly realizing it, NACTA ‘discovered’ itself an uncharted and ill-mapped territory; since the issue of violent extremism was deeply intertwined with the ‘community’. It is probably fair to argue that the lack of inter-organization coordination (civil vs. military) also signalled mixed messages about adapting soft and community-centric approaches. Furthermore, the policies (i.e., NISP, 2018 & NCEPG,

2010) failed to recognize, include, and integrate the sub-national actors (such as non-governmental/development organizations) who were well familiar and grounded within the communities (both in conflict and post-conflict contexts). Consequently, the policies did not produce substantial results and still has an inadequate or non-existent relationship with local authorities or communities. While the scholarly community in Pakistan moved to redress the theoretical deficiency, the studies related to CRVE, to a greater extent, remain circumscribed by the lack of data or assessments (as proposed in NISP, 2018 & NCEPG, 2018). It is to be further noticed that the landscape of P/CVE is dependent upon the external consultants (via multi-lateral organizations) who are mapping the related agendas.

Overall' at policy level, there is no clear structure and delivery of the community-based strategy, which has indeed compromised its very efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, several deficiencies need to be addressed at the tactical level. This study suggests that the policy needs to invest in communities and non-government (developmental) organizations, i.e. sub-national actors. Such an approach will enable the P/CVE policy-led practice to refocus on downstream prevention of violent extremism; hence, bolstering the resilience and capacity building at the local level. In addition, our decades of experience has concluded that the threat (i.e. violent extremism and terrorism) primarily originates from the marginalized communities, (ethno-religious) identities and/or segments of the society.

Furthermore, as pointed out by several studies, violent extremist narrative necessarily works towards widening the gap between the society, government and LEAs; and, therefore, undermine any P/CVE related initiatives. Thus, the authorities must provide confidence to the communities that their involvement is necessary and will significantly improve the P/CVE practice. The outcome of such a formulation is a shared understanding and environment, which is vital to ensure the best response to violent extremism at a community level.

For the aforementioned reasons, the community needs to be at the centre of counter terrorism and counter violent extremism. This principal must become implicit within the state policies. This is without doubt the area where community itself become an early warning system for the security organs of the society. We also need to understand how policy can reach the most vulnerable groups of the society (such as youth, minorities, ethnic identities) that are on the margins and whose views are potentially at odds with integration (e.g., Grossman et al., 2020).

Indeed, the aspects pertaining to the delivery of preventing and countering violent extremism in NCEPG (2018) are all evidence of an attempt to make the policy and practice more apparent. However, it is crucial to consider the fragmented nature of the departments or authorities. Therefore, the guidelines or trajectories may seem to be understood differently from department to department; thus causing significant

confusion among the ones responsible for delivering on the ground. In addition, there is confusion concerning the preventing or countering approaches should revolve around mere religiously-oriented or sect-oriented violent extremism, or it should also encapsulate the wider society where ethnic-nationalist groups also commit or mobilize themselves to commit violence. As a result, at the policy level, there is an additional need to develop a (non-)linear linkage between extremism and violent extremism, and why other forms of extremism which are not religiously oriented or induced should be part of countering strategy. It is, therefore, not surprising to observe that the broader society and related sub-national actors are confused about the exact orientation of the soft measures.

Lastly, the construct of community resilience must be considered as an effective and long-term response to the threats of violent extremism and terrorism. The existing policies must reconfigure the tactical (but organic) manifestations of CRVE and its functionalization at the macro or structural level. The strategies must envisage an 'institutional-nongovernmental' approach where NACTA can assist in developing the capacities of the non-governmental actors (and other stakeholders) to include them in a framework that allows them to conduct specific activities to the local conditions. In addition, there is a need to empower and integrating non-governmental actors and strategic donor engagement (i.e., multi-lateral organizations) at an institutional level; thus, building resilient communities against violent extremism.

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02

## Opinions and Attitudes Towards Extremism

A COMPARISON OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE  
UNIVERSITIES IN KARACHI

Dr Mehtab S. Karim and Sakina Riaz

### ABSTRACT

Youth espousing extremist views is a global phenomenon. People in this age are prone to extremism. This study is based on data collected from students enrolled at public and private universities in Karachi about their attitudes and opinions regarding extremism and the best way to curb it. Based on student opinions, an index of extremism was constructed, which suggests that extremism is more prevalent amongst those enrolled at public sector universities, particularly among males, who are younger, belong to lower economic strata and are studying natural sciences, information technology and engineering. The differences between students enrolled at public and private sector universities remain statistically significant while taking into account their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics such as gender, age, economic status of the family and their subject of study. However, neither their self-proclaimed religiosity levels nor attendance of madrasa show any significant impact on extremism among the students. It is recommended that all universities may offer compulsory educational programs on countering violent extremism, particularly focusing the vulnerable students.

**Keywords:** Students rival groups, violence on campus, violent extremism, militancy, unemployed youth

### INTRODUCTION

The youth, particularly university students, are a crucial segment of a population who are supposed to be the future agents of change as well. Economic progress, national cohesion and social harmony of a country largely depends upon the economic opportunities that should be provided to them with the ultimate goal of engaging them positively and productively. In this respect, knowing their opinions on extremism is critical so that appropriate policy measures might be taken to prevent them from being radicalized.

In Pakistan, the total number of youths (in the age group 15-29) as reported in the 2017 census was 56.3 million, which constitutes 27.1 per cent of the total population. Of these, the young adults, who fall in the college and university going age groups

(17-24 years) were 31.1 million (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2021). The youth bulge in Pakistan, together with the dearth of economic opportunities available to them and easy access to internet to reach out to radical ideology, could be the major factors behind the spread of extremism among them.

In the past, rival groups of students have often been found in conflict with one another on campuses. In the 1980s, Rangers had to be brought in to control students' rival groups in Karachi University (Mahmood 2019). Similarly, the rival groups had often fought with each other in Punjab University (Baloch & Musyani 2018).

In recent times, violence on university campuses has been on the rise. Clashes have been reported between student wings of various religious, political, and ethnic groups on the university premises across the country. Student groups particularly in most of the public sector universities are deeply polarized along linguistic, sectarian, and political lines (Haq 2017). The surge in violence can be attributed to the emergence of extremism on university campuses. The most heart-broken incidence was reported at Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan in 2017, where Mashal Khan, a 23-year-old student of Mass Communication, was killed by a group of students for allegedly posting blasphemous content on social media. Rashid (2017) argues that "today, with the exception of a few campuses, Pakistani universities have no space of freedom for learning, ideological debate, or critical thinking.

During post 9/11 era, several studies have been conducted on the rise of extremism in Pakistan. However, studies based on quantitative data with a large enough sample size are limited. These studies are also scattered, therefore, have rarely been used to reach a policy decision. Siddiq (2010) interviewed about 600 students from Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad and reports that attending elite educational institutions does not result in youths becoming liberal.

In another study, Fair, Malhotra and Shapiro (2013) conducted a nationally representative survey of 6,000 adults (18 years and older) across Pakistan, measuring their attitudes toward specific militant organizations. The study did not find a relationship between the intensity of self-proclaimed religiosity and support for militarized jihad. The authors suggest that both Pakistani and international policy makers will have to first understand and then engage the specific militant organizations to meaningfully reduce militancy.

Ahmed and Jafri (2020), for their comparative study of students' perception about extremism, collected data from two public sector universities in Islamabad. They suggest different dynamics of extremist material and extremist recruitment between

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<sup>1</sup>NACTA was established as an administrative entity under Ministry of Interior in 2008. However, it was reorganized as federal authority vide NACTA Act 2013 to act as a focal national institution and unify state response to counter extremism and terrorism by combining the efforts of law enforcement & intelligence agencies and by formulating and implementing policies & action plans through continuous research, adaptive innovation and ancillary mechanisms' (<https://nacta.gov.pk>).

the two universities. They report that while one university is dominated by politically-motivated ethnic groups, students at the other are exposed to religiously-motivated contents, violence, and recruitment.

To-date, no such study has been specifically conducted in Karachi. Karim and Baqai (2020) argue that migration to the city of Karachi from within Pakistan and Afghanistan, has resulted in militant organizations finding sanctuary. Unemployed and disenfranchised youths, and those from poor families easily fall prey to these organizations, resulting in the spread of extremism among the youth, and spread of violence in the city.

### *The Case of Karachi*

Karachi is not only the largest metropolis of Pakistan, but also the country's commercial hub. The city is also known as "mini Pakistan" where people from all the districts have migrated (Shah 1987). Among the megacities of the world, Karachi city is considered as overly populated, ethnically diverse, politically volatile and poorly managed (Karim 1996). Over the past three decades, Karachi has often seen ethnic, sectarian and political violence (Ahmer 1996; Budhani 2010; Baqai and Hassan 2017).

Historically, post-colonial megacities' premier economic status contributed to an enormous increase in their populations. The population of Karachi grew from about 300,000 in 1941 to over a million in 1951, mainly due to immigration from India (Karim and Baqai 2020). Since then, there has been a constant internal migration to Karachi from other provinces in addition to inflow of illegal immigrants from neighboring Afghanistan. During 1981-1998, Karachi's population almost doubled as reported in the 1998 census. The 2017 census counted about 16 million people, however, most commentators have argued that the city's population is more than 22 million (Karim 2018). The constant waves of migration to Karachi from other areas of the country have changed the ethnic complexion of the city. Post 9/11 conflicts and surgical strikes in Afghanistan and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (now part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) have resulted in large-scale migration to Karachi that also led to ethnic polarization (Baqai & Hassan 2017)

However, the violence matrix of Karachi is not about law and order. This is apparently a by-product of the demographic convulsions the city has been experiencing since the early 1960s, too many people moving to the city from all over the country, while most of the city's population has been deprived of the basic civic amenities, a phenomena identified in the mid-1980s (Karim 1987) which led to widespread riots (Hussain 1986). Since then, violence has continued in Karachi which is considered one of the most violent cities of comparable size in South Asia as reported by key international newspapers and magazines. According to one estimate, the city has a significant number of illegal lethal weapons, which was one of the major factors behind murders and crimes (Chotani et al. 2002). In 2001, the murder rate in Karachi was 4.04 per 100,000 population and between 1994 and 2004, there were 8,816 casualties

reported through incidents of violence including murders, torture by non-state actors, kidnappings for ransom, vigilante reprisals, bombings, and suicide attacks. Lately, low intensity violence was carried out without any gap (Budhani 2010).

The operation by Pakistan Army against Taliban in Swat in 2007 and 2009 resulted in internal displacements. Thousands left their homes and Karachi was the obvious choice for majority to settle in, which was already home to some millions of Pashtuns. This trend gained momentum in 2009, when the military operation reached South Waziristan, Mohmand Agency, Bajaur, and Dir. This resulted in unchecked migration to Karachi from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA as well as Afghanistan (Karim & Baqai 2020).

The increasing violence in Karachi apparently had bearing on university students who are mainly drawn from the city. One example of violent extremism affecting university students is of Saad Aziz, a graduate of an elite university in Karachi, who was affiliated with Al-Qaeda sleeper cell in Karachi and along with others, was involved in target killing of members of religious minorities and security officials (Sahoutara, 2019). In this background, this study aims to ascertain the attitudes and opinions of students regarding extremism keeping in view the following questions.

- To what extent extremist views have penetrated among the students attending public or private sector universities in Karachi?
- Do socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, self-assessed religious observance, and madrasa attendance affect students' views about extremism?

## METHODOLOGY

Karachi city has about 47 universities and degree-awarding institutes. Of these, 11 are in the public sector and 36 in the private sector. During the months of April and May 2021, an online questionnaire was developed aiming at ascertaining information from students. A pre-coded questionnaire was used, which was divided into several sections seeking demographic and socioeconomic information about the respondents, including their family background, and their attitudes towards and opinions on extremism.

Students were approached through faculty members at several public and private sector universities and their opinions and attitudes were ascertained through several research questions, each measured with the help of a five-point Likert scale, i.e. (1) strongly agree (2) agree (3), neutral (4), disagree (5), and strongly disagree. A total of 690 students completed the survey. About five per cent of students did not respond to all the questions, which were treated as missing values.

## KEY FINDINGS

### *Demographic and Socio-economic Background of Student*

Table 1 shows demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and religious

orientation of students. They are from diverse backgrounds. About three-fourths of the students, who responded, were males; about one-third fell below age 22; over one-third came from lower economic background; over two-fifths were studying business and commerce, one fourth were studying natural sciences, IT & engineering and three-tenths were studying social sciences; over two-thirds consider themselves as moderately religious, and about three-tenths attended a religious school or madrasa. Slightly over half are enrolled at private universities.

**Table 1:** Number and Percentage Distribution of students by their Characteristics

<b>Characteristics of Respondents</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	397	58.4
Female	283	41.6
<b>Age-group</b>		
Below20	112	16.5
20-21	325	47.9
22-23	128	18.9
24 & above	114	16.8
<b>Economic Status*</b>		
Lower	251	36.4
Middle	128	18.6
Upper	311	45.1
<b>Subject of Study</b>		
Management Sciences & Commerce	286	43.8
Natural Sciences, IT & Engineering	165	25.3
Social Sciences	202	30.9
<b>Self-Assessed Religiosity</b>		
Not Religious	78	11.5
Moderately Religious	443	65.4
Very Religious	156	23.0
<b>Ever Attended Madrasa/Religious School</b>		
Attended	200	29.5
Not Attended	478	70.5
<b>Type of University</b>		
Public	323	47.1
Private	363	52.9

\* Based on possession of car and air-conditioners by the family. Those having neither are considered belonging to the lower strata; those having one of the items are from the middle strata, and those having both are from the upper strata.

**Note:** Total does not add to 690 due to non-responses to some of the questions.

***Opinions and Attitudes of Students towards Extremism***

In this section we discuss how those enrolled at public sector universities differ with those enrolled at private sector universities.

***Main Causes of Extremism***

As shown in Table 2, a higher percentage of students at private sector universities is in agreement with the statement that economic deprivation, political exclusion, global discriminatory policies, and joining a group having extremist ideas are causes of extremism.

When compared with those enrolled at public sector universities, about twice enrolled at private sector universities strongly agree with the statement that global discriminatory policies are the major causes of extremism. Over one-third of students strongly agree with the statements that global discriminatory policies, having extremist friends, and joining a group having extremist ideas are causes of extremism.

**Table 2:** Perception of students about the causes of extremism in Pakistan by the type of university

Statement	Type of University		
	Public	Private	Both
<b>Economic deprivation among young people promotes extremism</b>			
Strongly Agree	12.0	7.4	9.6
Somewhat Agree	43.8	61.0	52.8
No Opinion/Neutral	38.2	24.7	31.1
Disagree	4.7	5.7	5.2
Strongly Disagree	1.3	1.2	1.2
Number of Students	336	317	653
<b>Political exclusion is a cause of extremism</b>			
Strongly Agree	13.3	7.7	10.4
Somewhat Agree	38.0	56.7	47.8
No Opinion/Neutral	40.5	30.6	35.3
Disagree	5.7	4.2	5.2
Strongly Disagree	2.5	0.9	1.2
Number of Students	337	316	653
<b>Global discriminatory policies are major causes of extremism</b>			
Strongly Agree///	19.9	39.2	29.9
Somewhat Agree	31.0	24.6	27.6
No Opinion/Neutral	40.8	29.1	34.8
Disagree	6.6	6.5	6.6
Strongly Disagree	1.6	0.6	1.1
Number of Students	337	316	653
<b>Friends play an important role for a young person to have violent extremist ideas</b>			
Strongly Agree	22.9	48.4	36.0
Agree	41.6	30.7	36.0
No Opinion/Neutral	31.1	16.7	23.6
Disagree	3.8	3.9	3.8
Strongly Disagree	0.6	0.3	0.5
Number of Students	335	315	650
<b>A young person could easily become extremist or radical by joining a group having extremist ideas</b>			
Strongly Agree	23.8	46.0	35.2
Agree	44.1	34.3	39.1
No Opinion/Neutral	27.3	15.2	21.1
Disagree	4.4	3.9	4.2
Strongly Disagree	0.3	0.6	0.5
Number of Students	335	315	650

### *Countering the Spread of Extremism*

When students' opinions were ascertained about the best way to control the spread of extremism in the country, a much higher percentage of those enrolled at private sector universities tend to strongly agree that parents and university teachers could play an important role in controlling violent ideas among adult children and students. This shows a significant confidence in parents and teachers among students. With regard to an effective way to deal with those having extremist views, more than twice of those enrolled at private sector universities as compared with those at public sector universities, strongly agree with the statement that the most effective way to deal with those with extremist views is to avoid them.

**Table 3:** Percentage of Distribution of students by their response to the best way to control the spread of extremism

Statement	Type of University		
	Public	Private	Both
<b>Parents could play an important role in controlling violent extremist ideas of adult children</b>			
Strongly Agree	33.1	53.9	43.8
Agree	44.9	31.4	38.0
No Opinion/Neutral	17.8	11.7	14.7
Disagree	3.2	3.0	3.1
Strongly Disagree	1.0	0	0.5
Number of Students	334	314	648
<b>University teachers could play an important role in controlling violent ideas among students</b>			
Strongly Agree	27.0	48.7	38.2
Agree	45.7	35.2	40.3
No Opinion/Neutral	23.5	13.1	18.2
Disagree	3.5	1.5	2.5
Strongly Disagree	0.3	1.5	0.9
Number of Students	335	315	650
<b>The most effective way to deal with those with extremist views is to avoid them</b>			
Strongly Agree	21.9	40.1	31.3
Somewhat Agree	37.5	24.0	30.5
No Opinion/Neutral	31.4	21.4	26.2
Disagree	8.3	11.3	9.8
Strongly Disagree	1.0	3.3	2.1
Number of Students	337	315	652

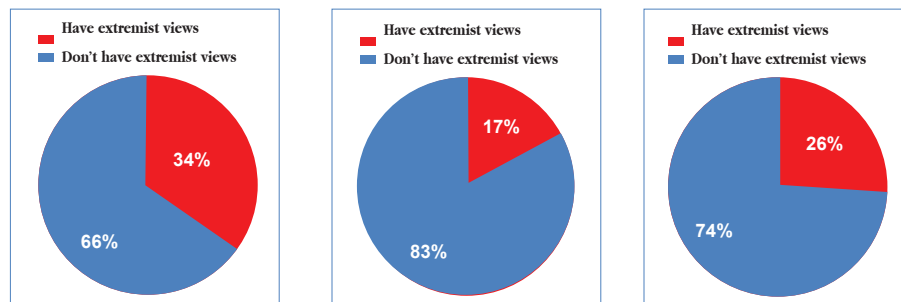
### *Index of Extremism*

An index of extremism was constructed with the help of three questions; whether the students showed interest in visiting an extremist website; whether they showed

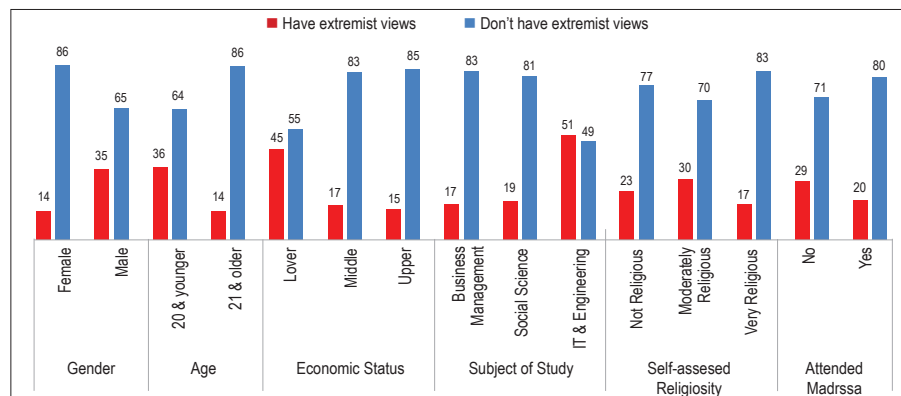
interest in chatting on internet with people who advocate violence as a mean to achieve a political objective and whether they would not mind being in the company of those having extremist views. Those answering strongly agree or agree with all the three statements are considered as having extremist tendencies.

As illustrated in Figure 1, about one-fourth of the students were classified as having extremist views, however, there is a significant difference among those attending public and private sector universities. The percentage of students espousing extremist views is twice among public sector universities than private sector universities (34 and 17 %, respectively). Further analyses as reported in Figure 2, indicate that extremist views are highly prevalent among males in 20, those who are 20 years or younger, belong to families from lower socioeconomic strata, are studying natural sciences, information technology and engineering, had attended madrasa and reported themselves as moderately religious.

**Figure 1:** Percentage of university students in Karachi with or without extremist views



**Figure 2:** Percentage of university students in Karachi having or not having extremist views by their background characteristics, indicating substantially higher percentage having extremist



**Figure 2:** Percentage of university students in Karachi having or not having extremist views by their background characteristics

views among males, those who are younger, belong to lower economic strata, are studying natural sciences, information technology and engineering.

Further analysis was conducted using logistics regression. As reported in Table 4, differentials in espousing extremist views between students attending public and private sector universities remains significant after taking into account students' background characteristics.

Students at public sector universities are 2.6 times more likely to have extremist views against those enrolled at private sector universities. While all other socioeconomic and demographic characteristics show significant impact on having extremist views among students, neither their self-proclaimed religiosity nor their experience of attending madrassa show any significant impact on their inclination toward extremism.

**Table 4:** Multivariate analysis of having extremist views among students enrolled at public and private sector universities in Karachi.

	Number of Students	Per cent	Adjusted Odds (95% Confidence Interval)	P-value Ratio and
<b>UNIVERSITY TYPE</b>				
Private [REF]	363	52.9	1.00	
Public	323	47.1	2.59 (1.637-4.096)	0.029
<b>SUBJECT OF STUDY</b>				
Business Management [REF]	286	41.4	1.00	
Social Sciences	239	34.6	1.40 (0.831-2.363)	
IT & Engineering	165	23.9	2.27 (1.241-4.154)	0.008
<b>GENDER</b>				
Female [REF]	283	41.6	1.00	
Male	397	58.4	1.94 (0.900-2.434)	0.010
<b>AGE</b>				
21 years & older [REF]	354	52.8	1.00	
20 years & younger	326	47.2	1.61 (0.344-2.191)	0.044
<b>ECONOMIC STATUS</b>				
Upper [REF]	251	36.4	1.00	
Middle	128	18.6	1.49 (0.776-2.897)	
Lower	251	36.4	3.18 (1.930-6.167)	0.001
<b>RELIGIOSITY</b>				
Very Religious [REF]	156	23.0	1.00	
Moderately Religious	443	65.4	1.39 (0.771-2.502)	
Not Religious	78	11.5	2.13 (0.988-4.586)	Not significant
<b>ATTENDED MADARSSA</b>				
Yes [REF]	200	29.5	1.00	
No	478	70.5	1.05 (0.836-0.637)	Not significant

\*A total of 690 students responded, however, some did not respond to a few questions.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has identified that university students in Karachi (who are attending public sector universities, particularly those who are males, 20 years and younger belong to lower economic strata, and are studying natural sciences, IT and engineering) are at a higher risk of getting exposed to extremist views. However, there is no indication that those who tend to have extremist views are prone to become radicalized and may be used by extremist elements to advance their agendas. Therefore, it is critical that those students who have tendencies to get involved in extremist activities are identified pre-emptively.

- To protect students from extremist elements, it is important that students remain civically engaged, and participate in sports and other social activities, including community service and the democratic process.
- Moreover, since a majority students indicate that university teachers play an important role in curbing extremism, faculty members should be offered short courses and workshops aimed at garnering their attention towards more productive activities. These include fostering a learning environment and promoting public spaces where social and intellectual personalities and other public figures from civil society can hold a dialogue directly with young students about the detrimental impact of extremism on themselves, their families, and society at large.
- It is imperative that educational programs should focus on equipping students with skills to counter extremist ideas, by teaching them critical thinking and comparative religions. Extremist propaganda must be removed from curricula across all subject-matters.
- There should be regular check on the activities of different student groups on the university premises. Those found involved in extremist activities or having links with extremist or terrorist outfits should be interrogated and expelled from the institution. In this regard, both faculty and staff should take the responsibility of keeping the suspected students under surveillance.

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03

## Promoting Critical Pedagogy to Counter Violent Extremism on Campus

Dr Fatima Waqi Sajjad

### ABSTRACT

Violent extremism is an alarming phenomenon, which is a threat to global peace, security, and sustainability. It relates to a specific mindset and thinking pattern. The United Nations (UN) considers education a key area of action to counter and prevent it. Poor quality and inequality in education and its link to unemployment are identified as key drivers of violent extremism. However, these drivers do not explain incidents of violent extremism among the highly educated and financially well-off university students. This study explores the phenomenon of violent extremism among university students and suggests ways to effectively counter it. By analyzing qualitative data, the study argues that if extremism is defined as ‘closing one’s mind to the possibility of difference’, education can counter it by ‘opening up minds to different perspectives and possibilities. Hence an open and informed dialogue on contemporary issues must be encouraged in universities. Apart from initiating an open dialogue, critical pedagogy is an effective tool to instill critical consciousness into students, which can help build resilience against extremism. The study seeks to devise a social science policy vision based on indigenous needs and social, political, and cultural norms.

**Keywords:** Critical Pedagogy, violent extremism, radicalization, P/CVE, critical thinking

### INTRODUCTION

Violent extremism among the highly educated individuals is an alarming phenomenon that raises critical questions for scholarly exploration. Gambetta & Hertog (2017) explore profiles of militants involved in terrorist activities, according to which a staggering 46 per cent of militants from the Middle East were identified as university graduates, of whom 45 per cent were engineering graduates. The study questions as to why such highly educated individuals were inclined towards terrorist activities. Similar questions have also been raised in Pakistan when certain university graduates were found guilty of such activities. Sabeen Mahmood, a human rights activist, was

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<sup>1</sup> Ansar ul Sharia was a Pakistan-based Al Qaeda-inspired militant group. It reportedly comprised hardly 10 individuals caught by the security forces in 2017

killed by a graduate of a top business school in Karachi on 24 April 2015. In 2017, Pakistan's security forces busted all the members of Ansar ul Sharia,<sup>1</sup> whose leader held a Master's degree in Applied Physics from a well-known public sector university, and all other members of this group were also university graduates; Mashal Khan, a student of Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan was killed by a crowd of his fellow students on the university premises. Incidents of violent extremism in universities and growing militancy among the highly educated pose serious question to our education system. In this backdrop, this study probes the following questions:

- a) What factors explain violent extremism among the highly educated?
- b) How can education be used to prevent violent extremism?
- c) How can critical pedagogy build resilience in students against extremism?
- d) How do the prevailing education practices hinder education's potential to counter extremism?

In the light of above questions, the study seeks to understand the link between education and countering violent extremism. It argues that education can counter extremism when it promotes free dialogue on critical issues to develop critical consciousness among students. It proposes critical pedagogy, a philosophically grounded practice, as a mean to nurture critical consciousness in students and effectively counter extremism on campus. It further questions the contemporary education policies and practices that nurture compliance and block the way of critical thinking.

The broader objective of the study is to inform higher education policy-making institutions how to effectively counter extremism on campuses. It identifies the gaps in existing CVE policies and problems with the prevailing education practices.

#### ***Significance for the Policy Makers***

The study aims to inform policy makers about the missing link between countering violent extremism (CVE) and higher education policies. The target audience is government security agencies, NACTA, Ministry of Education, Higher Education Commission (HEC), international agencies / local NGOs / think tanks working in the field of CVE and education.

## METHODOLOGY

The study uses qualitative data as evidence in support of the arguments presented. The first research question has been explored through a systematic review of literature. The second and fourth questions have been addressed through literature review as well as in-depth interviews of experts (Appendix A). The third question uses secondary data for analysis.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Factors that explain extremism among the highly educated and how education can counter them*

Before exploring the afore-mentioned question, one needs to be clear about the term, violent extremism. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2017) points out the complexities of defining this term, as it refers to an essentially contested phenomenon. The absence of a universally accepted definition remains a problem. However, Desmond Tutu<sup>2</sup> most properly defines extremism as: "... when you do not allow for a different point of view; when you hold your own views as being quite exclusive, when you don't allow for the possibility of difference." (The Doha Debates 2006)

This concise yet a comprehensive definition of extremism explains how insisting on a fixed set of ideas and unwillingness to accommodate different ideas, is an attitude that needs to be rectified.

This definition gives us a clue as to how education can be used to prevent or counter extremism. If extremism is understood as closing our minds to the possibility of difference, preventing or countering it should entail doing the opposite, which is opening our minds to the possibility of difference. It means education can prevent or counter extremism when it encourages open thinking, promotes broader, deeper, and critical thinking that questions our pre-conceived ideas and assumptions. It is not only the education in general, but also critical thinking and critical consciousness that prevent or counter extremism.

To further consider how education can be used to counter extremism, one needs to examine the factors that breed extremism among the well-educated, and then reflect how education can address these factors. UNESCO policy guide summarizes multiple drivers of extremism identified in literature. These are divided into two categories: 'individual motivations' termed as pull factors and 'conducive conditions' termed as push factors. Among the pull factors identified in the study, the following points may explain extremism among the well-educated:

- search for identity and purpose
- boredom
- sense of mission
- promise of adventure
- identification with collective grievances
- distortion and misuse of beliefs
- attraction of charismatic leadership

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<sup>2</sup> A South African Anglican cleric, who received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1984 for his role in the opposition to apartheid in South Africa.

Among push factors, the following points may explain extremism among the well-educated ;

- marginalization and sense of injustice
- prolonged unresolved conflicts
- poor governance and violations of human rights

Now, one needs to examine how education can address the afore-mentioned drivers of extremism. That is, how education can provide students with a sense of identity, purpose and mission; how education can promise adventure and alleviate boredom; how education can address collective grievances, enable students to undo ideological distortions or manipulation by charismatic leadership. We also need to consider if and how education can address injustice, marginalization, and human rights violations and if it can contribute to resolve prolonged conflicts (Sajjad 2019).

Today, most anti-radicalization policies and practices view education either as a mean of surveillance on students or a mode of promoting the state narratives. Sukarieh and Tannok (2016) point out how European countries have developed a massive anti-radicalization industry in recent years, which seeks to identify radicalization among students. UK's Prevent Extremism policy has been described as a frontrunner of this anti-radicalization industry. Prevent strategy seeks to monitor students to identify potential terrorists, and to promote British values in schools (Novelli 2017). Such policies attempt to monitor and control students' thinking rather than develop it. Sukarieh and Tannock (2016) point out that anti-radicalization policies stress the need for debate and critical thinking on issues related to radicalization. Wallner (2020) offers a systematic and comprehensive review of Prevent/ Counter Violent Extremism (P/CVE) interventions in education. She has listed a number of P/CVE strategies adopted in recent years, including interventions focusing on knowledge of students and interventions focusing on the way students think. She points out that most P/CVE strategies are based on assumptions instead of rigorously tested theories.

She concludes that interventions that involve students in dialogue and debate on controversial topics tend to be far more effective than monitoring or spying students. When students are equipped with life skills that enable them to critically analyze the world around them and interact with different people, they develop an open-minded attitude and respect for difference. Critical thinking has been repeatedly described in literature as a key skill that builds resilience in students against the sway of violent ideologies (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2017, p. 32; Ghosh et al. 2017; Sajjad 2019, p. 212). It is pertinent to note that Wallner (2020), at one point, describes situations in which critical thinking may not prevent violent extremism. It is when 'grievances voiced by extremists on structural inequality, poverty, injustice, marginalization and discrimination are often real, making ideas of overcoming these injustices through violence – as advocated by violent extremists – a

legitimate argument for rational and educated individuals'. Critical thinking in such cases may not prevent violent extremism. These are precisely the situations where we need to rethink the problem of violent extremism and what we are trying to achieve through education. Education can prevent/counter violent extremism when it allows students to think for themselves and nurtures their critical judgment, especially in the situations where injustice is real.

***How Critical Pedagogy can build resilience in students against extremism?***

Critical pedagogy represents a wide range of teaching practices that take inspiration from the philosophy of Paulo Freire<sup>3</sup>, a Brazilian philosopher, who was the staunch advocate of critical pedagogy. He envisioned classrooms as sites of social change. Kincheloe (2008) says: Critical pedagogy is grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equality; it aims to mitigate the effects of power and subtle workings of structural and cultural violence on students. It is dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering; it argues that suffering is a humanly constructed phenomenon and can be alleviated through collective action. It prevents students from being hurt; it contends that parts of school curriculum should address the everyday problems faced by teachers and students in their effort to live just and ethical lives.

In critical pedagogy, teachers retain the role of researchers and learners; they are not simply the functionaries who follow top-down orders without question. They should be the producers of knowledge. Teachers become researchers of their students; there is a continuous dialogue with students that questions prevailing power structures. Teachers listen carefully to students' problems and frame them in broader social, political, and cultural contexts. Critical pedagogy remains interested in margins of the society and aims to voice the concerns of the oppressed.

The key characteristics of critical pedagogy indicate the promise of this educational approach in addressing the fundamental drivers of extremism identified earlier. It is precisely the kind of education that alleviates boredom, gives a sense of purpose/adventure and empowers students to make a positive change in the real world through peaceful means. Paulo Freire terms this type of education as 'problem posing education', a humanist and liberating practice of education that enables individuals to overcome 'their false perception of reality' and to transform reality into a desirable way (Freire 2005; 86; McLaren & Kincheloe 2007). A transformative and empowering education practice that addresses real life concerns can become the most effective strategy to prevent extremism and build resilience against extremism among the well-educated individuals.

Freire's critical pedagogy aims to nourish critical consciousness in students, a vital skill that builds resilience in students against dogmatic and extremist ideologies. Through a dialogue about their lives, grievances, and everyday experiences with multiple

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<sup>3</sup> A Brazilian philosopher and educator, who was staunch advocate of critical pedagogy. He envisioned classrooms as sites of social change.

forms of structural and cultural violence, students are able to see oppression not only as a fixed or given condition (from which there is no exit except through violence), but also as a changeable situation that can be transformed through positive collective action. Education that offers hope and promise through collective action can counter violent extremism in the best possible way.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### *How prevailing education practices hinder education's potential to counter extremism?*

Based on in-depth interviews with university faculty, it has been observed that existing education practices and teaching methods in Pakistani universities do little to empower students or develop their critical consciousness or instill among them passions for collective action.

University teachers, interviewed for this study, gave a number of reasons behind the rise of extremism on campuses. One reason was the dominant traditional methods of teaching that do not allow students to think independently. It was pointed out that quite often teachers neither believe in critical thinking, nor promote it. Independent thinking that promotes creativity is blocked. When thinking is blocked, students become vulnerable to extremist ideologies. Mariam Chughtai (personal communication, 28 October 2020) said:

*If universities become spaces where like-minded people meet each other and enforce that like-minded mentality on everybody else, such places will promote greater extremism.*

Pointing out the perils of prevailing hierarchical, compliance-oriented culture in universities, many teachers noted that there seems to be a fear of free and critical dialogue. In addition to the predominance of traditional teacher-centric methods of education (called the banking model of education by Freire), two further trends in higher education have been pointed out as factors that block critical thinking and open dialogue.

The growing influence of market-oriented neoliberal values has been considered a major hindrance to free and critical dialogue on campuses (Giroux 2002, 2010, 2014, 2015; Ball 2012a, 2012b; Kincheloe 2009). Sukareih and Tannok (2016) identify the key features of 'the neoliberal turn in education' as:

*The narrowing of the curriculum to focus on market valued skills and knowledge, the closing down of humanities, social sciences and liberal arts perspectives, the imposition of high-stakes standardised assessments, the suppression of student dissent ... recurrent attacks on academic freedom, and the overall, endless promotion of corporate interests and partnerships. (p. 14).*

Spring (2014) terms this trend as the 'economization of education', where education is guided by the goal of economic growth and evaluated through the lens of an economist. Such a lens reduces education to 'an investment in the workforce', where students are viewed as 'human capital' and learning is limited to 'skills-based instruction' measured through standardized assessment.

According to most university teachers, market and career-oriented higher education not only restricts freedom of thought but also students' right to pursue a degree of their choice. Khalid Zaheer (personal communication, 02 September 2020) said:

*Real and genuine learning is not taking place because students do not choose their field of study in accordance with their inclinations and abilities owing to family and peer pressures.*

A compliance oriented managerial culture in universities also restricts meaningful classroom interaction and open dialogue. Khalid Zaheer (personal communication, 02 September 2020) said:

*Universities are revenue generating projects. They focus only on numbers. In this environment, a fruitful student-teacher interaction is by and large missing. The impact that a good teacher can have on students is seriously missing.*

Another prevailing trend that blocks critical and reflective thinking in universities is a tendency to blindly imitate the Western academia. Alatas (2016) observes that research and scholarship in post-colonial societies, especially in the field of social Sciences and Humanities, remains dominated by the Western thought, concerns and practices. He coins the term 'the captive mind' to refer to 'an uncritical and imitative mind dominated by an external source, whose thinking is deflected from an independent perspective' (Alatas 2016, 1). Many scholars interviewed for this study expressed dismay over the captive mind syndrome in research and higher education policies in Pakistan. Tahir Kamran (personal communication, 08 September 2020) said:

*The knowledge we produce has to have an immediate connection with ourselves. We need to identify problems that connect with ourselves. (Currently) we are far too abstract. Our Social Sciences do not connect with our historical experiences. There is a disconnect between our being and our knowledge.*

Being a university teacher, I can relate to these observations. Instead of nurturing local academic communities and generating authentic research on indigenous problems, current higher education policies as well as public and private sector universities encourage the unthinking race for global rankings. Instead of taking pride in resolving local issues, and questioning global epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, the universities take pride in their inclusion in the global rankings. There is little engagement with critical scholarship in education and social sciences that questions university rankings' purpose and criteria (Ball 2014; Pusser and Marginson 2013; Mc Clean, Abbas & Ashwin 2017). There is seldom a reflection on the meaning and purpose

of higher education for our society and people.

The university teachers interviewed for this study also questioned policies that prefer importing expertise from foreign countries as if experts from foreign lands can fix all issues swiftly. Tahir Kamran (personal communication, 08 September 2020) said:

*Importing people from outside who are not able to understand ground realities, does not help the situation at all. (To fix issues) there is a need to trust, train and empower the locals.*

Dr Nadeem ul Haq (personal communication, 09 October 2020) said:

*The mindset that those who come from abroad have a magic wand and can resolve all problems needs to change.*

Owing to the growing influence of neoliberal values and the widespread assumption that imitation can bring quality in education, the prevailing education in Pakistani universities lacks a critical engagement with issues that matter to our context and students. Hence our universities fail to inculcate critical consciousness in students that can defend them against extremism.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To prevent/counter violent extremism in universities, one needs to ensure that universities become safe places for open and critical dialogue. The prevailing culture of compliance nurtures uncritical minds that remain susceptible to extremist ideologies. Higher education must aim to nurture critical consciousness in students to build resilience against extremism. Economic growth is an important goal, but it is certainly not the only goal of higher education. The exclusive focus on economy overshadows the goals of nurturing human intellect and transforming human society. This oversight is very costly. To prevent violent extremism through education, the goal of nurturing human mind and intellect must be given due importance in institutions of higher education. For this purpose, the importance of social sciences and the humanities must be duly recognized. Critical pedagogy is an effective way to cultivate human minds and address multiple drivers of violent extremism on campus. Hence critical pedagogy must be promoted as a policy. With the intent of developing students' critical faculties to effectively counter extremism on campus, following policy measures for higher education may be suggested.

Current education policies and practices must be reviewed and reformed with the aim to instill critical consciousness in students that remains the most effective way to counter extremism.

- A broader social sciences policy vision based on our indigenous needs and socio-political norms should be devised. It should be theoretically informed; Critical, historical, post-colonial, and de-colonial perspectives should inform and shape the goals of social sciences education, as these perspectives resonate

with the worldview and concerns of the Global South.

- State-of-the-art courses of social sciences/ peace education/critical pedagogy/ world history, specifically designed for Pakistani students, should be introduced as general courses in universities as well as professional colleges. The current HEC Undergraduate Education Policy (2020) includes courses on 'Civilizational Knowledge'. The scope, quality and number of these courses must be significantly enhanced. These courses must aim to develop critical consciousness in students through dialogue and discussion on social, political, and moral issues.
- Teachers should be trained to teach these courses in a manner that encourages free debate and discussion. Teachers' training and development is the most challenging task. If a culture of open dialogue is encouraged as a policy, teaching skills can be developed over time.

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## APPENDIX A

### List of Experts interviewed

#### *University Faculty involved in Education/Development Policy Making*

- 1) **Dr. Nadeem ul Haq**  
Vice-Chancellor, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Quaid-e-Azam University Campus, Islamabad.
- 2) **Dr. Tahir Kamran**  
Iqbal fellow at the University of Cambridge, as professor in the Centre of South Asian Studies. Professor at Beaconhouse National University (BNU)
- 3) **Dr. Mariam Chughtai**  
Associate Dean and Assistant Professor at the LUMS School of Education.
- 4) **Rahat ul Ain**  
Founding Director/ Professor of Practice School of Governance , University of Management and Technology , Lahore.
- 5) **Dr. Abdul Hameed**  
Professor / Former Dean School of Social Sciences and Humanities University of Management and Technology Lahore.
- 6) **Dr. Afshan Huma**  
Assistant Professor, Educational Planning Policy Studies and Leadership, Allama Iqbal Open University

#### UNIVERSITY FACULTY/ DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS

- 1) **Dr. Tariq Rahman**  
Dean, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore and Professor Emeritus, NIPS, Quaid-i-Azam University
- 2) **Dr. Umbreen Javaid**  
Dean, Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences, University of the Punjab Lahore
- 3) **Dr. Iram Khalid**  
Chairperson, Dept. of Political Science, University of the Punjab Lahore
- 4) **Dr. Shoaib Pervez**  
Chairperson, Dept. of Political Science and International Relations, University of Management and Technology Lahore
- 5) **Dr. Zahid Shahab Ahmad**  
Research Fellow, Deakin University, Former Assistant Professor at the Centre

for International Peace & Stability (CIPS), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) Islamabad

#### UNIVERSITY TEACHERS RUNNING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- 1) **Dr. Khalid Zaheer**  
Islamic Scholar, Faculty Member Information Technology University (ITU) Lahore , University of Central Punjab ( UCP) and LUMS.
- 2) **Shahid Rasheed**  
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Sociology Forman Christian College Lahore.  
(Founder Zaawiya Trust School)

#### APPENDIX B

##### Questionnaire for Expert Interviews

- Major problems with Higher Education in Pakistan? Top three in your view?
- Major problems with Social Sciences and Humanities Education in general?
- Your opinion on causes of rising extremism on university campuses in Pakistan and why higher education failed to prevent violent extremism? Top three?
- Your view on how extremism can be prevented through education. What do we need in our education system to prevent/ mitigate/counter violent extremism?
- Do you think critical thinking ability helps in countering extremism? How?
- What is critical thinking in your view?
- Our education system focuses more on compliance or critical thinking in your view?
- What blocks critical thinking in our education system?
- What viable alternatives (policies/practices) can you suggest to counter violent extremism on campus?



04

## Countering Violent Extremism through Community Resilience in Southern Punjab

A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS

Dr Muqarrab Akbar

### ABSTRACT

Pakistan in general and Southern Punjab in particular faced extremism and intolerance during war on terror. Although the successive governments have framed multiple countering violent extremist strategies, they failed due to various reasons. A comprehensive countering violent extremist approach needs to be adopted to make Pakistan a peaceful and tolerant state. The youth is considered the most important part of the society that can play an effective role in achieving this goal. This study aims to identify opinions and attitudes regarding countering violent extremism among varsity students and professionals. A sample size of over 600 respondents was taken to know about their perception on violence, extremism and countering violent extremism. An overwhelming majority think that killing of civilians to achieve some political objectives is an act of terrorism whereas division prevails on the opinion that 'strikes to achieve a goal is terrorism'. Their perception has helped in understanding the community resilience among the people of Southern Punjab. The study suggests keeping a strict check on teaching environment and students' activities on the university premises to maintain a discipline and ban all the websites being run by extremist groups.

**Keywords:** CVE, Community resilience, extremism, militancy, radicalization, university students, professionals

### INTRODUCTION

Terrorism, extremism, violence as well as radicalization are the terms that are sometimes used interchangeably. However, radicalization is supposed to be the first step towards extremism and terrorism. Extremists tend to be closed-minded supremacists and radicals tend to be open-minded egalitarians (Schmid 2014). Pakistan has been the victim of extremism since the start of war on terror and lost precious lives and properties in addition to receiving great dent to its social norms and cultural values. The attacks

<sup>1</sup> Salman Taseer, the then Governor of Punjab, who was assassinated in January 2011 by his official bodyguard for his outspoken defence of a Christian woman, Aasia Bibi, who was in jail on charges of committing blasphemy;

<sup>2</sup> Mufti Sarfraz Naeemi, a Sunni cleric known for his anti-terrorist views, was assassinated in June 2009;

<sup>3</sup> Maulana Hassan Jan Madani, an Islamic scholar and Sheikhu Hadith, was assassinated in September 2007;

on Salman Taseer<sup>1</sup>, Mufti Sarfraz Naeemi<sup>2</sup>, Maulana Hassan Jan Madani<sup>3</sup> and Malala Yousafzai<sup>4</sup> are the clear-cut manifestations of extremism. The study mainly focusses on southern Punjab, which constitutes about 17 districts with major cities as Multan, D.G. Khan, Rajanpur, Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan. It comprises about 32 per cent of the total population and 52 per cent of the total area of the Punjab province. Saraiki is the major language of this region, which is considered a deprived and underdeveloped area due to its feudal economy and lack of resources. These factors compel the people of this region particularly the youth to join terrorist and extremist outfits. Almost every terrorist organization such as Pakistani Panjabi Taliban, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and Jaish-e-Muhammad have strong support bases there (Nawaz 2020) in the form of madrasas. These organizations are allegedly using religion to weaken the state narrative of tolerance and interfaith harmony. Once the bulwark of Sufi traditions and mysticism, the region is now vulnerable to radicalization and extremism. That's why many extremist outfits find it a breeding ground for extremist elements by manipulating the religious feelings and sentiments of locals. It is a soft target for sectarian violence and religious extremism (Nawaz, 2020; Khalid & Leghari 2014; Hansen, 2012; Basit, 2015), but literature on extremism among university students and professionals is almost non-existent. Only Khalid and Leghari (2014) discuss the tendency of youths of Southern Punjab towards radical Islamist ideology and explain multiple social, political, and economic reasons as catalysts behind turning the youth towards extremism. Hansen (2012) describes that there is an increasing tendency of shifting traditional Barelvi (Sufi) sect towards orthodoxy and radicalization. Nawaz (2020) claims that different terrorist organizations have got the opportunity to use religion as a tool to attract people towards religious extremism.

In such an extremist and intolerant environment, Pakistan needs an effective and long-term policy to counter violent extremism. The youth in Pakistan is considered as the most vulnerable segment of the society and it is easy to radicalize them whether they are the students of a university or madrasa.

A theoretical framework of collaboration between government and individual can create community resilience against violent extremism. The resilience against violent extremism can be made through different actions such as resilience as recovery, resilience as prevention, resilience as adaption or resilience as resistance. To create community resilience, a group level approach is always adopted to counter violent extremism in a society. This research is based on such empirical questions that clearly help to conceive the role of group in creating resilience among community in Southern Punjab.

This study aims to answer the questions based on the perception of university students and professionals. It is a general perception that extremism gripped the area

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<sup>4</sup> Malala Yousafzai, an activist and advocate of female education and Nobel Peace Prize winner, survived a bullet attack in October 2012;

due to the indifference and alienation among the educated youth and professionals. The study highlights their opinion about reasons behind extremism in the region. It addresses the following questions.

- What is the attitude of university students as well as professionals towards violence, extremism, countering violent extremism (CVE) and community resilience?
- How do the two groups differ from each other in explaining the causes of extremism and what remedies they propose to overcome violent extremism?
- What effective measures can be taken with respect to CVE and community resilience in Southern Punjab?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Resilience in countering violence and extremism tends to create and build systems of recovery from the effect of violent extremism by supporting each other within a community (Ungar 2021). Created in 2017, the Global Engagement and Resilience Fund aimed to counter violent extremism through community engagement. Government-led community resilience strategies can play an inclusive role in this regard. Both individual and community can devise resilience strategies to counter it.

Basit (2015) narrates that the culture of violence and extremism in the society has deformed the peaceful and tolerant face of Pakistan. He suggests that Pakistan should introduce a comprehensive de-radicalization program with long-term CVE policy. The community resilience can be developed by introducing different de-radicalization techniques.

Shah (2020) highlights the role of different madrasas, casts, militant groups and terrorist networks of southern Punjab in the proliferation of radicalization in the region.

Khalid and Leghari (2020), claiming militancy and extremism as primary issues of Southern Punjab, say that political, social, and economic grievances are leading the youth towards radicalization which will have severe implications for the state. They see more deprivation, poverty and disparity in the region in terms of enrolments, health facilities and industrial development. They conclude that monitoring of madrasas and redressal of socio-economic grievances are important steps to address the issue of radicalization. So, the community resilience can be developed by reforming madrasas and resolving the socio-economic problems of the community.

Aziz (2015) sees religious factor behind radicalization in addition to weak social cohesion, corruption, absence of rule of law, economic inequality, absence of local level governance institutions, etc. To deradicalize the society, community resilience needs to be developed by establishing social cohesion, economic equality, grass roots level democracy and rule of law.

Nawaz (2020) points out that post US invasion of Afghanistan created opportunities

for various terrorist outfits to use religion to attract people towards religious extremism. He suggests banning hate speech and hate literature to stop the spread of religious extremism and radicalization.

Afzal (2020) while identifying the nexus between madrasas and Islamists that helps provide breeding ground to extremist elements, says that reforms in overall education system in Pakistan can create community resilience.

Hasnen (2012) describes that there is an increasing tendency of shifting from traditional Bareilvi (Sufi) Islam to orthodox and radical interpretation of Islam, which could be a factor in the spread of extremism. Pointing out that extremist interpretation by different religious groups is causing radicalization, he concludes that authorities are ignoring the growing trend of extremism since there is a common perception that terrorist attacks have decreased.

Williams, Taza & Prellis (2016) highlight different ways to collaborate between the youth and government in CVE that, they believe, can create community resilience. Khan (2015) argues that CVE is considered as a soft approach to counter extremism and terrorism through different engagements.

Akbar and Yaseen (2020) elaborate that hardly any religion teaches to use violence against other religion but unfortunately there are some elements that spread hatred and violence among people. The state must take action against such elements to counter extremism and to maintain peace. The resilience can be developed in community by controlling the religious radicalism, they suggest.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the comparative analysis of university students and professionals. An online questionnaire was sent to around 500 university students and 150 professionals, including doctors, engineers, lawyers, journalists, government officers, university teachers and businessmen. The questionnaire was developed keeping in view the different demographic and socio-economic issues to get the respondents' opinion about extremism and countering violent extremism. The convenient sampling technique has been used. Around 467 university students and 138 professionals responded our questionnaire. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) has been used for the analysis. The responses have been described in percentage. The chi-squared ( $\chi^2$ ) test was used to analyze the correlation between variables as per need. Among total number of respondent students, 51.3% were male and 48.7 were females. The ratio of male among professional respondents was 98%. The alpha value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Data shows that a large number of respondents are inclined towards religion; either they are moderately religious or very religious. Their social status also varies based on the information provided by the respondents based on their monthly income. While responding to different questions, their perception about extremism and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) can be observed. Their perception is compared with the students of southern Punjab to analyze whether there is some difference in perception of students and professionals regarding CVE. The study shows that all these questions are significantly associated with society (students vs professionals) (Annexure 1).

An overwhelming majority of both students and professionals agree that killing of civilians to achieve political objective is an act of terrorism. Whereas the respondents were divided about the opinion that 'strikes to achieve a goal is terrorism'. A large number of both students and professionals also consider the robbery (if someone is killed there) an act of terrorism. The opinion of professionals is divided regarding the statement that terrorism is a modern-day phenomenon. However, a large number of students consider it modern-day phenomenon. There is a unanimous agreement that terrorism is a serious global problem and is illegal and unethical in all respects and all times. This shows that any act of terrorism is not acceptable for the society in any form or in any case. A large number of professionals is of the opinion that terrorism is not justified as an act to take revenge whereas 39% of the students justify this. The professionals were divided on the question that terrorism is an act against Muslims. 59% students consider terrorism an act against Muslims whereas only 12% disagrees to it. A large number of professionals rejects the perception that terrorism is an act against non-Muslims whereas students are confused as 21% agrees and almost 34% disagrees and 45% does not have any idea. Majority of the professionals do not agree with the notion that terrorism is an act of Muslims against Muslims whereas the opinion of students is divided over it. Interestingly, a large number of both student and professional respondents are of the opinion that students are targets of extremist/ radical teachings. The opinion of both sides is divided about the perception that universities can be a breeding ground for the spread of extremism.

A community resilience approach is needed to create such an environment in the universities so that these might be stopped from becoming breeding grounds. A sizeable number of respondents are of the view that they don't mind visiting a known militant/extremist website. A large number of professionals do not want to interact with extremist elements whereas students seem to be confused on this question as 16.5% agrees, 44% disagrees and 39% have no idea. Very few from both sides say they do not mind being in company of those having extremist views. An overwhelming majority of the professionals agree that a monetary benefit instigates the young people to

become extremists, 36% students agree with it and 52% students have no idea about it. The professional respondents almost unanimously agree that economic deprivation promotes extremism among the youth whereas 55% students agree with this notion. It shows that economic inclusion and economic equality can create community resilience among the society. A large number of professional respondents say that political exclusion is a cause of extremism whereas 51% students also agree with this and 42% have no idea. The professionals almost unanimously agree that global discriminatory policies are one of the major causes of extremism; however, 51% students agree whereas 45% have no idea about it. Effective mechanism to counter global discriminatory policies can be helpful in promoting community resilience. On the role of religious ideas in promoting extremism, the professionals have a divided opinion whereas 51% students think that religion has a role in extremism and 42% does not have any idea. A large number of professionals think that avoidance is the most effective tool to deal with the extremist views whereas 50% of the students agree with it and 36% have no idea. In South Punjab, a sizeable number of professionals thinks that people are extremists due to their religious beliefs and 48% students also agrees with it. It shows that proper knowledge of religion can create community resilience. A large number of professionals do not think the absence of student unions a reason behind extremist views whereas 42% students think so and 44% have no idea. A unanimous approach can be seen regarding the use of peaceful means to protest instead of violence to address grievances among professionals whereas 46% students agree and 44% have no idea. The peaceful means are more appropriate for creating community resilience against violent extremism because violence begets violence. The role of friends is considered crucial in making an individual violent, according to the research. It means that your near and dear ones are the most important source of creating community resilience against violent extremism. There is almost consensus among professional respondents that a young person could easily become extremist or radical by joining a group having extremist ideas whereas 58% of the students agree with this. Almost all respondents from both sides agree that parents and university teachers can play an important role to stop breeding extremism among students. This research shows that community resilience among youths against violent extremism can be generated by the teachers and parents. The opinion of professionals is divided regarding more religious people have extremist views whereas 64% of the students agree with this notion. A large number of both sides do not want a person having extremist view in their neighborhood. A large number of people in Pakistani society do not mind of having a neighbor from other religion, according to the results of the survey. However, they are divided on the opinion that if their friends became extremists, they would not like to continue friendship. Almost half of the professionals still have their friendship with those having extremist views whereas only 28% of the students think in the same manner.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The research shows that extremism is still a crucial issue for Pakistan in general and for the people of southern Punjab in particular. The failure of countering violent extremism may result in the societal degradation at large. The research shows that a large number of population is still unaware of the problem and is unable to identify the cost they will have to pay in case the problem persists. The research data collected through the university students clearly shows the confusion among them. They are not clear about ideas and issues related to violence and extremism because of either absence of a counter narrative or lack of proper guidance. Their responses manifest the confusion in their minds about extremism. In such situations, the community resilience will not work effectively and any step towards countering violent extremism will not be fruitful. The parents, teachers and friends can collectively play an effective role in creating resilience against violent extremism. However, the professionals' responses, to some extent, are encouraging. Therefore, they have developed community resilience against violence and extremism. In Pakistan, the youth, particularly students, remained more inclined towards extremism during the past two decades. Following measures are proposed to stop the way of extremism.

- The educational institutions especially universities should promote the concept of resilience and an overall tolerance among students in respect of others' ideologies, opinions, belief systems, cultures, behaviors, etc. which make them able to free themselves from any biases, discriminations, prejudices, etc.
- There is a dire need to keep a continuous vigil on teaching environment and students' activities on the university premises to maintain a discipline by restructuring their security systems.
- The government must ban all the websites being run by extremist groups and trace those who show hate material and extremist ideas through social media.
- Economic incentives and monetary benefits are considered the biggest attractions that instigate the youth to become extremists. There is a need to identify such financial transactions to stop financial assistance to extremist elements.
- Thousands of university graduates are roaming around to find jobs. The state needs to think seriously and formulate policies to provide them jobs and resolve the economic grievances of people.
- Political exclusion can be considered a cause of extremism. The government must bring all factions of the society into mainstream politics by reviving local governments and addressing their political grievances.
- The government should instigate a campaign through embassies and state actors to make the world realize that global discriminatory policies are the

major causes of extremism and terrorism, so the powerful and developed states must treat the weak and least developed nations on equal basis.

- There is a need to promote interfaith harmony by engaging different school of thoughts so that the role of religion in promoting extremism can be minimized. For this purpose, Islamic Ideology Council should play a pro-active role by bringing ulema and religious scholars on one-point agenda of non-violence.
- Orthodoxy has a major role in promoting extremism, so it is the responsibility of the state to use different religious platforms to present a true interpretation of religion. Intellectual and philosophical debates should be designed to keep the youth away from religious, political, social, and ethnic violence groups.
- Parents must keep an eye on the friends of their children to avoid any untoward situation. Parents should establish a friendly relationship with their kids and spend sufficient quality time with them.
- Educational institutions need to incorporate chapters on tolerance in textbooks, which teach students that terrorism is not justified to take revenge from anyone and how they can prevent themselves from radicalization.
- A more rigorous campaign to counter extremist narrative needs to be launched by the state through media, academia, clergy, NGOs and civil society with special focus on the youth, as they can be influenced easily.
- Parents and teachers must be trained to teach their children and students as how to maintain peace, tolerance, and harmony in the society.

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## ANNEXURE 1

Q. No.	In your opinion		Student vs Professionals				P-Value
			Students		Professionals		
			Count	%age	Count	%age	
5.1.a	Killing civilians to achieve political objectives is an act of terrorism.	Totally Agree	181	38.8%	82	59.4%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	169	36.2%	42	30.4%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	91	19.5%	6	4.3%	
		Disagree	23	4.9%	3	2.2%	
		Totally Disagree	3	0.6%	5	3.6%	
5.1.b	Strikes to achieve a goal is terrorism.	Totally Agree	56	12.0%	15	10.9%	<b>&lt;0.01</b>
		Agree	133	28.5%	51	37.0%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	162	34.7%	24	17.4%	
		Disagree	108	23.1%	42	30.4%	
		Totally Disagree	8	1.7%	6	4.3%	
5.1.c	Robbery where people are killed is terrorism.	Totally Agree	114	24.4%	45	32.6%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	212	45.4%	42	30.4%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	94	20.1%	6	4.3%	
		Disagree	45	9.6%	30	21.7%	
		Totally Disagree	2	0.4%	15	10.9%	
5.1.d	I believe that terrorism is a modern-day phenomenon.	Totally Agree	57	12.2%	5	3.6%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	166	35.5%	55	39.9%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	154	33.0%	21	15.2%	
		Disagree	84	18.0%	39	28.3%	
		Totally Disagree	6	1.3%	18	13.0%	
5.1.e	I believe that terrorism is a serious global problem.	Totally Agree	209	44.8%	84	60.9%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	189	40.5%	39	28.3%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	54	11.6%	6	4.3%	
		Disagree	15	3.2%	3	2.2%	
		Totally Disagree	0	0.0%	6	4.3%	
5.1.f	Terrorism is illegal and unethical at all times.	Totally Agree	260	55.7%	88	63.8%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	135	28.9%	33	23.9%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	60	12.8%	5	3.6%	
		Disagree	11	2.4%	6	4.3%	
		Totally Disagree	1	0.2%	6	4.3%	
5.1.g	Terrorism is a	Totally Agree	72	15.4%	6	4.3%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>

	justified act to take revenge.	Agree	110	23.6%	15	10.9%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	119	25.5%	6	4.3%	
		Disagree	144	30.8%	68	49.3%	
		Totally Disagree	22	4.7%	43	31.2%	
5.1.h	Terrorism is an act against Muslims.	Totally Agree	121	25.9%	30	21.7%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	155	33.2%	36	26.1%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	135	28.9%	12	8.7%	
		Disagree	49	10.5%	51	37.0%	
		Totally Disagree	7	1.5%	9	6.5%	
5.1.i	Terrorism is an act against non-Muslims.	Totally Agree	30	6.4%	6	4.3%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	68	14.6%	15	10.9%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	208	44.5%	18	13.0%	
		Disagree	148	31.7%	87	63.0%	
		Totally Disagree	13	2.8%	12	8.7%	
5.1.j	Terrorism is an act of Muslims against Muslims.	Totally Agree	43	9.2%	6	4.3%	<b>&lt;.001</b>
		Agree	101	21.6%	21	15.2%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	178	38.1%	9	6.5%	
		Disagree	126	27.0%	69	50.0%	
		Totally Disagree	18	3.9%	33	23.9%	

Q. No.	In your opinion:	Students vs Professionals				P-Value	
		Students		Professionals			
		Count	%age	Count	%age		
5.2. a	Students are targets of extremist/radical teaching.	Totally Agree	65	13.9%	27	19.6%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	181	38.8%	69	50.0%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	181	38.8%	18	13.0%	
		Disagree	39	8.4%	19	13.8%	
		Totally Disagree	1	0.2%	5	3.6%	
5.2.b	Universities can be breeding grounds for the spread of extremism.	Totally Agree	32	6.9%	12	8.7%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	132	28.3%	51	37.0%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	202	43.3%	15	10.9%	
		Disagree	96	20.6%	57	41.3%	
		Totally Disagree	5	1.1%	3	2.2%	
5.2.c	I don't mind visiting a known	Totally Agree	17	3.6%	5	3.6%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	80	17.1%	25	18.1%	

	militant/extremist website.	No Idea/Don't Know	221	47.3%	12	8.7%	
		Disagree	132	28.3%	63	45.7%	
		Totally Disagree	17	3.6%	33	23.9%	
5.2.d	I don't mind chatting on internet with people who advocate violence as a mean to achieve some political objectives	Totally Agree	14	3.0%	5	3.6%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	63	13.5%	7	5.1%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	182	39.0%	18	13.0%	
		Disagree	183	39.2%	69	50.0%	
		Totally Disagree	24	5.1%	39	28.3%	
5.2.e	I don't mind being in company of those having extremist views.	Totally Agree	15	3.2%	5	3.6%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	42	9.0%	9	6.5%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	176	37.7%	24	17.4%	
		Disagree	207	44.3%	61	44.2%	
		Totally Disagree	26	5.6%	39	28.3%	
5.2.f	Monetary benefits instigate young people to become extremist.	Totally Agree	25	5.4%	21	15.2%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	144	30.8%	81	58.7%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	241	51.6%	15	10.9%	
		Disagree	53	11.3%	18	13.0%	
		Totally Disagree	3	0.6%	3	2.2%	
5.2.g	Economic deprivation among young people promotes extremism.	Totally Agree	47	10.1%	30	21.7%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	209	44.8%	90	65.2%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	179	38.3%	3	2.2%	
		Disagree	31	6.6%	12	8.7%	
		Totally Disagree	1	0.2%	3	2.2%	
5.2.h	Political exclusion is a cause of extremism.	Totally Agree	46	9.9%	33	23.9%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	194	41.5%	57	41.3%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	195	41.8%	21	15.2%	
		Disagree	31	6.6%	27	19.6%	
		Totally Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
5.2.i	Global discriminatory policies is the major cause of extremism.	Totally Agree	55	11.8%	48	34.8%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	184	39.4%	69	50.0%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	209	44.8%	12	8.7%	
		Disagree	17	3.6%	9	6.5%	
		Totally Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
5.2.j	Extremism means rejecting the religious	Totally Agree	51	10.9%	21	15.2%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	189	40.5%	54	39.1%	

	ideas of others.	No Idea/Don't Know	194	41.5%	18	13.0%	
		Disagree	32	6.9%	42	30.4%	
		Totally Disagree	0	0.0%	3	2.2%	
5.2.k	Extremism has nothing to do with religion.	Totally Agree	35	7.5%	24	17.4%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	155	33.2%	42	30.4%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	219	46.9%	12	8.7%	
		Disagree	55	11.8%	48	34.8%	
		Totally Disagree	3	0.6%	12	8.7%	
5.2.l	I know there are people on campus who spread news about extremism and terrorism.	Totally Agree	26	5.6%	6	4.3%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	79	16.9%	27	19.6%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	271	58.0%	75	54.3%	
		Disagree	88	18.8%	21	15.2%	
		Totally Disagree	3	0.6%	9	6.5%	
5.2.m	The most effective way to deal with those having extremist views is to avoid them.	Totally Agree	36	7.7%	27	19.6%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	138	29.6%	51	37.0%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	234	50.1%	15	10.9%	
		Disagree	56	12.0%	42	30.4%	
		Totally Disagree	3	0.6%	3	2.2%	
5.2.n	Many people in Pakistan are extremists due to their religious beliefs.	Totally Agree	59	12.6%	24	17.4%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	167	35.8%	48	34.8%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	183	39.2%	15	10.9%	
		Disagree	55	11.8%	39	28.3%	
		Totally Disagree	3	0.6%	12	8.7%	
5.2.o	Absence of student unions on campus is one of the reasons for students having extremist views	Totally Agree	36	7.7%	6	4.3%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	161	34.5%	42	30.4%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	204	43.7%	24	17.4%	
		Disagree	61	13.1%	51	37.0%	
		Totally Disagree	5	1.1%	15	10.9%	

Q. No.	In your opinion:	Students vs Professionals				P-Value	
		Students		Professionals			
		Count	%age	Count	%age		
5.3.a	There are peaceful ways to protest instead of violence to address grievances.	Totally Agree	64	13.7%	57	41.3%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	152	32.5%	81	58.7%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	206	44.1%	0	0.0%	

		Disagree	44	9.4%	0	0.0%	
		Totally Disagree	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	
5.3.b	Friends play an important role for a young person to have violent extremist ideas.	Totally Agree	88	18.8%	39	28.3%	<0.001
		Agree	204	43.7%	78	56.5%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	152	32.5%	9	6.5%	
		Disagree	22	4.7%	6	4.3%	
		Totally Disagree	1	0.2%	6	4.3%	
5.3.c	A young person can easily become extremist or radical by joining a group having extremist ideas.	Totally Agree	68	14.6%	48	34.8%	<0.001
		Agree	205	43.9%	78	56.5%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	165	35.3%	5	3.6%	
		Disagree	27	5.8%	5	3.6%	
		Totally Disagree	2	0.4%	2	1.4%	
5.3.d	University teachers could play an important role in controlling violent ideas among students.	Totally Agree	94	20.1%	54	39.1%	<0.001
		Agree	224	48.0%	75	54.3%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	134	28.7%	3	2.2%	
		Disagree	15	3.2%	6	4.3%	
		Totally Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	
5.3.e	Parents can play an important role in controlling violent extremist ideas of adult children.	Totally Agree	125	26.8%	73	52.9%	<0.001
		Agree	231	49.5%	57	41.3%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	98	21.0%	3	2.2%	
		Disagree	12	2.6%	3	2.2%	
		Totally Disagree	1	0.2%	2	1.4%	

Q. No.	In your opinion:	Students vs Professionals				P-Value	
		Students		Professionals			
		Count	%age	Count	%age		
5.4.a	Usually more religious people have extremist views.	Totally Agree	100	21.4%	15	10.9%	<0.001
		Agree	200	42.8%	54	39.1%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	122	26.1%	18	13.0%	
		Disagree	41	8.8%	42	30.4%	
		Totally Disagree	4	0.9%	9	6.5%	
5.4.b	The most effective way to deal with those having extremist views is to avoid them.	Totally Agree	55	11.8%	27	19.6%	<0.001
		Agree	176	37.7%	54	39.1%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	167	35.8%	9	6.5%	
		Disagree	69	14.8%	42	30.4%	
		Totally Disagree	0	0.0%	6	4.3%	

5.4.c	I would not like to have a neighbor who has extremist views.	Totally Agree	61	13.1%	30	21.7%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	196	42.0%	63	45.7%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	149	31.9%	18	13.0%	
		Disagree	59	12.6%	21	15.2%	
		Totally Disagree	2	0.4%	6	4.3%	
5.4.d	I would avoid having neighbors of a different religion.	10.9	51	10.9%	5	3.6%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	141	30.2%	16	11.6%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	177	37.9%	15	10.9%	
		Disagree	95	20.3%	63	45.7%	
		Totally Disagree	3	0.6%	39	28.3%	
5.4.e	If a friend becomes extremist, I would not want to remain his/her friend anymore.	Totally Agree	44	9.4%	18	13.0%	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
		Agree	121	25.9%	27	19.6%	
		No Idea/Don't Know	172	36.8%	21	15.2%	
		Disagree	126	27.0%	60	43.5%	
		Totally Disagree	4	0.9%	12	8.7%	

05

## Developing a National Narrative: University Faculty's Perception of Violent Extremism

Dr Faryal Razzaq, Amna Siddiqui and Sana Ashraf

### ABSTRACT

Viewing faculty as an influencer in shaping the values and attitudes of students is a well-researched phenomenon. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness and need assessment of screening extremist tendencies during faculty hiring in Pakistan. Similarly, the lack of training to mitigate extremist views or addressing sensitive and controversial issues raised by students in the classroom is a matter of grave concern. Literature implies that the faculty in Pakistani universities has substantial inclination towards extremist ideologies. This study aims to generate data from the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to reach an understanding about terrorism, its causes, and find a way forward for a unified counter terrorism narrative. Assessing the faculty's violent extremist beliefs, their understanding of emotions, and violent risk ideation is an important starting point to formulate policy recommendations for developing an academia-informed anti-terrorism narrative. The data was collected through qualitative and quantitative means by conducting interviews. Using frequency and correlation analyses and T-Tests, results indicate that 69.6% of the faculty has violent and extremism views, 33.3% has extremist tendencies while 82.6% showed higher tendencies of risk-taking and impulsive behaviours.

**Keywords:** HEIs, faculty hiring, students radicalization, CVE, emotional intelligence, PVE approach

### INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have often been accused of harbouring extremist views whenever incidences of terrorism centred on these institutes occur. When faculty and staff are hired in HEIs, their experience and qualifications are properly assessed, and in some cases, certain personality tests are also conducted. However, people from different backgrounds join the faculty with their religious beliefs and political affiliations. No apparent screening is done to stop their way to join the faculty so that the impressionable minds of students might be protected from extremist or violent ideologies.

This study aims to assess the extremist and radical tendencies of the faculty and

staff and suggests specific interventions for their capacity building. It also provides a framework for screening during the hiring process.

The current research is significant in the sense that not much attention has previously been paid to the possibility of presence of disruptive elements in academia that generate the idea of violent extremism (VE). Mechanisms for screening faculty and staff have also been suggested to assess their violent tendencies and extremist inclinations. The study shows red flags for those faculty members who are inclined towards extremism due to their radical views and how can these views be mitigated through their capacity building.

The findings gathered by intervening and assessing the faculty's understanding and perspective of extremism, their beliefs, tendencies and concurrent emotional regulation capacity, it is imperative to devise a national narrative framework. Keeping in mind the results, the study proposes a model for the screening of faculty to downplay the effect of radicalization stemming from within the HEIs.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Terrorism, as described by Sun Tzu, is to end one life and frighten thousands – it is a psychological war which intends to publicize and internationalize key political motives, intentions and objectives (Bartley 2005). After the 9/11 attacks, the term 'violent extremism' (VE) has also got popularity. Since then, efforts to mitigate extremist ideologies and terrorist activities are being made by the successive governments.

Terrorism lacks a unified definition (Schmid 2013), and is often seen in the light of religious extremism in countries like Pakistan where the blame is often placed on Islamist extremist groups, whereas the underlying motives could be social and political (Daraz 2012). Most theorists agree that the factors influencing radicalization that lead to VE are an individual's belief system, which is shaped by economic and political marginalization as well as psychological and process-oriented factors like religiosity (Peracha et al. 2017). As a result of terrorist activities, countries like Pakistan have to face huge economic losses, destruction of physical infrastructure, and drastic upheavals in the socio-political fabric of the society (Daraz 2012; Nizami et al. 2018).

Using approaches to prevent violent ideation and tendencies at the 'breeding' stage of radicalization is termed as Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE); Pre-emptive approaches like education and awareness programs are launched to target vulnerable communities (Davies 2011; Davies 2018; Stephens et al. 2021). One of the PVE approaches focusing on the psychological 'push' factors of extremist tendencies (Mirahmadi 2016) is the use of emotional intelligence (EI) to mitigate violent behavior (Porche 2016). An individual, who is good at understanding, regulating and managing his own and others' emotions (i.e. having higher EI), has a greater propensity to be

adjusted psychosocially, and can flexibly navigate conflicting situations (Mayer et al. 2008, Zeidner & Matthews 2018). Enhancing EI can lower the fear of terrorism and ability to apply a better perspective (Shah et al. 2020).

PVE approaches hold a significant importance in the political and military backdrop of Pakistan, considering that the war on terror has cost economy \$118 billion loss in the last 15 years (Orakzai 2019). Despite this, due to a plethora of political reasons and the government's seemingly ineffective policies, the element of radicalization and extremist ideologies have succeeded to make inroads in the mainstream educational institutes of Pakistan, and radicalize the youth (Ismail et al. 2020). Of note here is also the widespread intolerance, popularization of 'conspiracy theories' and rise of sectarian sentimentalism, which further complicates a 'unified' approach to tackle extremism (Feyyaz 2016).

While observing the HEIs in Pakistan, it has been learned that students are involved in assisting, facilitating, and participating in terror-related activities. Some are even supported by the employees of these HEIs (Buzdar et al. 2018). In a study conducted to assess teachers' view on extremism in Pakistani universities, Nauman and Saeed (2016) concluded that the faculty agrees on the mitigating role of education in handling extremism among the youth in its present state. Religious extremism, a diversified stream of education resulting in class and social division leading to extremist elements, sectarianism in different HEIs, being extremely rigid in one's views, intolerance, overriding of merit and unfair means of subjugating rules – all are the forms of extremism observed by the faculty (Nauman, &Saeed 2016). A look into the educational background of most-wanted terrorists in Pakistan shows that they are relatively well-educated when compared with their peers, but at the same time their lower socio-economic status juxtaposed with higher education pushes them towards extremist means to achieve their goals (Saeed & Syed 2018). Buzdar, Tariq and Ali (2018) say that there is no unified stance on terrorism, and even their definitions were in conflict and influenced by media. The authors suggest that there should be a proper system of screening for extremist tendencies which are prevalent in HEIs, and that there is a dire need for capacity building of the faculty to counter extremist and terrorist ideologies, which make them able to handle the situations in classroom discussions.

This raises the questions about Pakistan's strategy with respect to a nationally accepted counter-terrorism narrative. Lack of a unified approach, and certain loopholes lead to a scattered framework without genuine progress. Organizations concerned lack ability to overcome the psychological warfare by handling the situation sensitively with deliberation. The terrorist outfits utilize ideologies based on reality, but a good chunk of it is also rooted in fiction, sentimentalism, and conspiracy theories. To counter this psychological oppression, there needs to be nuance in experts' methodology to be able to add an educated perspective to the counter-terrorism narrative. An in-depth

investigation into specialized abilities and creating a more objective stance is needed both in terms of scholarship, state-sanctioned narrative as well as support from the common public (Feyyaz 2015). Another critique is the lack of awareness about the ground realities. The government has progressively ignored the public sentiment, the importance of institutionalized strength and force, acquiring a long-haul approach instead of making rushed policies, a comprehensive plan which is agreed on from all stakeholders and not achieving underlying dependability from the ground up to develop a national narrative on counter-terrorism (Cheema & Shamil 2017). The lack of a national narrative which is an all-rounded understanding of the extremist ideology and their psychological oppression, is still evident as all previous efforts for counter-terrorism have more or less been military in nature (Habib 2018).

At the end of 2014, when the Army Public School in Peshawar attacked, the government responded with a 20-point National Action Plan (NAP). It aims to counter psychological warfare through transcendently non-mobilized approaches. The NAP focuses on, among different perspectives, handling illegal intimidation by destroying fear-mongering monetary organizations, forbidding fanatic madrasas (with strict theological andragogy), partisan outfits, and fighting the disdain discourse against strict and ethnic minorities (Mahmood 2016). In spite of this, unless Pakistan's Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) measures gain a more organized and wise approach, the efforts to control local radicalism and illegal intimidation will remain futile. As CVE efforts dispatched by the military and the common society are underway, an appraisal of their difficulties and accomplishments will help Pakistan incorporate the changes relevant to the current requirements (Zahid 2017).

## METHODOLOGY

The faculty members of HEIs were interviewed to assess their violent beliefs and extremist tendencies, EI capacity and perspective on counter-terrorism efforts. Keeping in view the scope of the study, following research questions have been addressed.

- a. What are the factors that define the construct of anti-terrorism comprehensively?
- b. How HEIs can help build the capacity of faculty regarding teaching and handling of sensitive interactions in classrooms in connection with anti-terrorism narrative?
- c. How can faculty screening and staff hiring in HEIs be made more effective by assessing their extremist tendencies?

In accordance with the study parameters, faculty in HEIs were assessed using a mixed-method approach to collect both quantitative as well as qualitative data from faculty members after initial screening. To gauge the faculty's beliefs about extremism, their violent tendencies and EI, three different measures were used in the quantitative

phase. Indigenously developed Extremism and Violence Risk Identification Scale (EVRIS) (Hassan et al. 2021) was used to quantify the faculty members' risk factors that are associated with extremist and violent tendencies. For assessing their emotions, the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SREIT) (Schutte et al. 1998) was used which is a freely available scale to measure EI capabilities with different subscales. Lastly, to measure the faculty's beliefs on extremist values and violence, another indigenous measure of Violent Extremism Beliefs Scale (Peracha et al. 2017) was used. All authors of the indigenous scales were informed of the study and provided consent for the current project.

A quantitative questionnaire was developed and circulated online in the first phase to get responses (response rate 13.2%) from the HEI faculty members who were accessible online. In the second phase, to get the maximum responses, the authors also collected data by conducting field visits of six different public and private sector universities in Islamabad/Rawalpindi region. For the qualitative part, due to COVID-19 protocols and Standard Operating Procedures, Focus Group Discussions could not be arranged, so data was collected online and in-person.

All participants, who consented to provide their opinion, were briefed about the study design and parameters and the purpose to conduct this research. Their privacy was not compromised, and their responses were coded in numbers before data analysis to maintain anonymity. The selection of participants was made on the basis of being part of a private or public sector HEI, in any teaching discipline or administrative position. All ethical protocols of the Declaration of Helsinki were adhered to.

The faculty that took part in the survey were from 31 different universities across the four provinces. There were 27 different ethnicities from 50 different areas of specialization. The highest number of respondents were from Punjab (N=67, 73.6%), followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (N=14, 15.4%), Sindh (N=6, 6.6%), and Balochistan (N=4, 4.4%).

Particulars		N (%)
Gender	(N=93)	
	Male	60 (64.5)
	Female	31 (33.3)
	Prefer not to say	2 (2.2)
Age (N=90)	20-30years	16 (17.8)
	31-40years	43 (47.8)
	41-50years	22 (24.4)
	51-60years	4 (4.4)
	61 and Above	5 (5.6)
Marital Status (N=93)	Single	13 (14.0)
	Married	77 (82.8)
	Divorced	3 (3.2)
Job Position (n=92)	Research Assistant	2 (2.2)
	Lecturer	28 (30.1)
	Assistant Professor	35 (37.6)
	Associate Professor	12 (12.9)
	Professor	5 (5.4)
	Others	11 (11.8)
Teaching Experience (N=90)	< 1 yr	7 (7.8)
	1 – 2 yrs	11 (12.2)
	3 – 4 yrs	11 (12.2)
	4 – 5 yrs	3 (3.3)
	> 5 yrs	58 (64.4)
Religious Beliefs (N=93)	Muslim	92 (98.9)
	Prefer not to say	1 (1.1)

**Table 1:** Study participant's demographics

To get qualitative data, an additional 11 (M=8, F=3) faculty members from HEIs who had an interest in the social aspects of the study and were willing to give the interview took part in our detailed qualitative interviews (Annexure 1). The researchers additionally interviewed 36 (M=21, F=14, Undisclosed=1) faculty members for a short version of qualitative interview (Part A in Annexure 1). The qualitative interview was created keeping in mind the research criteria; some questions were adapted from previously generated interview protocol as outlined by Peracha et al. (2017), to assess the faculty's perspective on what makes a terrorist and what are their views on our anti-terrorism narrative as a country and being part of academia. The full interview protocol is given in Annexure. 1.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Both the quantitative and qualitative data was collected and subsequently analyzed by using SPSS (IBM Corp. Released 2017. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 25.0.

Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.), and NVivo (12) for the thematic and qualitative analysis.

For the quantitative analysis, the total number of respondents (N=93) were assessed by using Extremism and Violent Risk Ideation Scale (EVRIS), their EI scores (SREIT) and Violent Extremism Beliefs Scale (VEBS) as previously outlined. Each scale also had their own dimensions as outlined by the authors.

#### ***Extremism and Violent Risk Ideation***

A total of 93 respondents (M=60, F=31, Prefer not to say=2) were assessed and their data was analyzed against their Extremism and Violent Risk Ideation (EVRIS). The scale had 26 items with Likert-type responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), with the statements in the questionnaire evaluating the respondent's extremist and violent tendencies. The scale items were also grouped into factors measuring the respondent's uncertainty in life (7 items), lack of social support (6 items), violent aggression tendencies (9 items), as well as religious intolerance (4 items). The total EVRIS Score (N=93) had a mean of 47.87 ( $\pm$  16.30). The 93 respondents had a mean score of 14.44 ( $\pm$  5.77) for the Uncertainty in Life subscale, a mean score of 11.15 ( $\pm$  5.32) for Lack of Social Support subscale, the Violent Aggression subscale had a mean score of 15.10 ( $\pm$  5.77), and a mean score of 7.18 ( $\pm$  3.18) for Religious Intolerance. Table 2 shows the total EVRIS scores along with the sub-scores of its factors in male and female respondents (N=91). There were no significant differences between the male and female mean scores (all  $p > 0.05$ ).

	Statistics						
	Gender	N	Mean (SD)	T (df)	p*	Mean Difference	95% CI of the difference (lower, upper)
Total EVRIS Score	M	60	48.48 (17.76)	-.502 (89)	.617	-1.838	(-9.112, 5.436)
	F	31	46.65 (13.87)				
<i>Uncertainty in life</i>	M	60	14.20 (5.98)	.543 (89)	.588	.703	(-1.870, 3.277)
	F	31	14.90 (5.60)				
<i>Lack of Social Support</i>	M	60	11.42 (5.49)	-.841 (89)	.403	-.997	(-3.354, 1.359)
	F	31	10.42 (5.09)				
<i>Violent Aggression</i>	M	60	15.92 (6.42)	-1.737 (89)	.086	-2.207	(-4.732, .318)
	F	31	13.71 (4.11)				
<i>Religious Intolerance</i>	M	60	6.95 (3.15)	.933 (89)	.353	.663	(-.749, 2.075)
	F	31	7.61 (3.33)				

**Table 2:** Gender stratified total mean score and sub-scores of EVRIS factors

\* $p < 0.05$  considered significant. SD = Standard Deviation, CI = Confidence Interval

All subscale scores were positively correlated with each other and the total EVRIS score (all  $p < 0.05$ , Suppl. Data), with the highest correlation of the total EVRIS score with lack of social support ( $r = .855$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

#### **Assessing Emotions Scale**

The same cohort was also assessed on the Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SREIT) with 33 total items and 4 subscales (Palmer et al. 2009) of Perception of Emotion (10 items), Managing Own Emotions (9 items), Managing Others' Emotions (8 items), Utilization of Emotions (6 items). As with EVRIS, the SREIT scale also had Likert-type responses to statements with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The total mean score of the SREIT in 93 respondents was 126.85 ( $\pm 15.49$ ), with the Perception of Emotion subscale mean score at 37.15 ( $\pm 6.12$ ), respondents

scoring a mean of 35.59 ( $\pm$  5.28) in the Managing their Own Emotion subscale, a mean score of 30.66 ( $\pm$  4.08) in the Managing Others' Emotions subscale while the Utilizing Own Emotions subscale had a mean score of 23.45 ( $\pm$  3.35). Table 3 shows the total mean scores and mean scores of the subscales stratified by gender (N=91). There were no significant differences between the male and female mean scores (all  $p > 0.05$ ).

	Statistics						
	Gender	N	Mean (SD)	T (df)	p*	Mean Difference	95% CI of the difference (lower, upper)
Total SREIT Score	M	60	125.77 (16.03)	.886 (89)	.378	3.072	(-3.819, 9.964)
	F	31	128.84 (14.97)				
<i>Perception of Emotion</i>	M	60	37.02 (6.66)	.340 (89)	.735	.467	(-2.266, 3.201)
	F	31	37.48 (5.25)				
<i>Managing Own Emotions</i>	M	60	35.48 (4.85)	.218 (89)	.828	.259	(-2.100, 2.617)
	F	31	35.74 (6.27)				
<i>Managing Others' Emotions</i>	M	60	30.10 (4.08)	1.677 (89)	.097	1.513	(-.292, 3.317)
	F	31	31.61 (4.08)				
<i>Utilization of Emotions</i>	M	60	23.17 (3.48)	1.115 (89)	.268	.833	(-.652, 2.319)
	F	31	24.00 (3.17)				

**Table 3:** Gender-stratified total mean score and subscores of SREIT factors

\* $p < 0.05$  considered significant. SD = Standard Deviation, CI = Confidence Interval

All subscale scores were positively correlated with each other and the total SREIT score (all  $p < 0.05$ , Suppl. Data), with the highest correlation of the total SREIT score with managing others' emotions ( $r = .881$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

#### ***Violent Extremis m Beliefs Scale***

The faculty scores on the Violent Extremism Beliefs Scale (30 items) were also taken

to assess their beliefs about VE. The VEBS measure also had four subscales, namely Religious Power, Violence & Extremism, Lack of Positive Thinking, Power Politics and Risk-Taking and Impulsive Behaviour (Peracha et al. 2017). The respondents answered the statements ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The respondents (N=92) scored a total mean score of 69.05 ( $\pm$  19.59) on the VEBS scale, with a mean score of 27.54 ( $\pm$  10.17) in the Religious Power, Violence and Extremism subscale, a mean score of 16.04 ( $\pm$  7.39) in the Lack of Positive Thinking subscale, the Power Politics subscale had a total mean score of 13.01 ( $\pm$  4.61), while Risk-Taking and Impulsive Behaviour subscale had a total mean score of 12.46 ( $\pm$  3.63). Table 4 shows the gender-stratified total mean scores and mean scores of the subscales for the VEBS scale (N=90). There were no significant differences between males and females in the VEBS scale dimensions.

	Statistics						
	Gender	N	Mean (SD)	T (df)	p*	Mean Difference	95% CI of the difference (lower, upper)
Total VEBS Score	M	59	71.71 (19.99)	-1.876 (88)	.064	-8.067	(-16.610, .476)
	F	31	63.65 (18.13)				
<i>Religious Power, Violence &amp; Extremism</i>	M	59	28.59 (10.78)	-1.428 (88)	.157	-3.206	(-7.667, 1.255)
	F	31	25.39 (8.71)				
<i>Lack of positive thinking</i>	M	59	16.63 (7.92)	-1.278 (74.42)**	.205	-1.950	(-4.990, 1.090)
	F	31	14.68 (6.26)				
<i>Power Politics</i>	M	59	13.51 (4.95)	-1.439 (88)	.154	-1.476	(-3.515, .562)
	F	31	12.03 (3.93)				
<i>Risk-taking &amp; Impulsive Behaviour</i>	M	59	12.98 (3.32)	-1.792 (88)	.077	-1.435	(-3.026, .157)
	F	31	11.55 (4.11)				

**Table 4:** Gender-stratified total mean score and subscores of VEBS factors

\*p<0.05 considered significant. SD = Standard Deviation, CI = Confidence Interval

\*\*Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was significant (F=5.463, p=.022), equal variances not assumed.

All subscale scores were positively correlated with each other and the total VEBS score (all  $p < 0.05$ , Suppl. Data), except Lack of Positive Thinking and Power Politics subscales ( $r = -.030$ ,  $p = .779$ ), which had a negative correlation but was not statistically significant. The Religious Power, Violence & Extremism subscale had the highest correlation with the total VEBS score ( $r = .922$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

#### **Correlation Analysis between Scales**

In order to determine the correlation between the constructs of the EVRIS, SREIT and VEBS scale, we conducted Pearson's Product Correlations between the total mean scores. It was found that EI is negatively correlated with EVRIS but not significantly correlated with the VEBS total mean score. Meanwhile, EVRIS and VEBS are positively correlated with each other (Table 5).

<b>Correlations</b>			
Scales	Total EVRIS Score – r (p)	Total SREIT Score – r (p)	Total VEBS Score – r (p)
Total EVRIS Score	1	<b>-.431 (.000)**</b>	<b>.309 (.003)**</b>
Total SREIT Score		1	-.038 (.717)
Total VEBS Score (N=92)			1

Table 5: Correlations between EVRIS, SREIT and VEBS constructs (N=93)

r = Correlation Coefficient,  $p < 0.05$  considered significant.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Furthermore, as the total mean scores of EVRIS and SREIT are correlated, we also performed correlation analysis between their subscales (Table 6). Uncertainty in Life was negatively correlated with all dimensions of EI except Utilizing own emotions. Lack of Social Support was also negatively correlated with all EI dimensions but Perception of Emotions and Utilizing own Emotions were not significantly correlated. Moreover, Violent Aggression was negatively correlated with all EI constructs (all  $p < 0.05$ ), but Religious Intolerance was not significantly correlated with any EI dimensions.

<b>Correlations between SREIT and EVRIS dimensions</b>				
EVRIS dimensions	SREIT Dimensions			
	Perception of Emotions – r (p)	Managing Own Emotions – r (p)	Managing Others' Emotions – r (p)	Utilizing Own Emotions – r (p)
Uncertainty in Life	<b>-.286 (.005)**</b>	<b>-.452 (.000)**</b>	<b>-.405 (.000)**</b>	-.160 (.126)
Lack of Social Support	-.193 (.063)	<b>-.370 (.000)**</b>	<b>-.283 (.006)**</b>	-.185 (.076)
Violent Aggression	<b>-.321 (.002)**</b>	<b>-.411 (.000)**</b>	<b>-.372 (.000)**</b>	<b>-.306 (.003)**</b>
Religious Intolerance	<b>-.215 (.038)*</b>	-.143 (.171)	-.102 (.333)	.028 (.790)

Table 6: Correlations between EVRIS and SREIT constructs (N=93)

$r$  = Correlation Coefficient,  $p < 0.05$  considered significant.

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Correlation analysis of the subscales between EVRIS and VEBS constructs was also performed as the total scores were positively correlated (Table 7). Uncertainty in Life, and Lack of Social Support (as EVRIS dimensions) were not significantly correlated with any VEBS dimensions (all  $p > 0.05$ ). However, Violent Aggression was positively correlated with all VEBS dimensions with the highest correlation with Religious Power, Violence & Extremism ( $r = .528$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Religious Intolerance was also positively correlated with all VEBS dimensions except Lack of Positive Thinking.

Correlations between EVRIS and VEBS dimensions				
	VEBS Dimensions (N=92)			
EVRIS dimensions (N=93)	Religious Power, Violence & Extremism – $r$ (p)	Lack of Positive Thinking – $r$ (p)	Power Politics – $r$ (p)	Risk-Taking & Impulsive Behaviour – $r$ (p)
Uncertainty in Life	.124 (.239)	-.128 (.225)	.035 (.741)	.004 (.972)
Lack of Social Support	.201 (.055)	.007 (.947)	.100 (.341)	.157 (.136)
Violent Aggression	<b>.528 (.000)**</b>	<b>.217 (.038)*</b>	<b>.318 (.002)*</b>	<b>.359 (.000)**</b>
Religious Intolerance	<b>.390 (.000)**</b>	.109 (.303)	<b>.320 (.002)**</b>	<b>.292 (.005)**</b>

**Table 7:** Correlations between EVRIS and VEBS constructs (N=93)

$r$  = Correlation Coefficient,  $p < 0.05$  considered significant.

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### *Cut-Off Scores*

For the Extremism and Violent Risk Ideation Scale (EVRIS), a cut-off score was calculated by taking the mid-point of the highest possible score and lowest possible score (midpoint score being 52). As many as 31 out of 93 respondents (33.3%) had a higher EVRIS score indicating extremist tendencies and the risk of developing them. However, 66.7% (N=62) had a lower score indicating lower tendencies.

The SREIT total score has ranges indicating unusually low EI (score below 111), better than average EI (score above global mean of 124) and unusually high EI (score above 137). This cut-off score range has been indicated by the scale authors. 12.0% of the respondents had unusually low EI (N=11) while 29.3% has unusually high EI (N=27), leaving 58.7% of the respondents having better than average EI (N=54).

In order to determine the severity of violent extremist beliefs, the total VEBS

score and its subscales also come with cut-off scores as indicated by the authors. It was observed that 69.6% of the respondents had a higher than average violent extremism belief. An astounding number of the respondents (82.6%) showed higher tendencies of risk-taking and impulsive behaviours. Among all the VEBS dimensions, power politics had the lowest percentage (53.3%), but still more than half of the respondents inclined towards higher scores (Suppl. Data).

### ***Qualitative Interviews***

Out of the total 93 respondents, who participated in the quantitative survey, 36 also provided their short qualitative responses. They were asked about their perception regarding extremism, their beliefs, and stance on anti-terrorism. A more detailed qualitative interview was also conducted wherein 11 additional faculty members from HEIs participated.

Thematic analyses of the short qualitative interview revealed important themes demonstrated word clouds (N=36; Annexure 2). Some additional questions revealed lack of training in HEIs with respect to addressing sensitive issues in the classroom. No one reported having any formal narrative or policy regarding anti-terrorism by one's institution. However, 50% said that their institution has mitigating strategies like security programs, zero tolerance to violence and that they try to work on personality/psychology and spiritual development of students. Some respondents suggested that indulging in sensitive issues is best avoided altogether as it can result in disagreements, dispute, and quarrelsome behaviours.

The longer, more detailed qualitative interviews revealed some important themes in the thematic analyses in terms of future directions and policy-making decisions regarding the anti-terrorism narrative. Annexure 2 demonstrates thematic analyses using word clouds generated from representative questions in the qualitative interview (as outlined in the methodology section before).

50% of the faculty said that they have encountered extremist persons and identified their traits. Interestingly, when asked how the extremists look and act like to whom they met, the faculty said people having extremist views look normal until you challenge their views. When asked: 'Do you think extreme (even violent) actions are justified if someone disrespects your religious beliefs?' three out of 10 respondents, said: "Yes, it is justified." However, the majority said: "it is unjustified." It is worth mentioning that both the responses should be seen in the backdrop of religious and legislation factors respectively. To a question that do you believe in promoting your sect by highlighting the 'wrongs' in other sects or degrading other sects? As many as eight respondents showed disagreement saying that there should be a mutual respect between sects; we can highlight good deeds, make comparisons, but cannot criticize their religious ideology. On the contrary, the respondents, who agreed to the statement did so due to their ideology. On blasphemy laws, most of them thought it requires amendments as it

is being misused, 1/3rd said they are not sure what it entails but they know what the law was about: death penalty for anyone who will insult prophets.

Lastly, to a question that can you engage yourself in controversial or divisive discussions that are a threat to your belief system without getting emotionally charged?, three respondents showed disagreement, saying that it is harmful & useless to be engaged in such discussions Whereas, the remaining respondents said they like logical and evidence-based discussions.

Our detailed thematic analysis of the qualitative interviews (Annexure 2) from the academia of Pakistan directs us to propose the following definitions to make a national narrative:

**Terrorism:** Terrorism is the execution of extreme ideologies pertaining to social, political, and religious domains. It has a devastating impact on people and communities through violating human rights, and disturbing peace and social norms.

**Anti-Terrorism:** Anti-terrorism means taking hard measures to stop terrorism through laws enforcement, making strict anti-terror laws, and using soft measures to develop tolerance especially religious tolerance. It means having systems in place to curb violence, radicalization, and extremism while maintaining peace and upholding human rights through speedy justice.

The following measures need to be taken to counter terrorism:

Enlightenment of youths through awareness drives, advocacy, and dialogues)

Equitable enforcement of law

Inculcating religious tolerance, political inclusivity, and social cohesion among youths

Strict laws for anti-terrorism that violates human rights

Alleviation of poverty and social disparity.

Breaking social isolation.

Developing a peaceful counter narrative

Strengthening family ties

End to injustice

Launching de-radicalizing programs

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The potential of HEIs to fight terrorism on intellectual grounds is thus significant. After the attack on Army Public School in Peshawar in 2014, the then government formulated 20-point National Action Plan to stabilize the country and engaged all the civil society actors to play their part in curbing terrorism. There are many instances of religious, political and ideological clashes that resulted in VE in the HEIs. This serious issue calls for the investigation of employees, their affiliations and belief systems. The power of impressionable youth and mobilization of university students cannot be

undermined. Therefore, it requires careful screening of current faculty and staff and assessment of capacity building against radical/VE tendencies. The way a teacher can influence their class in a wrong direction could be a ticking bomb, as most HEIs lack any mechanism that monitors what is discussed in the classroom. Moreover, after decades of war on terror and being a highly vulnerable country, most institutions in Pakistan still do not have a formal stance or policy on anti-terrorism and violent extremism. This study is an effort to highlight that a careful evaluation and collective wisdom of academia should be channelized to reach fruitful conclusions so that Pakistan might move in the right direction, and control terrorism and its spread through educational institutions.

***Institutional Policy:*** A clear-cut institutional policy specifically for HEIs based on progressive and enlightened moderation needs to be devised as per the national narrative to counter terrorism/extremism. For this purposes, broad-based deliberations should be organized by engaging academia, think tanks and state institutions concerned. Ministry of Education and Higher Education Commission (HEC) can play a major role in this regard.

***Capacity building and grooming:*** There is a dearth of training or capacity building programmes for handling controversial and sensitive issues in the classroom. Faculty needs to be imparted formal trainings to tackle sensitive issues such as: how to take up violent extremism through moral reasoning; how to counsel students who have extremist tendencies and beliefs; and how to de-escalate the hostile situation on the university premises. Training need assessment and the capacity building program for faculty should be done on regular basis. Besides, faculty's intellectual grooming programmes should be introduced. For this purpose, faculty exchange programmes and working with international think tanks would be helpful.

Capacity building of faculty through andragogy, i.e. how to engage students and handle difficult classroom interactions related to religion, politics, and ethnicities, should be conducted at least once a year.

***Screening for extremist tendencies before hiring and admissions:*** Keeping in mind the responses of faculty, seemingly normal persons may have violent and extremist tendencies which need to be screened out. A mandatory screening of students should be done to check their extremist beliefs and violent tendencies before admission. Special week should be observed after every semester by organizing seminars and workshops to promote interfaith harmony, peace, emotional resilience, etc.

***Screening of faculty:*** Our findings show that the current faculty should also be screened to identify the disruptive and potentially extremist elements in HEIs. It will help mitigate the extremist and terrorist activities that may originate within the educational institutions.

***Trainings on Emotional Intelligence:*** Moderation in beliefs, inclusion of diversity, Emotional Intelligence (especially empathy and ethics) should be incorporated in curriculum and reinforced in different disciplines as a separate module. Inter-university consortium should meet at least once a year to promote ethics, civility, and emotional intelligence through skill & knowledge sharing & setting benchmarks for the best practices.

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## ANNEXURES

<b>Annexure 1: Qualitative Interviews Protocol</b>
<b>Part A – Short Qualitative Interviews</b>
What is your definition of extremism?
How would you define anti-terrorism?
What do you feel are the important factors for countering terrorism?
What is the official stance and definition of your institution regarding anti-terrorism?
Have you received any training regarding teaching methodologies to tackle sensitive issues like religion, sectoral or political views in classrooms?
If the answer to above question is affirmative, please explain the details of the training
If the answer to above question is negative, then what is your strategy and techniques to handle these issues in class interactions?
<b>Part B – Detailed Qualitative Interviews</b>
What do think are the traits of an extremist?
Have you encountered/known any people you would consider extremists? What kind of people have you found them to be in their daily life?
Describe your detailed view on the anti-blasphemy law in your country.
What do you feel are the important factors for countering terrorism?
Why do you think people become extremists and how they justify their actions?
How do you think extremism affects individuals and communities?
What differentiates an extremist from a criminal?
Do you think education can eliminate extremism? If yes, how?
What do you think are the most leading motives of a) religious extremism, b) political extremism, and c) sectarian violence?
Do you think extreme (even violent) actions are justified if someone disrespects your religious beliefs?
Do you believe in promoting your sect by highlighting the wrongs in other sects or degrading other sects? Please explain why or why not?
Can you engage in controversial or divisive discussions that are a threat to your belief system without getting emotionally charged? Please provide details on why or why not.

ANNEXURE 2: THEMATIC WORD CLOUDS FOR REPRESENTATIVE QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

Short Qualitative Interview Responses (N=36)	
What is your definition of extremism?	<p>A word cloud where 'extreme-ideology' is the largest and most central term. Other prominent words include 'enforcement', 'impact', 'social', 'political', 'violent-behaviour', 'religious', 'devastating', and 'violation-of-rights'.</p>
How would you define anti-terrorism?	<p>A word cloud with 'Law-enforcement' as the largest term. Other significant words include 'Tactic', 'Tolerance beliefs', 'enforcement', 'Law', 'Hard-Measures', and 'measure-to-stop-terrorism'.</p>
What do you feel are the important factors for countering terrorism?	<p>A word cloud featuring 'Education' as the largest word. Other terms include 'Law-enforcement', 'Law', 'Empathy', 'Political-willingness', 'Justice', 'dedication', 'Tolerance', 'Alleviate-Poverty', and 'Eliminate-Social-Isolation'.</p>
What is your institution's definition of, and official stance on anti-terrorism?	<p>A word cloud with 'zero-tolerance' and 'law-enforcement' as the largest terms. Other words include 'measure-to-stop-terrorism', 'psycho-therapy', 'employment', 'peaceful-environment', 'spiritual-values', 'tactic', 'education', and 'security-programs'.</p>

In the short qualitative interview, the respondents also answered some personal questions which can help in understanding the quantitative part of the questionnaire better. The respondents were asked to describe how well they were treated during their childhood. The majority of the respondents (n=14) replied that they grew up under extreme care. However, there were few respondents (n=2) who stated that they grew up as carefree and some were even abused (n=2). Whereas some replied that their childhood was just okay (n=7) and for some it was extremely happy (n=3). A question also gauged the incidence of domestic violence faced by the respondents i.e. 'Have you ever experienced domestic violence?' The majority (n=23) respondents indicated that they have never experienced domestic violence. In contrast, 6 respondents who did experience it outlined their primary reasons were due to disciplinary measures, economic factors, backwardness, and physical abuse.

<p>What do you feel are the important factors for countering terrorism?</p>	<p><b>Social-Isolation</b>  <b>National Family One</b>  <b>Moral VALUES Stop</b>  <b>Islamic Education</b>  <b>Monitoring</b></p>
<p>Why do you think people become extremists and how they justify their actions?</p>	<p><b>Injustice</b>          Psychological-issues  <b>Personal-experience Disparity Society</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Lack-of-education</b>          Family-conflict Poor-nurturing of  <b>Social-isolation</b></p>
<p>How do you think extremism affects individuals and communities?</p>	<p>Religious-Sectarianism  <b>Enforcement-of-ideology</b>          Poor-life-style <b>Imbalance Illogical</b>  <b>Badly-affect-on-life</b>  <b>Intolerance</b>          Low-socioeconomic</p>
<p>What differentiates an extremist from a criminal?</p>	<p><b>Legislation</b>          Mindset  <b>Ideology</b>          Same          Interconnected</p>
<p>Do you think education can eliminate extremism? If yes, how?</p>	<p><b>Instilling-Societal</b>  <b>Moral</b>  <b>Family Values</b></p>
<p>What do you think are the most leading motives of religious extremism?</p>	<p><b>Lack-of-knowledge</b>  <b>Ideology</b>  <b>Brain-Washing</b>  <b>Institutional-funding</b></p>
<p>What are the leading motives for political extremism?</p>	<p><b>Money</b>  <b>Power</b>          Expansion <b>Corruption</b></p>

### Supplemental Data

#### EVRIS Scale Correlations

Correlations (N=93)					
EVRIS dimensions	Total EVRIS Score – r (p)	Uncertainty in Life – r (p)	Lack of Social Support – r (p)	Violent Aggression – r (p)	Religious Intolerance - r (p)
Total EVRIS Score	1	.838 (.000)**	.855 (.000)**	.851 (.000)**	.636 (.000)**
Uncertainty in Life		1	.720 (.000)**	.515 (.000)**	.343 (.001)**
Lack of Social Support			1	.599 (.000)**	.316 (.002)**
Violent Aggression				1	.612 (.000)**
Religious Intolerance					1

**Table:** Correlations between total mean score and sub-scores of EVRIS factors

r = Correlation Coefficient,  $p < 0.05$  considered significant.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

#### SREIT Scale Correlations

Correlations (N=93)					
SREIT dimensions	Total SREIT Score – r (p)	Perception of Emotion – r (p)	Managing Own Emotions – r (p)	Managing Others' Emotions – r (p)	Utilizing Own Emotions - r (p)
Total SREIT Score	1	.765 (.000)**	.877 (.000)**	.881 (.000)**	.770 (.000)**
Perception of Emotion		1	.465 (.000)**	.507 (.000)**	.357 (.000)**
Managing Own Emotions			1	.784 (.000)**	.676 (.000)**
Managing Others' Emotions				1	.693 (.000)**
Utilizing Own Emotions					1

**Table:** Correlations between total mean score and sub-scores of SREIT factors

r = Correlation Coefficient,  $p < 0.05$  considered significant.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### VEBS Scale Correlations

Correlations (N=92)					
VEBS dimensions	Total VEBS Score – r (p)	Religious Power, Violence & Extremism – r (p)	Lack of Positive Thinking – r (p)	Power Politics – r (p)	Risk-Taking & Impulsive Behaviour – r (p)
Total VEBS Score	1	.922 (.000)**	.624 (.000)**	.665 (.000)**	.711 (.000)**
Religious Power, Violence & Extremism		1	.348 (.001)**	.720 (.000)**	.561 (.000)**
Lack of Positive Thinking			1	-.030 (.779)	.395 (.000)**
Power Politics				1	.369 (.000)**
Risk-Taking & Impulsive Behaviour					1

**Table:** Correlations between total mean score and sub-scores of VEBS factors

r = Correlation Coefficient, p < 0.05 considered significant.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### VEBS Cut-Off Scores

Scale	Higher than cutoff score N (%)
Total VEBS Score	64 (69.6)
RPVE total	60 (65.2)
LPT total	63 (68.5)
PP total	49 (53.3)
RTIB total	76 (82.6)

**Table:** Total VEBS score and subscale scores (all N = 93) with cut-off value percentages



06

## Engendering Counter-Extremism Behavior through Model Female Vocational-cum-Educational Institutions in Southern Punjab

Dr Iram Khalid and Dr Asiya Mukhtar

### ABSTRACT

The study identifies the gap between policy and its execution against violent extremism in Pakistan. It highlights that most of the efforts to root out extremism remained focused on the use of military force, violence, and rehabilitation work (hard power) which was insufficient. To get qualitative data, a survey and key informant interviews were conducted. By applying the Attitudes-Behavioral Corrective (ABC) approach, the paper contends that there is a need to use soft power approach to mitigate extremism by educating the women population of underdeveloped areas, including Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan and Bahawalpur in southern Punjab. Moreover, special efforts are needed to invest on the capacity building and empowerment of women so that they might raise their kids without financial limitations and educate their next generation against the ills of terrorism.

**Keywords:** Counter-Extremism, Vocational Training, Education, Models of CVE

### INTRODUCTION

Several models and approaches have so far been proposed to counter violent extremism, however there is an ambiguity in their modus operandi and efficacy. While analyzing Pakistan's strategies and approaches, confusion surrounds the number of government-funded efforts made so far or still underway, and the mechanism under which the government, other partners and stakeholders can work together in order to obtain desirable objectives. This study is an attempt to bridge such gaps by locating a general framework so as to understand the type of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program needed for a specific region. It proposes an eclectic approach towards CVE via education model in the deprived, conservative, and far-flung areas like southern Punjab where female population is excluded of all the policies and plans for development and social change.

Generally, Pakistan has been facing violent extremism since long, which resulted in continuing dismal socio-economic conditions in the less developed areas. In these areas, a strong anti-west and anti-liberal sentiment prevails, which is the major

motivational force behind converting masses into a violent mob by the radical elements. These elements have a social and political dominance there. In this backdrop, the study aims to:

- evaluate the level of awareness about terrorism in southern Punjab
- find reasons behind the failure of successive governments and NGOs' in curbing extremism
- explore the parameters of change required in that area
- analyze existing policies for the prevention of Violent Extremism in particular regions
- provide a workable solution to bring about a change in the behavior of masses at grass roots level

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will mainly explicate the major existing discourses related to Pakistan's terrorism milieu and the possible strategies to counter them. The existing data would be utilized for developing an operational framework to eliminate terrorism from southern Punjab.

Pakistan has a unique position in the international terrorist scenario because it is simultaneously a victim of terrorism (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences 2016) and accused of harboring terrorism by acting like a safe haven for terrorist outfits (US Department of State 2019). Despite the fact that Pakistan has been making efforts to curb terror-financing and has also tried to play a mediating role in the Afghan peace process, it is still accused of nurturing extremist groups and terrorism (Kaltenthaler et al. 2010). The report, 'Countering Violent Extremism: Mapping Perceptions, Practices and Potential of Private Sector and Local Business' indicates a sharp incline in violent extremism in Pakistan, that at times is very intricately intertwined with the religious discourse and rhetoric thus making it more complicated and complex to deal with (Institute of Social and Policy Sciences 2016). This precarious situation makes Pakistan's ability and possibility to eliminate terrorist tendencies from the society both challenging and impossible.

Some social scientists also provide a critique of the National Internal Security Policy and subsequent National Action Plan of the Government of Pakistan. For instance, a report of United States Institute for Peace (USIP) highlights certain communicational and policy gaps between the civil and military authorities and finds no clue of working on bridging these gaps through the participation of stakeholders.

Experts have also identified the Pakistan's geographical locations, which are most volatile in terms of rising extremism and violence. Southern Punjab is unfortunately one of those dominions. The Crisis Group Asia Report N°279 (2016) titled: 'Pakistan's Jihadist Heartland: Southern Punjab' provides an apt picture of Southern Punjab's extremist milieu and discusses dense pockets of extremist groups being nurtured in

traditional religious schools called madrasas. One very significant observation of this report is that 'madrasas are the main hub of terrorist activities'.

In 2018, the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) formulated the CVE policy for Pakistan in the name of 'National Counter Extremism Policy Guidelines'. This policy identifies the main factors behind radicalization, violence, extremism, and terrorism. It highlights the following six broader areas (NACTA 2018) where policy interventions could bring about substantial results in CVE.

- i) Rule of law for the protection of people's lives, liberty and property.
- ii) Citizen engagement by bridging the gap between government and public,
- iii) The role of media in promoting a soft image of Islam and national culture, (Media can also be used for the promotion of inter-provincial harmony and can play a substantial role in women empowerment.)
- iv) Educational reforms by introducing an integrated curriculum in schools, universities, colleges and madrasas that minimize disparity,
- v) Enhancement of procedures of parole and probation for the release of people from jails who are not guilty, and
- vi) The promotion of culture can be understood as a soft policy to prevent and counter violent extremism.

Pakistan is a country which is fighting against illiteracy, poverty, corruption, political instability, deprivation, and militancy, "An uneducated Muslim population has persistently been duped and robbed of its rights in the name of a religious utopia. Therefore, it is essential to provide basic health facilities, education, and economic security to the masses. Rule of law and development projects are necessary to provide them legal and economic relief. Religious militias need to be neutralized and reintegrated into society by diverting extremist tendencies towards social work (Khan 2005, p. 47).

## METHODOLOGY

This study applies a behavioral model approach towards the elimination of terrorism. Both the qualitative and quantitative data have been collected and used to analyze the study. There are two types of powers which are utilized to eliminate extremism, i.e. 'hard power' and 'soft power' (Nye Jr. 2003, 2009, 2011). Hard power implies the use of military, rule and law, and coercive tactics. For Nye Jr. (2003), "soft power encompasses the range of civil society instruments."

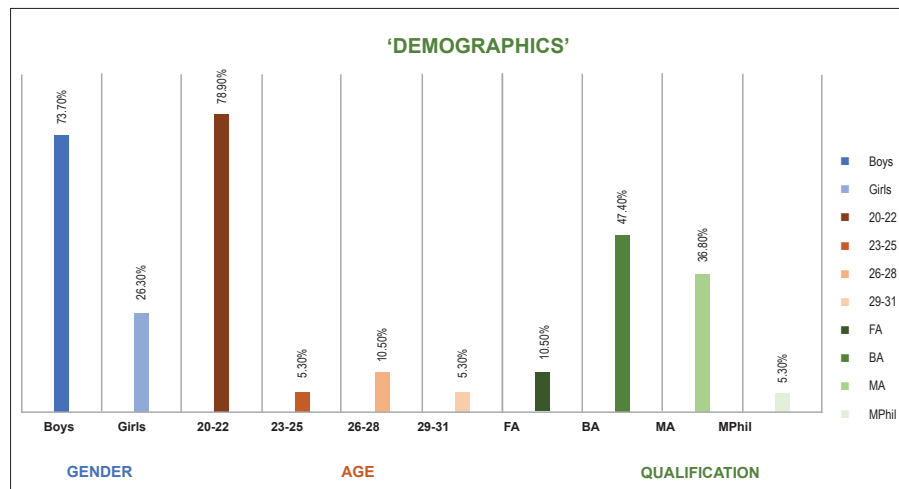
To see the validity of soft power approach, this study employs Attitudes-Behaviors Corrective (ABC) model of violent extremism proposed by James Khalil, John Horgan and Martine Zeuthen in 2019. This model has been chosen because it emphasizes the need to "ask right questions" related to "drivers of violent extremism" (Khalil et al. 2019).

By taking cue from ABC model, a questionnaire (Annexure A & B) was designed to “ask the right” question. Mostly educated men and women were chosen to fill up the questionnaires mostly have MCQs. These questions mainly assess the level of awareness in southern Punjab about the drivers behind terrorist activities, their behaviors and opinions about the efficacy of government and NGOs efforts to mitigate extremism, their point of view about the major reasons behind extremism in their area, and the value of females’ educational cum vocational involvement in the overall process of eliminating terrorism from this region. For the analytical part of the research, academia, regional politicians and local elite were consulted to conceive the ground realities.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### *Quantitative Data Analysis*

The questionnaire designed for collecting data from the field was aimed at knowing the opinion of the youth, who are associated with the socialization process and can understand the gravity of extremist situation prevailing in the region. The demographics of the sample population are depicted in the graph below:

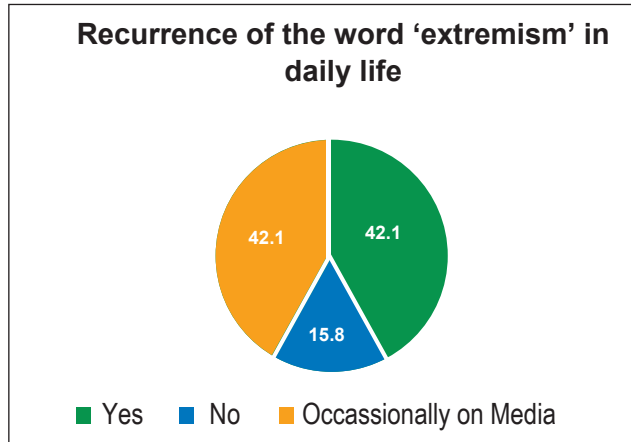


**Figure 1.** Demographic Information of the Respondents

The sample population is a mix of both male (73.70 %) and female (26.30 %). Well-educated respondents were carefully chosen so that their responses can provide a logical direction for developing a policy framework. Keeping in mind the objectives of the study, all the participants were chosen from different areas of southern Punjab, for instance, Bahawalpur, Multan, DG Khan (Figure 1). Majority of them fall in the age group of 26-28 years. Most of the respondents (47%) have BA degrees followed by MA (36.80%) and MPhil (5.30 %).

Figure 2: Recurrence of the word 'extremism'

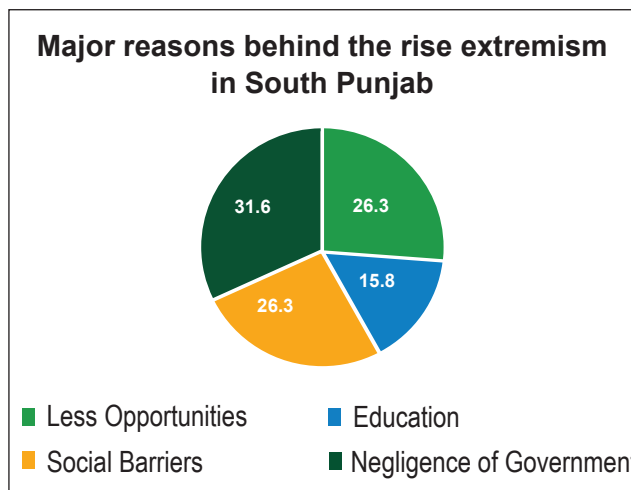
Majority respondents (42.1%) could find the meanings of the word 'extremism' either through media or other sources while only a few (15.8%) denied the presence of any issues related to extremism. As the hypothesis suggests, the extremist and aggressive norms



are socially accepted to the extent that the level of retaliation against them is less than required. This scenario suggests that there is a need to create awareness among masses and make them realize the drastic impact of extremism in their region.

Figure 3: Major Reasons of Rise of Extremism

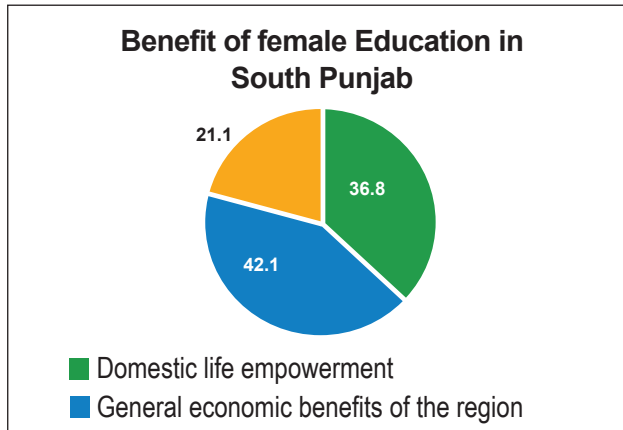
Figure 3 denotes the major causes of rise of extremism. Majority (31.6%) considers 'negligence of government' as the major cause behind the rise of extremism; 26.3% believe that 'less opportunities' and 'social barriers' are to be blamed for extremist issues in southern Punjab; only a



small group of sample population (15.8%) believes that 'lack of education' is the cause of spread of extremism. As the diagram suggests, it is being seriously realized by the masses that patronization of the government is seriously required. As a matter of fact, there is a need to work on all barriers mentioned in the survey that require practical solutions. In nutshell, unless a long-term strategy with an eclectic approach is adopted, it is impossible to root out violent extremism in this region.

**Figure 4:** Benefits of Female Education in Southern Punjab

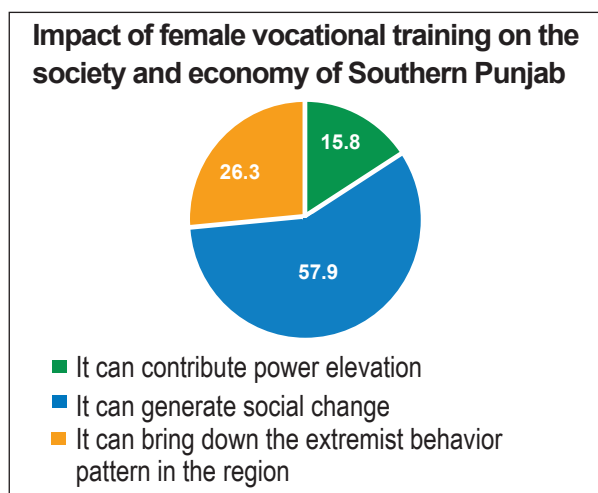
While identifying the benefits of female education in the region, Figure 4 shows that majority of respondents (42%) consider female education a big 'general economic benefit for the region'. 37% believe that female education would bring



about 'domestic life empowerment' by a majority. 21% are of the view that it would be helpful for 'future development prospects for this region. If it is a matter of women empowerment, the sample population of the survey ardently supports it. The results presented in Figure 4 suggest that if female education project is pursued in Southern Punjab, the violent extremism situation can be altered considerably. It is the women empowerment that can bring betterment in the socio-economic fabric of the entire region.

**Figure 5.** Impact of Female Vocational Training on Society and Economy

Figure 5 presents the impact of female vocational training on society and economy in southern Punjab. According to it, a majority (58%) believe that 'it can generate social change'. However, a small number of participants (26%) think that 'it can bring down the extremist behavior pattern in the region. However, only a few of them (16%)

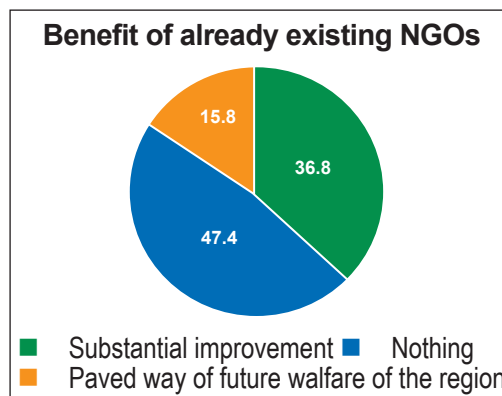


are of the view that 'it can contribute to power elevation'. The field survey endorses the implementation of women empowerment projects through educational cum

vocational institutes. Female population can play a vital role in bringing about change in the extremist behavior patterns of the society. Many ills of the region are associated with the gender disparity, economic conditions, and negligence of the government. This grim situation makes the social environment conducive for the extremist elements to fill the gap and propel their negative agenda in the society. This study suggests that if all stakeholders join hands and create a long-term educational and vocational training setup in the region, the room for extremist elements can surely be reduced effectively. The field survey also verifies this research hypothesis.

**Figure 6: Benefits of NGOs**

Figure 6 illustrates the benefits gained through the already existed NGOs. A majority of respondents (47.4%) consider that there are no benefits at all; 36.8% feel a 'substantial improvement' as a benefit of NGOs, and only 15.8% say it will 'pave the way for the future welfare of the region'. Most crucial part of the survey was to measure the level of effectiveness of NGOs and their field work. As the support



and security system is not as effective as required, the performance of these NGOs is not taken by the masses as effective as is required. This study suggests that the current socio-economic conditions prevailing in southern Punjab seek an all-encompassing policy that is backed by all the stakeholders so that it might ensure viable counter extremism parameters. Such parameters must be interwoven in the socialization process of the region, which could consequently provide economic benefits as well, especially via women empowerment by setting up institutions of educational cum vocational training.

#### ***Views of Academia and Regional Politicians***

In order to understand the ground realities of the region, a detailed interview of social and political figures of the area, Jaffer Khan Leghari and his wife, Mina Ehsan Leghari, was conducted. Mina Leghari pointed out some bureaucratic and political hurdles in establishing educational and vocational institutions in the region. She said: the process of recruitment of teachers as well as their transfer and posting is so intricate that it is rather impossible to continue with the educational system; there is no system to recruit the local educated applicants in their local institutions. Lack of livelihood opportunities, poor recruitment policies and lack of practical approach in the education

has seriously amassed the entire developmental scenario.

It is easier to open a madrasa in the area than a formal educational institution because it costs almost nothing to the parents, requires a nominal infrastructure and employees, and runs on donations. Sometimes one clergyman is enough to run the entire setup (Mina Leghari, personal communication, 31 July 2021). Tribal associations, power struggle and lack of governmental interest have messed up the entire educational process of the region (Jaffer Khan Leghari, personal communication (31 July 2021).

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Since the war on terror, debate over the difference between terrorism and extremism continues. Extremism is mainly associated with some ideology or belief system. Some of the ideologies and beliefs are structured in such a way that a follower can adopt the extreme versions. Extremism is not necessarily violent but can surely contribute to terrorist tendencies and acts. This requires a huge change in the formulation of policy and plan. Immediately after 9/11, steps were taken against terrorists and terrorism, but the serious intellectual work, policies and plans against extremism came a bit later. Now, after two decades of war on terror and after experimenting military and security models, the need to work on beliefs and ideologies (both ethnic and religious) is being realized.

Earlier, we have discussed that how military and defense models are applied and how local approaches to prevent CVE are studied? There has been one visible gap in almost all models and approaches and that is the lack of executional plan on long-term basis (especially for women and poverty-stricken areas of the country). Unless these extremist thoughts are not alternated by moderate educational plans and skill learning, the exploitation of the poverty-stricken and illiterate population cannot be stopped.

### *Proposed Model for Preventing and Countering Terrorism*

Deprived areas of Southern Punjab are often used by the radicals as nurseries and the bulk of recruits is taken from these areas. Keeping in view these dismal circumstances, following initiatives have been taken by the successive government.

- Check on the growth of the terrorist organizations
- Building community resilience against extremism
- Hindering local recruitment in the radical organizations

These initiatives have been mainly deployed because of security concerns. 'Defence and security model' of CVE definitely curbed the immediate hostile state of affairs but the attainment of long-term societal basis for undermining extremism in the southern Punjab remained unfulfilled.

All around the world, soft power through women engagement is being promoted

to counter terrorism. The USA has successfully employed the soft power of education to bring an ideological change in Africa (Aldrich 2014). There is an increasing focus on the need to incorporate psycho-social dimensions to counterterrorism (Baak et al. 2020). For instance, one study argues that schools and education system have a pivotal role to deescalate terrorism in Gulf States (Lawale 2020; Syed et al. 2015). Another angle to tackle extremism is through developing “sustainability and capacity building” (Cherney 2016). Moreover, there is an emphasis on women engagement in the peacemaking process. There is a need to understand the women potential in curbing terrorism as suggested by Skjelsbæk et al. (2020).

“Many terrorist groups have women wings and women-oriented publications and other outreach programs because they understand the important role that mothers, wives, and sisters play in a male family members’ decision to take up arms with a terrorist group. We find that females are significantly more likely to support the sectarian group with a women’s outreach-wing.” (Fair & Hamza 2018, p. 962)

The study stresses the need to employ soft power in order to curb extremism from southern Punjab. However, the question arises that what kind of soft power should be employed, who should be the stakeholders, drivers, and actors of this approach.

Here comes the gap which seriously calls for substantial plans of mitigating extremist elements from this tribal/conservative society. By taking clues from the available models and studies as well as the ground realities in terms of poverty, illiteracy, gender disparity, unemployment, and fundamentalist ideologies, this study proposes a female educational cum vocational model to eliminate terrorism from the region by implementing ‘soft power’ in the form of education followed by vocational training. Moreover, since women’s potential role in countering terrorism has been neglected in Pakistan, the model includes female population to bring innovation in the already available paradigms and include the marginalized groups in counterterrorism efforts.

Based on the already available models to study the reasons behind terrorism and the ways to prevent it, this study proposes a unique and eclectic approach to curb extremism from Southern Punjab. It argues that three already available models should be taken under consideration to propose a multidimensional model which is actually needed.

First Model is presented by the United Nations. This model focuses on the most relevant outcomes and is based on three basic things, i.e. policy framework, plan of action, and mobilization of resources. Good governance, mechanism of engaging community in social and political process, and education and gender equality are the much sought after demands of this study with additional suggestion of skills learning and vocational education arrangement for females.

Second model is taken into consideration because it is a study which helps understand the behavior patterns of the criminals associated with violent extremism. The

research has revealed that most of these extremists have criminal history, commitment to some extremist ideology, lack of education and belong to lower socio-economic strata, although first model's utility and application is different from the second one, still there is much similarity in the elements of the sample communities' behavior pattern and socio-economic conditions. This similarity makes this model closer to the study.

Third model is even more elaborative than the previous two. This model sufficiently leads towards the rehabilitation and reintegration of those communities entrapped in extremist thinking. This model presents theoretical explanation of elements of influence that generate extremist social behavior patterns. The prominent feature of the study is that there is a notable work on the preparation of such an environment where proper social reintegration of extremist elements could be taken place. This very feature makes it close to this study as it also suggests the plan of reintegration and rehabilitation of the deprived communities through skill-based education and creation of economic opportunities that could lessen the economic dependency of the poorest communities on others.

Here is the table given on the next page which further explains the complete features of these models as explained above.

Existing Models of Behavioral Study of Violent Extremist Elements		
Model One*	Model Two**	Model Three***
<p>i. *1- Model One: Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (UNO 2015)</p> <p>Major Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting the policy framework</li> <li>• National Plans of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism</li> <li>• Regional Plans of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism</li> <li>• Mobilizing Resources</li> <li>• Recommendations in 7 key areas-                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Dialogue and Conflict Prevention</li> <li>➢ Strengthening Good Governance</li> <li>➢ Engaging Communities</li> <li>➢ Empowering Youth</li> <li>➢ Gender Equality and Empowering Women</li> <li>➢ Education, Skill Development and Employment Facilitation</li> <li>➢ Strategic Communications, the Internet and Social Media (UNO 2015)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>ii. **2-:Model Two National Institute of Justice: Risk Factors and Indicators Associated With Radicalization to Terrorism in the United States</p> <p>Some Major Risk Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Having a History of Criminal Violence</li> <li>➢ Having a Deep Commitment to an Extremist Ideology</li> <li>➢ Being Unemployed</li> <li>➢ Having Less Education</li> <li>➢ Having a Lower Social Economic Status (Smith 2018)</li> </ul>	<p>iii. ***3- Model Three: ICCT – The Hague Research Paper: Designing Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme for Violent Extremist Offenders: A Realist Approach- ***</p> <p>Contextual Influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Individual factors</li> <li>➢ Interpersonal factors</li> <li>➢ Institutional factors</li> <li>➢ Infrastructural factors</li> </ul> <p>Goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Reduce violent extremism and terrorism</li> </ul> <p>Sub-Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Prepare inmate for return to society</li> <li>➢ Prepare host environment for inmate's return to society</li> </ul> <p>Mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Change cognitive, behavioural &amp; attitudinal characteristics of the inmate</li> <li>➢ Change cognitive, behavioural, attitudinal and socio- economic characteristics of the host community</li> </ul> <p>Instruments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Education and vocational training</li> <li>➢ Cognitive behavioral therapy</li> <li>➢ Religious counseling</li> <li>➢ Community engagement</li> <li>➢ Relations with employment agencies</li> </ul> <p>Family counseling (Veldhuis 2012)</p>
<p>*1. (UNO 2015)                      ** 2. (Smith 2018)                      *** 3.( Veldhuis 2012)</p>		

These models provide an ample justification for the further work on the new social vistas for further improvement in the societies mired with violent extremism. Moreover, significant fieldwork was conducted in order to show that how this community of the Southern Punjab reflects the indications of violent extremism and in what manner intends to take rehabilitation work a step forward than the programs already being undertaken by the NGOs and the agencies.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There are certain recommendations which can contribute to viable outcomes in CVE:

- Establishment of alternative educational cum vocational institutes for madrasa students, especially for the women of under-developed areas, which should impart training free of cost. Usually, women population is destined to be dumped to these madrassas, which destroyed their academic and personal grooming.
- As military and security models (hard power) are excessively used, now it is prime time to make combined efforts of NGOs and 'civil society' backed by 'government agencies' (soft power) to contribute to diminish violent extremism.
- There is a need to run media campaign to have an educated and well-trained female population to deal with the poor economic conditions and social change.
- Model educational cum vocational institutions should be set up under the supervision of independent Board of Governors.
- Small businesses or cottage industry should be promoted in remote and starved-hit areas so that the women might get employment or set up their own businesses to stop the way of extremism in these areas.

## VITAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are multiple views, models and narratives of violent extremism presented by the global intelligentsia. Each narrative and each model is characterized by the type and realities of extremism prevailing in that particular region. The case of Pakistan is unique due to its distinct geographical location and its ethno-religious patterns of society. As a matter of fact, this country has been facing extremist elements since the decade of 1980s. War on Terror was merely a new version of the previous extremist episode under the title of jihad. Since two decades have elapsed and the ultimate withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan is taking place, there is likelihood of another episode of extremism which is hard to avoid at least for Pakistan. In the present circumstances, Pakistan is in dire need of an effective counter violent extremism plan with a complete executional preparation. This is prime time to devise a proper mechanism for CVE on grass-root level. As this research suggests that poverty, illiteracy and lack of socialization process is providing a chance to the extremist elements to exploit the dilapidated social conditions and attracting youth towards their sanctuaries.

## FINAL ASSESSMENT

The educational-cum-vocational model of counter extremism offers an effective alternative to conventional religious centers. As a matter of fact, this model is even more effective than these madrasas as it will not only promote moderate trends in the female population but also equip them with skills. The skillful and well-trained moderate youth would definitely feel stronger and contribute towards a meaningful social change. This process of enlightenment would further facilitate the assimilation of this female population in the society as a useful and effective part of the population. Change is a process which takes its time, but its outcomes are solid and long-lasting. Many models are previously used based on security and defense strategies. Many organizations are working on the social front. This is time for joint efforts of civil society, Government Agencies and intelligentsia to plan and execute a simple and workable model of CVE focusing on the education and skill learning of female population of the under-developed areas like Southern Punjab and set it as an example for other areas of the country to fight out the evil of extremism effectively.

In the case of southern Punjab, poverty and illiteracy have been identified as the fuel for the recruitment in terrorist organizations. For this, the recommended solutions in the report are: the increase in employment opportunities, adequate and efficient provision of public utilities such as clean drinking water, and investment in local culture, heritage and sports. The involvement of the corporate sector could act as a catalyst in supporting and progressing CVEs (I-SAPS 2016).

Solution to extremism in southern Punjab is not militarized counter-terrorism but to control gender, racial, and religious prejudices by educating the masses. There is a need to allocate special budgets to spend on people's welfare and development. At the same time, there is a need to eliminate rampant impunity, gender disparity, and educational reforms are direly needed.

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## 07 | Countering Violent Barelvi Extremism in Pakistan: Challenges, Implications and Way Forward

DR NAEEM AHMED

### ABSTRACT

The recent rise of Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) on the political horizon of the country is being viewed as a new form of violent activism of the Barelvis, who used to be the non-violent and peace-loving people. The country-wide violent protests and sit-ins, which the TLP has so far organized, aimed at preventing the government from introducing any reforms in the blasphemy laws, and pressuring the government to break diplomatic ties with France for defending the publication of caricatures of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). The militancy manifested by the TLP not only impacted the socio-political landscape of the country, but also has severe international implications for Pakistan. Against this backdrop, this policy brief analyzes the origin of Barelvi extremist discourse with a particular reference to the rise of TLP, the challenges faced by the government in countering it and the scale of support to TLP's ideology in the Pakistani society in addition to its implications for Pakistan at the domestic and international levels. The primary data has been collected by conducting FGDs and one on one interviews by using open-ended questions. The study proposes to stop the policy of marginalizing the mainstream political parties to keep the extremist parties away from power corridors. It further suggests the government to abandon the project of patronizing Sufi Islam.

**Keywords:** Barelvi extremism, Sufi Islam, Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan, blasphemy laws, Faizabad dharna.

### INTRODUCTION

Pakistan has been witnessing sectarian violence, perpetrated by both Sunni (Deobandi) and Shiite militant groups since the mid-1980s. After the 9/11 incident, the Deobandi groups-led religious terrorism overpowered the state narrative of peace and interfaith harmony and continued till the military operation in Swat. After it went into background, Barelvi extremism surfaced. So, it is a decade-old phenomenon, which is growing rapidly.

In April this year, Pakistan witnessed an anarchy-like situation when Tehreek-i-Labbaik

Pakistan (TLP), a radical Barelvi group of Muslims established in 2015, staged violent protest demonstrations demanding the implementation of an agreement signed earlier between the government and the Tehreek. The agreement called for French ambassador's expulsion from Pakistan and boycotting French products in retaliation to the French government's defense of publishing the caricatures of Holy Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) in the name of freedom of expression (Khan 2021).

As a matter of fact, the TLP has been protesting on the issues of introducing any reforms in the country's blasphemy laws, particularly section 295-C that became the part of the Constitution during Zia regime in 1986 by an Act of Parliament, and defending the honor and finality of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) since long. On the other hand, the government has adopted a policy of appeasement by signing an agreement with the TLP, and at the same time allowing the outfit to blackmail the government by employing violent methods of agitation time and again. TLP has now become a political force to be reckoned with.

Currently, Pakistan has been witnessing a sudden new form of violent activism of Barelvis, who were known for their apolitical, non-violent, and peaceful thoughts and were least violent as compared to Deobandis<sup>1</sup>, Wahabis<sup>2</sup>, and Ahl-e-Hadith<sup>3</sup>. On 15 April 2021, the government banned the group under Anti-Terrorism Act (Jamal 2021), and the federal cabinet, in its July 13 meeting, kept the decision intact. However, in Pakistan, it is a general practice that the proscribed outfits re-surface with a new name as it has happened in the past with Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Jamaat Dawa (JuD) and Tahreek Ja'afria Pakistan.

The unprecedentedly violent assertion of the Barelvis in the political arena of Pakistan has not only greatly impacted the socio-political landscape of the country, but also brought severe international implications. Against this background, this study will focus on:

- Origins of the violent Barelvi extremist discourse with a particular reference to the rise of TLP,
- Challenges faced by the government in countering it,
- Scale of support to TLP's ideology in the society, and
- Implications for Pakistan at the domestic and international level.

The outcome of this study will provide possible insights to understand the narrative of the Barelvi outfits, particularly the TLP, as well as a way forward as how to counter it.

### ***Research questions***

- Why have the Barelvis opted for a violent discourse for the acceptance of their

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<sup>1</sup> A Sunni sect formed in 19th Century in Deoband, India as an Islamic revivalist movement

<sup>2</sup> A Sunni sect formed in 18th Century by an Islamic scholar named Muhammad Ibn-Abd al-Wahaab in central Arabia

<sup>3</sup> A Sunni Salafi reform movement emerged in North India in the mid of 19 Century.

demands?

- What are the challenges and policy options for Pakistan in countering violent Barelvi extremism led by TLP?
- What will be the implications for Pakistan at the domestic, regional, and international level, if Barelvi extremism goes unchecked?

### *Significance for policy makers*

The main objective of the study is to provide a succinct information to policy makers about the impending TLP-backed violent Barelvi extremism so that they, by realizing the severity of the situation, may formulate effective and long-lasting policies to avoid future chaos that could cause internal political instability and international isolation. The recommendations, both short-term and long-term, will provide a way forward to the government and its various institutions to revise and reform their existing policies and programs.

## METHODOLOGY

The research is qualitative in nature and the data has been collected from both the secondary and primary sources. For the collection of primary data, ethnographic tools, such as direct observations, were employed. In this regard, two Focus Group Discussions (i.e. one each with the members/sympathizers of the TLP/Barelvi organizations in Karachi, and government officials) were conducted. Keeping in view the COVID-19 situation and the consent of the respondents, online interviews were preferred through open-ended questions. Secondary data was collected through a vast literature review of government acts, policies, and programs in addition to studying journal and newspaper articles as well as speeches and media interviews of national leadership.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Pakistan's Barelvi Landscape and rise of TLP*

Although there are several Barelvi groups and organizations, which are active in Pakistan on religious and political fronts, the most important are: Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP); Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT); Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC); Sunni Tehreek (ST); Dawat-e-Islami (DI) and Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). Except TLP, others are relatively moderate Sunni-Barelvi organizations. Similarly, all the other groups except DI actively participate in the country's general elections.

The origin of the recent wave of TLP militancy could be traced back after the assassination of Salman Taseer<sup>4</sup> for being critical to Pakistan's blasphemy laws, who had

<sup>4</sup> Salman Taseer, the then governor of Punjab, was gunned down in January 2011 by his official bodyguard namely Mumtaz Qadri, who was reportedly a member of Dawat-e-Islami, however, Dawat along with other Barelvi outfits condemned the act.

also called for amending the law in order to avoid any misuse, particularly against the minorities. He had also stood for the acquittal of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman who was sentenced to death by a court of law for committing blasphemy. He not only visited Asia Bibi in jail, but also pledged at a media briefing on 21 November 2010 to personally take her clemency appeal to the then President Asif Ali Zardari. (Taseer to take Asia Appeal 2010)

Taseer's murder gave a new dimension to Barelvi militancy in terms of actors, issues, target and scope. Hitherto, the Barelvi militancy has been carried out by the ST against the Deobandi outfits for protecting and re-taking of mosques from the Deobandi groups in Karachi and other urban centers of Pakistan. Since the Deobandis were the target, the scope of the Barelvi militancy was very limited with no ambitious agenda of establishing a caliphate or taking over the state apparatus. (Syed 2016). In contrast, the post-Mumtaz Qadri Barelvi militancy, carried out by the TLP, is different from that of Sunny Tehrik. While highlighting the issues of blasphemy and honor of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), the main target of TLP militancy is the government and officials, who intend to bring any change in the country's blasphemy laws. In other words, the current religio-political activism of TLP is not against the Deobandis or Salafis rather it is meant to pressure the government to refrain it from making any change in the blasphemy laws.

Initially, TLP launched a campaign for the release of Qadri in the name of Tehreek Rihai Mumtaz Qadri (Movement for the release of Mumtaz Qadri) and later after Qadri's execution in the case, it turned into Tehreek-e-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah, which again renamed as the TLP when it decided to participate in the 2018 general elections.

The TLP's agitational politics gained its currency when at the time of Qadri's *Cheblum*<sup>5</sup> in March 2016, a Barelvi mob entered Islamabad's red zone and staged a dharna (sit-in). Their demands were to 'declare Qadri a hero, convert his prison cell into a national heritage site, dismiss members of Ahmadi community from government jobs and hang Asia Bibi.' (Ali 2016). However, the protest ended in the aftermath of negotiations with the government.

Street power is the major tool in the hands of TLP, which it often uses effectively to keep the government under pressure. For example, in November 2017, when the PML-N government intended to bring a change in the Election Bill, TLP staged a second sit-in in Islamabad, popularly known as Faizabad dharna, by blocking and paralyzing the capital city. In the Bill, the wording was changed from 'I solemnly swear' to 'I declare.' Finally, amid pressure, the government refrained itself from bringing any change in the bill, however, the then Law Minister Zahid Hamid had to resign. The sit-in ended when the government and TLP signed an agreement, brokered by the Army. (Basit 2020). The

<sup>5</sup> Muslims, especially the Barelvis, observe a ceremony on the 40th day after the death of their kith and kins and pray for the departed soul to rest in peace.

Supreme Court, in its detailed February 6, 2019 judgement by Justice Qazi Faez Isa's suo moto case, clearly highlighted the role of Armed Forces and various security agencies in the following words: "The Armed Forces, and all agencies manned by the personnel of the Armed Forces, including ISI, Military Intelligence (MI) and ISPR serve Pakistan, and thus all its citizens. They must never be perceived to support a particular party, faction, or politician."

In November 2018, TLP had also showed its street power when the Islamabad High Court released Aasia Bibi. Consequently, the TLP-led protests and sit-ins started across the country, particularly in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi.

The latest violent agitation was held by TLP in October 2020 against the French President's defense of Charlie Hebdo Magazine to re-print the caricature of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) in the name of freedom of expression and secularism. It led to a worldwide unrest and protests by the Muslims. Although this act of France was condemned by Pakistan, the TLP leadership demanded to boycott the French products and expel the French Ambassador from Pakistan. The protests later ended on the government's surety that the matter would be tabled in parliament within three months. As the time approached, the government gained more time till April 2021 to implement the agreement. However, before the deadline reached, the government started crackdown on the TLP and arrested its leader, Saad Rizvi, who took over the party after the death of his father, Khadim Hussain Rizvi, in November 2020. The situation unfolded in a very violent manner with the death and injury of several people, including law-enforcement personnel as well.

#### ***TLP's Political Triumph***

The existing literature reveals that after the 9/11 incident, Pakistan decided to promote a rather soft image of Islam, which is inclusive, non-violent, and advocate of peace, justice, love, and compassion. In order to counter radicalization and terrorism, the then president Gen. Pervez Musharraf, under his 'enlightened moderation' move, established the National Council for Promotion of Sufism in 2006. Later, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government (2008-2013) renamed it as Sufi National Council in 2009 and put it under a seven-member committee dominated by the Barelvi School of Thought. (Basit, p. 11). However, Taseer's assassination compelled the PPP to stop supporting Barelvi groups.

After Salman Taseer's assassination in 2011, TLP presented Qadri as a hero to gain political legitimacy in which violence is justified. This aspect was further exploited by its firebrand leader (late) Khadim Hussain Rizvi, who used to attract large gatherings through his sermons. Two other main factors which further led to the rise of TLP are: the effective use of social media; and the role youth belonging to the lower middle class. Another factor which further contributed to the TLP popularity is the unabated media coverage to its protest demonstrations and sit-ins across the country. This also provoked

the public sentiments on the very sensitive issue of blasphemy.

### ***Entry into Electoral Politics***

In order to secure its political stakes in the Pakistani politics, TLP participated in the 2018 general elections. Although it failed to win any National Assembly seats, it won only two provincial assembly seats in Sindh, bagged 2.2 million votes, emerged as the fifth largest political party at the national level and the third in the Punjab in terms of popular votes it gained (Zaidi 2020).

It is a fact that Faizabad *dharna* (sit-in) has changed the whole dynamics of the Barelvi politics from peace-loving people to those aggressively vying for their rights. In a very important policy statement after the 2017 Faizabad *dharna*, Rizvi had said: "Barelvis have been subjected to suppression for over a century and the reverse to that phenomenon has started. Though it will take time, eventually the voice of the majority will prevail." (Ali, 2017).

Although Rizvi is no more, his narrative would not only continue to provide a political and religious support-base to TLP, but also pose major challenges to the government in order to counter this narrative.

## **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

### ***Challenges in Countering Barelvi Extremism***

It is a fact that countering the TLP-led Barelvi extremist narrative is an uphill task. There are four big challenges ahead of the government.

First, TLP has raised a very sensitive issue of blasphemy and defending the honor of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), therefore, keeping in view the political instability in the country, no government or even institution would dare to touch upon or make any minor change or constitutional amendment in the existing laws.

Second, Barelvis constitute more than 50 to 60 per cent of the Muslim population of the country (Mahmood 2018), and the TLP has succeeded in presenting itself as the guardian of their rights while it has also succeeded in marginalizing other major Barelvi groups and political parties.

Third, another challenge faced by the government to counter the TLP-led political activism is the use of social media by the party. It is a fact that the TLP derives its support mainly from the youth belonging to middle-middle and lower-middle classes, that are very much exposed to social media. The frequent and easy use of social media apps, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter, have not only brought the Barelvis much closer to each other, but also made it easy for them to propagate their narrative through speeches and lectures, thus enhancing the TLP's support-base at grass roots level.

Lastly, the lack of any official narrative to counter the Barelvi extremism and

the 'sensitive' issues embarked upon by TLP, has further weakened the government to take any action. The 'Paigham-e-Pakistan' initiative, which the PML-N government had announced in January 2018 under the 'National Peace Narrative', only deals with a unanimous fatwa of condemning suicide bombing, Takfir, and armed struggle as well as rebellion against the state. However, it is silent on mob vigilantism and violence perpetrated by any non-state actor in the name of blasphemy and upholding the sanctity of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him).

### ***Domestic Implications***

Although one may not build a link/connection between state's support to Barelvi/Sufi Islam and the affiliation of Salman Taseer's murderer with a Barelvi group, the TLP's increasing popularity and agitational politics have severe domestic and international implications for Pakistan. Following are the four major domestic implications:

First, at the domestic level, the effective use of street power by highlighting very sensitive religious issues has generated a culture of mob vigilante and violence in the country. A country like Pakistan which is gradually struggling to deal with countering violent Deobandi and Salafi militancy, perpetrated by Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Al-Qaeda as well as the Islamic State (IS), this new kind of TLP-led fiasco with highlighting very sensitive religious issues has made Pakistan's task extremely difficult. In an alarming move, the TTP extended its support to the TLP. In a letter published in a section of press, TTP spokesman Mohammad Khurasani said:

"We stand by those who sacrificed their lives for the honour of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) in this hour of grief, pay tributes to them and remind the military forces of their worth. We reassure them that we will take account of every drop of bloodshed of these martyrs... We want to remind them that these governments and military institutions have always been unreliable, unprofessional and lying. Therefore, they should not be trusted and rather (waging) armed struggle against them is the only solution." (TTP puts its weight 2021).

Second, the rise of ideologically-driven organization has not only undermined the popular notion of Barelvi moderation, but also raised new concerns over Pakistan's battle against hardline Deobandi/Salafi militancy. This has also shattered the notion that majority of the population in the country 'is more moderate than militant.'

Third, the TLP's rise in 2018 general elections has severely impacted the Punjab politics. Although it failed to win any seat, it orchestrated a significant role in ensuring the political defeat of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in the Punjab. Sevea (2018) quoted Gallup Pakistan poll as:

"46 per cent of voters in the Punjab, who voted for the TLP had previously voted for the PML-N. The survey further demonstrated that the PML-N's defeat was due to it losing nine per cent of its vote share; four per cent of these votes swung towards the TLP."

It must be noted here that the state's direct or indirect support was purely on political grounds, i.e. to counter PML-N in the Punjab, where the former has failed to counter the latter's popularity, amid several attempts, e.g. by also using Pakistan Awami Tehreek as well.

Lastly, the religio-political narrative of the TLP has not only further sharpened the inter-sectarian divide but also created division within the ranks of Barelvi sect, thus severely affected the multicultural and pluralistic social fabric of Pakistani society. Two major Barelvi organizations, Dawat-e-Islami and Pakistan Awami Tehrik, not only disowned Mumtaz Qadri, but also distanced themselves from the TLP. However, the lower cadre of these organizations have been strongly attracted to the TLP's narrative as well as the demands made by the TLP. TLP has not only succeeded in occupying the religio-political space, but also TLP-led Barelvi radicalism has moved away from its traditional "image of being apolitical, and peace-loving spiritualists." (Paracha, 2018). Therefore, the 'competition in piety' approach would be an effort on the part of TLP not only to discredit the other fellow Barelvi organizations, but also outbid the Deobandis as well as the Salafis and Ahl-e-Hadith, to promote their version of religious values in Pakistan.

#### ***International Implications***

The TLP-led extremism has also severe international implications for Pakistan. Following are three significant implications:

First, the TLP-led anti-France protests and the agreement which the government signed with the group under which it had to bring the resolution in parliament on the matter of whether or not to expel the French ambassador seems to have its dire international implications for Pakistan. For instance, at the international level, it will increase Pakistan's isolation as France is the permanent member of UN Security Council as well as a leading member of the European Union and Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Second, it would directly impact the dismal state of Pakistan's economy. For instance, in April 2020, on Pakistan' Prime Minister, Imran Khan's appeal to the world's wealthy nations under a Global Initiative on Debt Relief, a group of 20 major economic giants and the Paris Club has frozen the debt payments of developing countries, including Pakistan. Pakistan's US\$1.1 billion debt was deferred. It must be noted that presently Pakistan owes more than 11 billion US\$ to the Paris Club, of which the French loan is the second highest after Japan's. (Raghuvanshi, 2021). Pakistan is a major debt-relief country from the Paris Club. It is a forum of major creditor states which also provide various solutions to the countries that are in extreme debt-burden. It must be noted that France has a major influential role in the Paris Club. Therefore, if Pakistan's relations with France deteriorate, it would directly impact Pakistan's already deteriorated economy. Moreover, it would directly impact Pakistan's trade relations

with the European Union, especially under the ambit of GSP-plus status. For example, in April 2021, a strong reaction came from the European Parliament, of which France is a very active and strong member, in the form of the adoption of a resolution, calling for the review of GSP+ status to Pakistan for increasing number of blasphemy cases in the country. The resolution not only called for Pakistan to “unequivocally condemn” incitement to violence and discrimination against religious minorities, but also showed deep concern at the ongoing anti-French sentiments in the country. (Rehman 2021).

Lastly, being the main victim of the war on terror, Pakistan has been making efforts to build its soft image as a hub of regional economic connectivity, while at the same time highlighting India’s gross violation of human rights in Kashmir as well as its intervention in Pakistan and its role as a spoiler in Afghanistan. In this regard, Pakistan needs a huge international support, particularly of the powerful and persuasive western states. Therefore, the actions of groups like the TLP, with whom the government also happens to sign an agreement, would sabotage all the efforts of image-building at the global level.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The recent rise of TLP’s violence-prone religio-political activism has made Pakistan’s political landscape more radical and militant. There is a dire need on the part of the government to devise a coherent strategy. In order to save Pakistan from any far-reaching consequences, the TLP power needs to be curtailed at the earliest. Following are some short-term and long-term policy recommendations:

### *Short-term:*

- The government needs to immediately abandon the project of patronizing Sufi Islam. The disastrous lesson of such a project could be learnt from the previous experiment when the state patronized various Deobandi groups and madrasas to fight in Afghan jihad. Therefore, any official patronization and support to one ideology will not only result in the weakening of the state’s writ, but also lend power and authority to groups like TLP.
- The unabated media coverage to the TLP dharnas gave too much publicity to the group and aroused public sentiments on the very sensitive issue of blasphemy. Therefore, media, especially the electronic media, should be barred from conducting any program on sensitive issues. Taseer’s murder is a case in point. For the sake of increasing program’s rating, anchors deliberately asked provocative questions, and wrongly dubbed Taseer as a blasphemous (Syed 2016).
- In order to establish the writ of the state, the incumbent government needs to abandon the TLP activities and ensure that such groups should not be allowed to propagate their narrative by challenging the legitimate coercive power of the state.

- The National Action Plan (NAP) needs to be implemented in letter and spirit. For this, use of hate speeches as well as the funding sources of TLP should be sternly scrutinized.
- National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) needs to be reformed and restructured in line with resilient development and its role should be enhanced by giving more powers so that it could penetrate at community level. For this purpose, there is a need to establish a policy think tank to conduct research on issues related to CVE and how to control future radicalization of the youth to save the society from further religious conflicts.

#### Long-Term

- The policy of marginalizing mainstream political parties should be abandoned, and the liberal political forces should be given space to join hands to keep the extremists and fundamentalists away from power corridors.
- In 2017, Faizabad dharna had exposed the skewed civil-military relations at that time. The military, which initially refused to intervene in the situation, later brokered the deal between TLP and the government. A relentless civil-military friction severely affected the state's ability to counter extremist groups. There is a dire need to create a balance between civil-military relations.
- The professional and institutional responsibilities of the intelligence agencies must be ensured by ending their implicit or explicit support to groups like TLP as was mentioned in Justice Qazi Faez Isa's report.
- Pakistan's anti-terrorism legislation is silent on ensuring security of the witnesses, judges, and the state prosecutors. Therefore, it is necessary to provide security and protection to those who conduct the trial of cases of such far-right groups, particularly related to blasphemy. For example, the anti-terror court judge who convicted Taseer's murderer, Mumtaz Qadri, to death, had to leave the country (Siddiq 2013).
- Although it is a good sign that the government has banned TLP and the Ministry of Law and Justice is working on getting its election symbol cancelled (Yousafzai 2021), the government has to ensure that the organization should not re-surface with a new name. In the long run, politics and political activities in the name of religion should be completely banned.

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08

## Exploring post-Conflict Community Resilience Options for Reintegrated Individuals of Swat

Noor Saba and Hamayun Khalid

### ABSTRACT

The re-integration of former combatants is a complex, exhaustive, and multi-tiered process, which demands a unified approach through a steady process of mainstreaming. While community resilience is vulnerable and sensitive to re-integration processes, there is a whole host of factors that impact the psychological transformation of individuals and their families alike. The study, by using the primary and secondary data, explores the post-conflict reintegration of ex-combatants of Swat and identifies the vulnerabilities of community resilience in effectively concluding the integration process. The main findings contain, reintegrated individual's marginalization, exclusion from communal activities, limited arrangement of secondary rehabilitation, no legal coverage resulting in unwarranted arrests, delayed legal procedures, and identity challenges. In the absence of any specific re-integration and community resilience model, the literature review of case studies on similar subjects enables us to craft of a suitable model for Swat. The study mainly recommends partnership between community members and reintegrated individuals so that the former might invite the latter in their communal and social activities as equal stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Extremism, Community resilience, post-conflict re-integration, social mainstreaming, religious counselling

### INTRODUCTION

Understanding the different facets of a conflict eventually leads to effective peacebuilding (Marchetti & Tocci 2009). Writing something on Swat conflict would require a comprehensive understanding of the militants' narratives, drivers of insurgency, societal impact, and evaluation of present, past and future responses. The conflict was deeply embedded with radicalization, violent extremism (VE), and an intent to establish a government by implementing Sharia in Swat valley. These efforts were spearheaded initially by Sufi Muhammad in 1992 under Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM), which continued till his arrest and banning of Tehreek in 2002. His mandate was furthered by Fazal Hayat, the son-in-law of Sufi Muhammad and popularly known as Maulana Fazlullah, who later joined the ranks of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

During this time violent attempts were made to enforce Sharia. Consequently, the military launched a kinetic operation against the TTP militants and ousted them from Swat. This has also resulted in mass migration. In the initial post-conflict reconstruction phase, the military, assisted by the government and civil administration, were devoted to the maintenance of peace. Soon after the physical threat of militants was contained, the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were rehabilitated, and infrastructure was reconstructed. Meanwhile, efforts for deradicalization, reintegration, and reconciliation of militants in captivity were also initiated.

The militants, who either surrendered or arrested, were divided into four categories, i.e. Jet Black, Black, Grey, and White. The categorization of detained militants was determined by their position, role and engagements in the organization. With the containment of physical threat of militants, the challenge of widespread radicalization and extremism among the detained militants was met with deradicalization programs. These programs focused on militants of grey and white categories, since they were not involved in additional criminal activities and had no “blood on their hands” (Azam & Fatima 2017). Moreover, their role, position, and engagements in the organization were lower in comparison to the other categories. The first deradicalization program, launched in 2009, was Sabaoon (Morning light). It focused on juveniles and young adults, followed by Mishal Deradicalization and Emancipation Program in 2010, which was for adult detainees. Mishal is a Pashto word, which means ‘Light’. Other deradicalization programs included Sparlay (Spring) and Rastoon (Right Path). These deradicalization programs operated on a model similar to the deradicalization model of Saudi Arabia. They consisted of the following five modules:

- Psychological Counselling and Assessment,
- Religious Counselling,
- Formal Education,
- Vocational Training, and
- Family Counselling

After the successful assessment of militants as beneficiaries of these programs, they were reintegrated into their respective societies.

Resilience for the scope of this research refers to adaptation and ability of a community, state, or region to adopt new strategies, norms, and practices in response to violent shocks and episodes of aggression to prevent and recover from the said violence. To establish a new peace equilibrium after violent episodes, communities undergo a transformation of self-organization to eliminate facets that either remain irrelevant or pose serious threats to the community.

While over a decade has passed and the valley has been secured, the current position of the reintegrated individuals serves as an area of inquiry. This study aims to investigate the issues faced by the reintegrated individuals and the Swat society

as a whole. Moreover, it also aims to explore suitable policy options to strengthen community resilience to violent extremism in the valley.

## METHODOLOGY

To explore the post-conflict issues of reintegrated individuals of Swat, its impact on community resilience, qualitative research methods were employed. For the collection of primary data, key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted. These interviews drawn up to acquire data were semi-structured. Respondents included civil society members, social workers, social welfare organizations directors, academicians, government officials, Secretary (Village Defence Committees) Swat, and a journalist. Reintegrated individuals could not be interviewed due to several considerations. Since the study is grounded on primary sources, respondents were sampled and selected closely based on:

- a) the role and level of engagement in Swat deradicalization process,
- b) role in reintegration process,
- c) position in civil society, and
- d) the level of engagement with reintegrated individuals

Access to respondents and sampling was done through the Chain-Referral Sampling method. Sampling, Selection, and personal interviews with the respondents were conducted over a period of 13 days (From 07 June 2021 to 19 June 2021). In these semi-structured interviews, respondents were asked questions on the initial phase of reintegration process, challenges to reintegration process, and community resilience, and what measures were taken to overcome these challenges. Since the study aims to explore suitable policy options for strengthening community resilience, the respondents' perspective was also inquired while taking under consideration their locality. During the sampling, for respondents selection, only those localities were focused that had higher density of reintegrated individuals. These localities included Charbagh, Sara China, Rorhya, Qambar, Mingora, Saidu Sharif, Kabal, and Khwazakhela. To authenticate the qualitative data acquired through the semi-structured interviews, informal discussions with individuals from diverse social groups were also carried out. Thematic analysis tools were applied to the data collected to identify common themes and patterns. Secondary sources of data, including research articles, reports, and book chapters were consulted for the study.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The terms deradicalization, rehabilitation, and reintegration are at times used interchangeably as a reference to cognitive disassociation from extremist ideologies and violent extremist group identities. Deradicalization refers to deconstruction of

an individual's radical and extremist views, disengagement from violent activities, and renouncing association with violent extremist groups. Rehabilitation refers to an individual's return to normal life while reintegration refers to the reestablishment of an individual's familial, societal, and communal ties where the individual exhibits positive and constructive participation in the society. The development of successful reintegration programs is indispensable not only for averting and containing recidivism among reintegrated individuals but also for allaying further radicalization.

The journey from violent extremism to reintegration involves the transformation of ideas of identity, viewpoints, ideology, social inclinations, and practical considerations. Various factors may abet an individual towards radicalization such as individual traits, psychosocial dynamics, and external enabling. The concept of reintegration is contextual, and it is only recently that the concept of reintegration for religious violent extremists has been introduced. To elucidate the contextual essence of reintegration, two clusters; the European Exit Programs, and 1st Generation Deradicalization programs, have been discussed.

#### ***European Exit Programs***

The European Exit Programs or Off-Rank Programs in different countries like Exit Deutschland Germany, Slotervaart in Netherlands, Aarhus model in Denmark, Fryhuset in Sweden, and similar programs like the Violence Prevention Network and Hayat were designed for criminal offenders (Holmer & Shtuni , 2017). These programs in Europe focused essentially on Neo-Nazis, Biker gangs, violent criminals, and quasi-criminal groups having a strong social presence and distinct identities (Holmer & Shtuni , 2017). During the emergence of violent religious extremist groups, these programs were tailored to prevent threats. The modalities of these programs are psychosocial, relying on personalized interventions, individual mentoring, vocational and technical training, and efforts to repair personal, family, social, and communal ties (Butt & Tuck, 2014).

#### ***1st Generation Deradicalization Programs***

Deradicalization programs were developed in response to the September 2001 attacks in the United States by Al-Qaeda and October 2002 bombings in Indonesia by Jammeh Islamia (JI). The programs were launched in Southeast Asia and the Middle East as part of a soft counter-terrorism approach. Yemen launched its program (Committee for Dialogue) in 2002, Indonesia in 2003, Singapore (Religious Rehabilitation Group) in 2003, and Saudi Arabia in 2004 (Cilluffo, Cardash & Khor 2014). These programs were incorporated in the prison systems of the aforementioned countries initially, but later segregated since the risk of radicalization inside prisons was escalating. A three-pronged approach was adopted that aimed to a) break an individual's physical commitment with an organization, b) reconstructing the individual's ideology, and c) a pragmatic plan for the individual's re-entry into the society. Pakistan's deradicalization programs reflect significant similarities with the Saudi Deradicalization Model. However, Pakistan's

deradicalization programs have been tailored per the country's needs and resources.

An individual's reintegration may vary as the cause of incarceration is silent to reintegration. A criminal's reintegration into society varies significantly from that of a violent extremist enthralled by radical views. Reintegration of criminal offenders includes their access to employment, consistent support system, secure environment, fulfilment of basic needs, a care system, and a vision to look forward to in life (Chan, 2018). The aforementioned factors are also fundamental in the reintegration of a militant; however, a militant's reintegration is more complex. Different violent militant organizations have complex structures encompassing criminal activities too, but their members qualify as combatants too and cannot be categorized as common criminals. A militant's reintegration includes repairing personal and social ties, moderate religious and worldly viewpoints, reconstructing social modalities since the reintroduction of members of the militant's former life may risk recidivism. Also, the attitude of the social infrastructure towards a reintegrated militant differs drastically from that of a common criminal.

***From De-radicalization to Reintegration: A Softer Approach to CVE***

Deradicalization programs are implemented through different modules around the world. Cultural and traditional factors along with resources steer the design of the modules of different deradicalization programs. Since the working of different deradicalization programs is beyond the scholarship of the research, therefore, comprehensive details of the programs would not be included.

Country	Counselling	Education	Family	Finance	Society	Religious	Online
Malaysia	/	/	/	/	/	/	
Indonesia	/		/	/	/		
Singapore	/	/	/			/	
Yemen	/				/	/	
Saudi Arabia	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Germany	/		/				

**Table 1.1.** Comparative Global Deradicalization Programs in Selected Countries (Aslam & Abu Bakar 2020)

Table 1.1 illustrates deradicalization programs of different countries, where they have incorporated different modules.

Counselling	Education	Family	Finance	Society	Religious	Online	Vocational Training
/	/	/	/		/		/

**Table 1.2.** Deradicalization Programs in Swat

The tables above illustrate different areas that the deradicalization programs have been incorporated as modules.

- Counselling: includes the psychological assessment and counselling of a beneficiary.
- Education: includes both formal and technical education of beneficiaries focusing on the development of skills.
- Family: focuses on the assessment and counselling of the beneficiary's family member to identify and eliminate radical tendencies in family members followed by training of post-release care of the beneficiary.
- Finance: providing beneficiaries with financial assistance for living expenditures and assistance in setting up financial income sources.
- Society: social training of societies and communities for acceptance and interaction with beneficiaries after reintegration.
- Religious counselling: deconstructing misinterpreted concepts and extremist viewpoints of beneficiaries to assist them to adopt tolerant and moderate religious and worldly viewpoints.
- Online platform: identification of online radicalization sources, deconstruction of misinterpreted religious ideologies over online platforms, and spreading awareness to beneficiaries and the mass public about online radicalization strategies and sources.
- Vocational training: Providing beneficiaries with technical and vocational skill training that could be applied by the beneficiary post-release as an income-generating source.

Pakistan's deradicalization model while exhibiting similarities with that of Saudi Arabia unfortunately lacks resources that the Saudi model has at its disposal. Therefore, it has been crafted under the means available. While the deradicalization process itself requires dedicated allocation of resources, the post-care of beneficiaries after reintegration being an extensive process requires continual allocation of capital. The post-care reintegration model of Saudi Arabia includes initial financial assistance for living expenditures, searching for suitable jobs for the reintegrated individual, secondary counselling, and even finding spouses for the reintegrated individual. post-release monitoring of a reintegrated individual is also part of the post-release process. Pakistan's deradicalization model, implemented in Swat is not as advance as the Saudi model due to limited resources. Limited financial assistance to the beneficiary is provided upon reintegration, moreover, individuals with no access to financial resources nor having anyone to rely upon are prioritized. However, financial assistance is not the only parameter that the post-care process must be assessed by. The living conditions of a reintegrated individual, mental and physical health, barriers to family, societal and communal repair of relations, personal security, and measures to prevent recidivism, are among the parameters to assess the reintegration process in Swat valley.

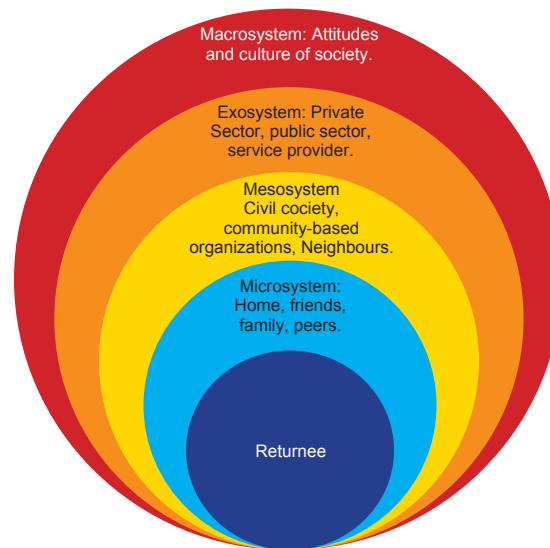
#### ***Reintegration and Community Resilience***

Before proceeding to explain the relation between reintegration and community resilience, defining a community is crucial. The definition of a community is context-specific since it is dependent on conditions like social, economic, political, and cultural aspects. International Organization for Migration (2019) defines community as: “a number of persons, who regularly interact with one another within a specific geographical territory, and tend to share common values, beliefs, and attitudes.”

To further elaborate on the relation of community and reintegration, the Ecosystem Approach would be introduced. The ecosystem approach emphasizes the role of the system of actors in a reintegrated individual's environment and how it may either play a supporting role or cause hindrances to the reintegration process (International Organization for Migration 2019). This only magnifies the role of a community in the reintegration process.

**Fig.1.1:** Reintegrated Individual's Ecosystem  
(International Organization for Migration 2019)

Fig1.1. illustrates the systems of actors that a reintegrated individual interacts with upon reintegration. There is a direct correlation between reintegration and community. Furthermore, it is important to define a community's resilience. While there is no single agreed-upon definition of community resilience, a generalized definition would be: “a measure of the sustained ability of a community to utilize available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations.”<sup>1</sup>



Though there is no single definition of community resilience, the study finds nine core elements which are common in literature. These are: local knowledge, community networks and relationships, communication, health, governance and leadership, resources, economic investments, preparedness, and mental outlook (Patel, Rogers, Amlot & Rubin 2017). The ‘adverse situations’ mentioned in the definition entail situations of natural disasters (earthquake, floods, hurricanes), limited and full-scale

<sup>1</sup> Definition by RAND Corporation, <https://www.rand.org/topics/community-resilience.html>

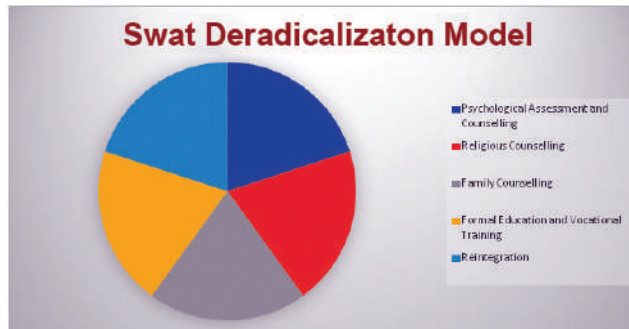
wars, insurgencies, terrorism, and violent extremism. Since the study focuses on community resilience to violent extremism in Swat valley, therefore, community resilience to post-conflict structures in Swat to radicalization and violent extremism would be discussed.

### ***Swat Deradicalization Model and Reintegration***

The Swat deradicalization model is based on five modules, i.e. i) Psychological Assessment and Counselling, ii) Religious Counselling, iii) Family Counselling, iv) Vocational Training, and v) Formal Education. The first module that the beneficiary of deradicalization program is exposed to is the psychological module.

**Figure 1.2:** The figure shows five different modules of Swat deradicalization model.

Through a series of one-to-one session with a therapist, the beneficiary's inclination towards militancy, supporting factors in inclination, ideological orientation and behavioural evaluation is assessed. The families



of the beneficiaries are also included in the therapeutic sessions. The family counselling module assesses the families of beneficiaries to identify any factors that could have negative implications on the beneficiaries. The family members are also trained on their interaction with the beneficiary in the initial period of integration. Through the psychological module, the beneficiary's religious standing, perspective on religion, and Jihad are also identified. These religious misconceptions are then addressed in the religious counselling module where through weekly religious sermons misinterpreted religious concepts are explained by religious clerics. The religious clerics also induce tolerant and moderate religious viewpoints in the beneficiaries, while providing civic education, "to help them transform their old lives, to assist them to lead meaningful lives" (Nisar-ul-Haq, personal communication 18 August 2021). Along with cognitive transformation, the beneficiaries are also provided with formal education and vocational training. Since the beneficiaries of the Sabaoon programs were juveniles and young adults, they were provided with formal education up to 12th Grade (F.Sc, F.A). The beneficiaries of Mishal programs were adults, who were provided with vocational training. Vocational training was provided in honey farming, carpentry, tailoring, wood designing, carpet making, and handicrafts. The idea behind the vocational training was

that to provide beneficiaries a certain skillset upon reintegration so that they might finance their living and refrain themselves from exploring any illegal means of income (Azam & Fatima 2017).

After completing the aforementioned modules, the next step for the beneficiary is reintegration into society under a controlled environment. In the initial phase of reintegration, the individual undergoes monitoring. It mainly includes the individual's report to local police on a weekly, fortnightly, or monthly basis, restrictions on traveling. After a certain period of time, when the reintegrated individual is allowed to travel, a formal application requesting permission followed by a travel plan is submitted with the local police station.

#### ***Community Resilience to Violent Extremism***

This section provides a more detailed account of community resilience that would help formulate a model for community resilience to violent extremism in Swat. Community resilience in relevance to the scope of the study would be discussed in the light of the literature available. The concepts of strong social bonds against violence and prevention of violence have been central to debates for long now. The Social Control Theory suggests that strong bonds between families, societies, and communities are cardinal in the face of violence and its prevention. These strong bonds further channel social norms and the motivation to abide by these norms (Hirschi 1969). These channelized norms further construct community resilience. Similarly, an examination of different violent extremists in the United States found the commonality of weak social and communal bonds that existed due to marginalization over different grounds (ethnic, racial, etc.) (Doosje, Loseman & Bos 2013). On the current situation of the reintegrated individuals in Swat community, Bacha (personal communication 20 June 2021) said:

While the reintegrated individuals may be continuing to lead their lives, they are aware of the negative and unwelcoming attitudes of most community members.

These negative attitudes attribute to the reintegrated individuals being left out, resultantly weakening social bonds. Ellis & Abdi 2017 focus on a community's existing social relations and connections, and how these existing relations are central to a community's resilience to violent extremism. They appraise the enhancement of existing social connections in a community and identify and eliminate the risk factors that may damage and eventually diminish these connections. Among the risk factors to social connection in Swat case, the disapproval of the reintegrated individuals may be of concern. Regarding disapproval of the reintegrated individuals, Sahaab (personal communication, 20 June 2021) said:

One of the reintegrated individuals in our community, after securing loans, opened his own restaurant. People refer to it as Taliban's Restaurant. People do not go there and discourage others to visit the restaurant since they do not accept him as part of their community so far. As the business is not running well, so the man

is thinking to close it.

In the US and Canada, studies conducted to explore the Somali immigrants' inclination towards violence also highlight the impact of social bonds. Through a sample of 465 Somali immigrants, it was identified that the participants with close social bonds within their respective communities were less open to violence and violent extremism (Ellis et al. 2016). Furthermore, Ellis & Abdi (2017) identified three social connections that they deemed critical for community resilience to violent extremism. These are illustrated in Table.1.3.

<b>Social Connections that Contribute to Community Resilience</b>	<b>Risk factors for Violent Extremism Addressed by Social Bonds</b>	<b>Examples of How Communities can Promote Resilience</b>
Bonds: sense of belonging and connection with others who are similar	Weak social identity, searching for belonging and meaningful identity	Support for ethnic-based community organizations promoting community self-help
Bridging: sense of belonging and connection with people who are dissimilar in important ways	Social marginalization, lack of identification with or attachment to nation	Community-wide/school-based antibullying/youth mentoring programming
Linking: connections and equal partnership across vertical power differentials, e.g., government and communities	Lack of trust, lack of collaboration and equal access to resources, systems that lack the knowledge to serve/engage communities	Establishing advisory boards or multidisciplinary team with community membership

**Table.1.3:** Types of social connection and how they relate to community resilience to VE

Table.1.3 illustrates social connections contributing to community resilience, risk factors, and examples of how resilience can be promoted by communities. Norris et al. (2008) proposed a model for community resilience to disasters highlighted four key capacities: i) Information and Communication, ii) Economic Development, iii) Community Competence, and iv) Social Capital.. While all four capacities serve a purpose in community resilience, the latter capacities of community competence and social capital garner the most relevance to community resilience to violent extremism. Porte (1998) defined social capital as “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures.” Key dimensions in social capital in reducing risk to violent extremism include: trust of belongingness

within one's community that elevates the sense of community, sense of attachment to one's community, and civic engagement with institutions (Norris et al. 2008). On civic engagement with institutions, Khwarzakhela (personal communication, 20 June 2021) said:

They [authorities] want us to be fine with every decision they make and every policy that they draft. They are ignorant and unaware of the implications it would have on the common people. If policies are being implemented on us, we do have a right to be part of the process.

Pfefferbaum, Pfefferbaum & Van Horn 2015) suggest that building social capital and strengthening social connections is central to strengthening community resilience. They also suggest the engagement of diverse community members in communal activities, especially marginalized facets of the community, and building partnerships. However, the reintegrated individuals in Swat may not have been readily accepted and therefore remain marginalized. A respondent expressed concern over the reintegrated individuals "turning invisible" in the community because of exclusion and the concern of their recidivism if they are not accepted as part of the community. While social connections may not be the only contributors to community resilience, they are critical capacities to consider, since structural and political contexts may either affect or shape the aforesaid social connections. Moreover, a community's resilience can be determined by their community competence, which is the ability of the effective collaboration of the members of a community to accomplish goals. This collaboration in competent communities is spread over different power differentials of the community to include and engage all members including less represented and marginalized members (Norris et al. 2008).

The study also identifies the gaps in reconciliation efforts, resulting in the marginalization of reintegrated individuals from communal and social activities. While the negative and unwelcoming attitudes of some community members may be understandable due to losses and grievances, reconciliatory efforts among the two parties are fundamental. While assessing the drivers of the conflict in Swat, a category of deprived individuals was identified who joined the ranks of militancy for the attainment of power, sense of inclusion in a progressive movement, sense of accomplishment and achievement, improving their living conditions through incentives from the militants, and elevating their social status.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Religious militancy that shaped the conflict in Swat valley along with radicalization and violent extremism in its aftermath gave birth to an array of diverse social,

communal, and economic issues. These issues are mainly encountered by the reintegrated individuals. The study identifies these underlying issues: the reintegrated individual's marginalization, exclusion from communal activities, limited arrangement of secondary rehabilitation, no legal coverage resulting in unwarranted arrests, delayed legal procedures, and their possible identity crisis. Since the study is equally concerned about analysing community resilience to violent extremism in Swat, therefore policy options recommended are in relevance to strengthening community resilience in Swat. Key elements extracted from literature for the conceptualization of a model included; Building Partnerships, Confidence Building Measures, Community Competence, and Social Capital.

Following policy measures are suggested to build and strengthen community resilience in Swat.

- ***Building Partnerships Among Community Members***

The reintegrated individuals of Swat are facing various social, political and economic issues. The completion of their deradicalization process and reintegration into society shows that they have been deemed fit to re-join the society. However, in some subsets of the community, the reintegrated individuals still haven't been accepted. Efforts for reconciliation, backed with pragmatic inclusiveness would increase the community competence. Strengthening community competence would further elevate the ability of the members to achieve shared goals. But the pre-requisite requires partnerships between community members, and reintegrated individuals so that the former might invite the latter to participate in their communal and social activities. Building partnerships among community members would strengthen social bonds, which have a direct relation with community resilience.

- ***Community Members as Stakeholders***

When the community members are not treated as equal stakeholders in either decision-making or policy-making, it adversely affects community resilience. It has a direct impact on the linking of social connections that contribute to community resilience. The reintegrated individuals and the local populace should be seen and treated as equal stakeholders in communal activities, policy-making, and decision-making to increase community competence.

- ***Averting Identity Crisis***

The reintegrated individuals in some subsets of the community are marginalized. that has compelled them to re-evaluate their position in the community. The marginalization and segregation of reintegrated individuals from the community would eventually create an identity crisis where they would question their standing in the society. The identity crisis can be averted by inviting reintegrated individuals in the communal and societal activities.

- ***Secondary Measures of Assistance***

For some reintegrated individuals, return to normalcy is a long process. The aforementioned challenges may affect the physical and mental health of the reintegrated individuals. Although the Swat model includes secondary rehabilitation and assistance, field research indicates that the secondary measures are not much effective since they are not operating in full capacities. Furthermore, since no free legal counsel is provided, the reintegrated individuals at times were arrested without any warrants. Legal counsel for the reintegrated individuals for safeguarding their rights should be introduced as a measure for their assistance. Secondary measures need to be realized and operationalized for their mental health.

- ***Community Education***

Some of the community members, who are reluctant to accept the reintegrated individuals, are ignorant of the concept of reconciliation. There is a need to educate community on reconciliation and its application. by organizing dialogues and seminars through different platforms in schools, colleges, universities, public halls, etc.

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09

## Community-based Rehabilitation Program for Ex-Combatants: Policy Options for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Dr Ilam Khan

### ABSTRACT

Rehabilitation of ex-combatants is a process in which they pass through a process to make themselves able to re-assimilate in the society. Rehabilitation in Swat district was started soon after the conflict ended in 2009 through an army operation. The program is considered successful; however it is criticized for the least involvement of community in the process, therefore, there are hurdles for ex-combatants to re-settle in community after undergoing their rehabilitation process. After in-depth interviews with the community members, ex-combatants, government officers and other stakeholders, this study suggests a community-based rehabilitation where 'restorative-jarga' will take the responsibility of rehabilitation of ex-combatants with the support of government.

**Keywords:** Ex-combatants, jarga, post-conflict reintegration, Swat, community, rehabilitation

### INTRODUCTION

Post-conflict rehabilitation and reintegration is a process which helps in building peace in post-conflict situations. A rehabilitation program is the direct determinant of prolonged and sustainable peace. In many districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the security forces launched rehabilitation and reintegration programs for ex-combatants, who underwent violent conflicts. One such example of it can be witnessed in Swat district. Though it is considered a successful practice, the program has been criticized by the community as well as the ex-combatants, who were rehabilitated. After a long experience with the community and engagements with the rehabilitated persons, it is learnt that community was ignored in the process of rehabilitation instead of giving it the responsibility to look after the reintegrated ex-combatants. The community is not ready to accept them considering them the enemies, who destroyed their livelihood. On the contrary, rehabilitated people complained of being stigmatized by the community which created hurdles in their assimilation and reintegration process. The cases of recidivism have also been surfaced. During discussions with the ex-combatants, it was learnt that they were not fully rehabilitated, as their desire for fighting was still there. For instance,

many of them said that they were wrong while fighting against Pakistan Army, and now after rehabilitation, they will fight along Pakistan Army.

The issue of reintegration is of paramount importance in post-conflict situation in Swat and other areas where the conflict has now ended. If the ex-combatants are not properly rehabilitated, they could be a potential threat to peace in the region and easily manipulated by the anti-state actors.

The study suggests a community-based rehabilitation program in which the community members should be the prime stakeholders. The locale under study already follows an established local tradition known as Pakhtunwali<sup>1</sup>. The norms of Pakhtunwali could be borrowed for the rehabilitation program. In restorative justice, the community, offender and victim sit together to control the damage done by the offender. Similarly, a 'restorative-jarga' could be set up in every village for the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants.

The members of this restorative-jarga will be the community, ex-combatants and government officials, who will find the best possible reintegration options for ex-combatants. In this regard, this study aims to highlight the policy options how to engage community in the rehabilitation program for ex-combatants in a Pakhtun society

## METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the vivid picture of rehabilitation program of ex-combatants, this study uses ethnographic tools (such as direct observations). To collect primary data from the field, around 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted through an open-ended questionnaire.

The target population was divided into four strata; first strata is composed of the members, who have been associated with the phenomenon of rehabilitation (i.e. mainly the government officials); second strata is concerned with the local population residing in Swat district, or in other words, the local population who has firsthand information about the rehabilitation program; third strata comprises the academicians, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other humanitarian bodies which were engaged in one way or another with the rehabilitation program in the district; and fourth strata is the ex-combatants, who have been rehabilitated and reintegrated in the society.

The above-mentioned respondent categories are followed through snowball 'sampling' method. The sample is a convenient random sample as residents in post-conflict areas are reluctant to give interview to any outsider. The study will also rely on the local sources in order to establish the respondents' network.

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<sup>1</sup> Pakhtunwali is an informal code which is embedded in every aspect of Pakhtun's life, i.e from war and peace to grief and happiness.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Why a Community Based Approach?*

In contemporary times, the international community and humanitarian organizations stress the need for bottom-up or community-based approaches as the best possible way to resolve societal issues, ranging from health to business, to peace and conflict (Khasnabis et al. 2010). Rehabilitation of ex-combatants through a civilian agency or community-based approach is a new idea. However, the critics are of the view that this is a risky job and only military can deal with ex-militants in either way (Col. Javed, personal communication, June 02, 2021). However, some available literature disclosed that such programs which are run by military have not yielded positive results, as witnessed in Afghanistan (Bahman, Zuhra & Torjesen 2012) and Democratic Republic of Congo (Shepherd 2012). In opposition to this, where civilians are participating in the process of rehabilitation, these programs are relatively more successful as witnessed in Columbian (Sanin & Pena 2012) and Lankan (Dharmawardhane 2013) rehabilitation programs respectively. It does not mean that military is incapable of doing rehabilitation, but military imparts trainings in dedicated cells where the community is having close to zero access. In fact, military is having its own perspective of engagement, and thus, examines the rehabilitation process in its own perspective. Rehabilitation is not possible at a fenced area where military surrounds the facility with guns to normalize the extremists' narrative (Mehran Wazir, personal communication, 25 May 2021). In such an environment, only the direction of engagement of ex-combatants can be changed; for example, an ex-combatant said:

“I was wrong while fighting against Pakistan army, now, after rehabilitation I will fight along Pakistan Army.” (Ibraheem, personal communication, 23 June 2021).

This reveals that the ex-combatants still love for fighting. The securitized environment isolates ex-combatants from the community which further widens the gap between ex-combatants and community. Consequently, the grievances of community remain unaddressed. To measure the success and failure of any rehabilitation program, it will be crucial to see how an ex-combatant is reintegrated into society. Reintegration is possible when community accepts the ex-combatants return to the community. Such situations support the need for community involvement in rehabilitation programs.

For any intervention the nature of society is ought to be understood in advance. The community engagement is likely to be successful in societies like Swat where traditions are respected and followed. In such societies the community-based rehabilitation could be managed with less resources and expenditure.

It is important to note that the community could be involved only in rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants, who belong to that specific community and not

the non-state actors who are outsiders to the land. In Swat district, majority of the militants were from Swat where community involvement becomes imperative and without involvement the outcome cannot be fruitful. Here the role of the state cannot be ignored too where the state should follow the policy of 'winning hearts and minds' of the community. The strategy of winning hearts and minds was always adopted by the militants for the purpose of strengthening their roots in the society (Spalek 2012). The responsibility of the state is to break the bond developed between community and militants as in post-conflict scenario there is always militants' sympathizers and ideological followers in the community.

The debate is highly concerned that whether attention for rehabilitation should be given to ex-combatants only who pose threat to the security sector or to the community or both at a time (Oluwaniyi 2018). Priority should be given to both ex-combatants and community rehabilitation, as it is imperative for peace building (Oluwaniyi, 2018). This is because both ex-combatants and community suffer equally, therefore their grievances need to be addressed simultaneously. An example of World Bank (2018) project in Central African Republic is focusing on rehabilitation of ex-combatants only which argues for positive results in reducing threat to the overall security of the community. However, states that give priority to ex-combatants over community are likely to end up with a failed reintegration since the community gets disenchanted by the privileges given to the ex-combatants. If the community is not taken into confidence, it harbors misgiving towards the acceptance of the ex-combatants back into the society; meanwhile less attention is given to the overall society, social issues, and revitalization of social capital (Oluwaniyi 2018).

The states that give priority to (individual) ex-combatants over community result in the formation of gangs and criminal groups, who get involved in drug trafficking, crimes, weapons and kidnapping as witnessed in Congo, Liberia and Angola (Oluwaniyi 2018). Oluwaniyi further reveals that in societies where both (individual) ex-combatants and community provided rehabilitation, the outcome was fruitful; for example, in Niger Delta, where the ex-combatants underwent a proper rehabilitation process.

The community should not only merely help in rehabilitation, but should be empowered enough to conduct the process of rehabilitation and reintegration by itself. In this regard, giving ownership to the community in rehabilitation and reintegration will also pave the way for overall de-radicalization. Leaderach (1997) is of the views that prospects for durable peace lie in local culture. In a similar connotation, Barry Buzan and Waever (2003) emphasize upon conflict management through indigenous ways. They add that majority of the conflicts arise from the community, therefore, the referred object should be the people and not the state. The United Nations (2006) also encourages resolving conflicts through indigenous ways and argues that people are not satisfied by the formal judiciary and justice system rather the demand for traditional

practices is increasing. In this way, restorative justice offers some welcoming means of resolving disputes and other post-conflict issues.

The importance of community engagement was realized by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (GoKP), with the note that Pakhtun society has an established traditional system known as *Pakhtunwali*, which could be utilized for different purposes. This strategy could save the government time and resources, and minimize the job of police and judiciary. In this regard, police has introduced Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) program in the province at community level. In this chain, Parent-Teacher Council (PTC), also known as school management committee has been set up. PTC is an elected body comprising of eight members. Five of the eight are elected from the vicinity of school, two are nominated by the elected five and the eighth one is the school principal, who usually serves as secretary of the council (Nasir et al. 2013). The purpose behind highlighting the above examples was to demonstrate that the notion of citizen participation is already prevailing in Pakhtunkhwa province in many programs other than rehabilitation and reintegration.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### *Civilian Engagement by Employing the Theory of Restorative Justice in the Context of Swat*

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a transitional justice system where offender and victim sit together in the presence of community to sort out the damage done by the offender. In RJ, both parties' consent is necessary to bring them on the table of negotiations (Gabbay 2005). The negotiations process is called 'restorative process' and upon conclusion may include restitution, reparation, and community services for the offender. The purpose behind community services is to fulfil both the individual and community's responsibility for achieving reintegration of the victim and offender (United Nations 2006).

#### *Pakhtunwali and Restorative Justice*

*Pakhtunwali* is the way of life of Pakhtuns. It is an umbrella term, covering all codes and values of Pakhtun culture in it. The most relevant codes of *Pakhtunwali* with restorative justice are: *Jarga*, *Nanawati*, *Kushunda*, and *Lashkar*. *Jarga* is the most prominent and popular code of *Pakhtunwali* which is a community-based fact-finding method that acts like a modern jury. It intervenes to halt violence, identify the issues, resolve them through mediation or arbitration, and further works for reconciliation and rehabilitation (Gohar 2014).

*Jarga* is of different types but the principles of all *Jargas* are same. Like RJ, *Jarga* also seeks the consent of parties and the parties participate in the proceedings. *Jarga*

listens the claims of the parties and give decision in the light of Pakhtunwali. A similar process is also adopted in RJ where the parties sit together, put forward their claims and then community decide accordingly. The difference between *Jarga* and RJ lies in their jurisdictions; the former simultaneously gives arbitration and mediation while in RJ, the parties come to an agreement.

#### ***Formation of Restorative Jarga***

Traditionally, *Jarga* constitutes elders (Maliks) of the vicinity or tribe(s). While constituting a *Jarga* under the RJ, members are taken from the respective village (community), ex-combatant's nuclear family, a religious figure (Mullah/Imam) of that village, Nazim (or any elected member of the local government), a police officer from the respective police station and victim's nuclear family. This body may be given a modern name of 'committee' or a traditional name *Jarga*, or as described by John P. Leaderach (1997) the 'peace constituency'. However, it will be fruitful if given a contextual name, i.e. 'restorative *Jarga*'.

Upon arrest, an ex-combatant will be presented in front of this body which will investigate the intensity of his involvement in militancy, what type of crime he has committed against a specific family, community or the state. On the basis of investigation, this body will decide in which category (black, grey or white) an ex-combatant fall. This will be a reliable categorization as this restorative *Jarga* will comprise closed relatives of the ex-combatant, who knows his level of involvement in the conflict. The final jurisdiction of this body will consist of reparation, restitution, community service or compensation (Anjum, personal communication, 20 June 2021).

#### **THE PROCEEDING *JARGA***

Usually, *Jarga* decision includes Nanawati or Kushunda (only in case of rehabilitation) in the following manner.

**Nanawati:** Nanawati or pleading for apology is a j decision of *Jarga* that the offender will seek apology for his crime. The offender is bound to follow *Jarga* proceedings and will plead for an apology. Then it depends on victims to accept or reject his apology, traditionally it is accepted. There are many ways to seek apology or to go for Nanawati. First, the offender along with community members and elders visits victims' house, or, secondly, the offender enters the grave when a member of victim's family dies and stay there till his apology accepted. Third, offender sends women to victim's house for seeking apology which is an extreme in Pakhtun society. If none of these adopted methods work and the offender is not forgiven then *Jarga* decide to pay money or land as restitution (Mehran Wazir, May 25, 2021). However, if victim agrees to give apology then a public eating is arranged for entire community and all the expenses are on offender. Through this way the victim and offender reconciliation and reintegration

is done in indigenous way. Apology is one of the principles of restorative justice and, thus, Nanawati can be employed rehabilitation and reintegration in a formal way.

Following is the story of Nanawati from South Waziristan:

*There was a fight between some youngsters and Taliban in which some Taliban were beaten. Taliban came and took many youngsters of the tribe in their custody for nearly three days and maltreated them. The tribe was agitated and wanted to take Badal (revenge) from Taliban. Other tribes of the area realized that the conflict may escalate to a more violent scale. They intervened and formed a Jarga of 120 members. The jurisdiction of Jarga was that Taliban will follow the code of Nanawati (will seek apology for their act) and will compensate 12 buffalos to the victims. As a result, the conflict was resolved and the victims were rehabilitated (Mebran Wazir, 25 May, 2021).*

**Kushunda:** Kushunda means ‘the expelled one’ in which the offender is asked to leave the community for a specific time or for entire life. The rest of the family remains in community peacefully. If an offender lives with his family, this means that family is supporting him. In this case the victim considers whole family his enemy and the conflict might escalate.

Following is a story from Bajaur district:

*Nisar Khan is a Kushunda living in Islamabad since 2012. There was a 70-year old enmity between two tribes in district Bajaur. A number of people were killed from both sides. In 2012, Jarga resolved the enmity and decided to make one person of the tribe Kushunda for its offense against the other. Nisar Khan, of the offender’s tribe was made Kushunda to satisfy the victim tribe as its member was killed. Now, Nisar Khan is living in Islamabad, and the tribes are living in peace in Bajaur (Nisar Khan, personal communication, Islamabad, May 08, 2021).*

In Swat and tribal districts, there is a fear of communal conflicts, as a number of ex-combatants were reintegrated into society without involving the community in rehabilitation process and without addressing the grievances of the victims. The victims are silent due to the presence of security forces, but soon the security forces vacate the area, the community or victim will take *badla* (revenge) from the offenders.

**Lashkar:**

Lashkar (civil militia) is a standing body that consists of volunteers from the community which executes the jurisdiction of Jarga. It is very difficult for an offender(s) to violate Jarga’s decision. Jarga represents the entire community, and if its verdict is violated, it means the individual offender or an offending tribe, becomes the enemy of the whole community.

While in restorative-jarga, this standing force can be replaced by the police, as suggested earlier that the body should include a police officer. The police officer will execute the decision taken during restorative-jarga process.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Pakistan, there are heavy losses of lives and properties during the protracted conflicts in different districts. The state is trying to be responsive for which government has assisted, and still assisting the victims. The assistance provided by the international community has been distributed among the victims in different forms. The state should form a 'compensation fund' for restorative jargas which will provide assistance to the victims from that fund. Restorative jarga will also decide and assist the offender in reintegration and will pay restitution on behalf of offender to the victims. The restorative jarga should have a comprehensive policy in which the eligibility for this fund should be clearly mentioned (Fazal Saeed, personal communication, 23 June 2021). The communal conflicts should not be included in this compensation fund since the resources may be scarce. This compensation fund will be used to compensate the social, political and economic losses of the community and offenders (ex-combatants).

Some critics say that restorative justice approach deals with the conflicts among individuals whereas in Swat the conflict lies between state and individuals (Dr Arshad Ali, personal communication, 22 June 2021). Restorative justice, like rehabilitation and reintegration, are also concerned with individuals (ex-combatants) which try to bring them back into the society. The issue with the existing rehabilitation program is that it does not include the community in the process, therefore, is not productive. In restorative jarga, the community will be the major stakeholder and if it allows for an ex-combatant's assimilation, there will be no issue at all. Secondly, in this restorative jarga, the community will perform the job of the state. It will ease the burden on state institutions by addressing grievances of both victim and offender and providing them speedy justice in a less expensive way, which will also help reduce burden on economy.

Some critics are also concerned about security-related challenges, which the community and rehabilitated ex-combatants will have to face. Restorative jarga may be targeted by the militants (Shakirullah, personal communication, 16 June 2021). State support (financial and security) will definitely be required from formation to implementation of restorative jarga and its decisions. Moreover, lashkar or civil militia can also be utilized for providing security to the community as well as for the implementation of jarga decision.

The influence of militants' narratives is always there in post-conflict societies. To counter those narratives, formal and informal dialogues should be initiated to strengthen

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<sup>2</sup> Hujra is a building used as a guest house but is generally known as an institution, a place of social gatherings.

community. Formal dialogues should be supervised by the government through its official representatives while informal dialogues may include informal discussions in hujras<sup>2</sup>, mosques, markets, social gatherings, media, and academia. However, there should special focus in policy that these informal dialogues should counter different extremists' narratives floating in community (Dr. Qibla Ayaz, conference discussion, Islamabad, July 21, 2016). The extremists' narratives have spread through the dominant discourse in society and must be countered through new narratives (or counter narratives). Prisons or rehabilitation centers are not durable solutions; however, community engagement in generating constructive informal dialogues can offer a durable solution to radicalization and extremism.

Moreover, the community engagement and inclusion should be done in different formal and informal ways. The ex-combatants after passing through restorative-jarga process should provide space and participation in friends' informal circles, work, sports, associations and other social networks can provide a good platform for reintegration, reunification and civic participation.

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## Evaluating Pakistan's Criminal Justice System against Violent Extremism

Rana Saifullah Hasan and Dr Naeem Ahmed

### ABSTRACT

This study evaluates Pakistan's Criminal Justice System against violent extremism. It involves scrutinizing the role of investigation, prosecution, providing security to witness and victim as well as other elements of criminal justice, including judicial system. World Justice Project Rule of Law index observes that Pakistan has slipped six-position down to 98th place in terms of criminal justice for the year 2020. Overall, Pakistan remained at number 120 out of 128 countries in the report showing an analysis of variables that include inadequate resources, poor judicial decisions, inadequate alternate dispute resolution, inadequate criminal defence, delayed cases, excessive pre-trial detention, biases against marginalized people, corruption and lack of judicial independence. Low conviction rate in Anti-Terrorism Courts itself speaks of the performance of investigation and prosecution. In many such cases, accused persons involved in heinous offences find acquittal on account of lack of evidence and benefit of doubt. While defense counsel enjoys a decisive leverage to gain an advantage of causing a single dent in the case of prosecution to achieve benefit of doubt, the latter is confined to make the best use of only those material collected by investigation. Resultantly, the rate of acquittal in Anti-Terrorism Courts stands at more than 85%. This speaks volume of our criminal justice system where the cases of terrorism and violent extremism are tried altogether, as neither the law nor courts have identified terrorism as a different phenomenon than extremism. The findings of this study comprehensively discuss the dynamics of investigation, prosecution, policing and anti-terrorism courts to propose substantial policy recommendations.

**Keywords:** Rule of Law, Criminal Justice System, Anti-Terrorism Act 1997, Violent Extremism

### INTRODUCTION

Effective Criminal Justice System is essential for the rule of law. The role of criminal justice system in countering violent extremism is a challenging one. Indeed, the primary objective of counter-extremism strategies must be to prevent drivers of violent extremism and bring them into the court of law for trial. A report by United Nations Office on Drugs

and Crime (UNODC) in 2018, suggests that a forward-looking, preventive criminal justice strategy against violent extremism requires a comprehensive system of substantive offences, investigative powers and techniques and evidentiary rules. Criminal Justice System has three basic components, i.e. Investigation, Prosecution and Courts.

An Effective Criminal Justice System is essential for good governance and indicates rule of law. With respect to the cases of violent extremism, it is unfortunate that the foundation of any case which is laid in the police station setting the law into motion is the First Investigation Report (FIR), which is lodged by a person who is incapable of understanding the scheme of jurisprudence as well as legislation behind the enactment of such law under which accused persons are nominated in the FIR. In many such cases, accused persons are not even nominated correctly in FIR. For example, in case of a mob attacking a place of worship, FIR is lodged against a few identified persons and multiple unknown persons. For instance, in Karak and Rahim Yar Khan worships attack cases, more than 350 and 150 people were nominated In the FIRs respectively. In addition to that, investigation is weak having inadequate expertise to collect material evidence, preserve it and process it. So much so, there are only two forensic laboratories in entire Sindh province, one in Sindh University, Jamshoro and another in University of Karachi, to analyze and process the sophisticated data and forensic evidence. It takes weeks and months to get results. In the case of Muhammad Noman vs. the State and another, reported as 2017 SCMR 560, it has been observed by the Hon'ble court that police had failed to investigate the allegations made by the accused, rather had conducted a one-sided investigation against the accused.

A study highlighted the lack of proper training of investigation officers in the cases of terrorism as a major setback. This study hence argues that when the foundation of any case is not laid properly, it cannot be expected that prosecution can make up for the deficiencies left by the investigation (Research Society of International Law 2018). Similarly, prosecution many a times comes under fire for its performance due to increasing number of acquittals in terrorism cases. Prosecution is also blamed for being politicized and it is not clear, who exactly is responsible behind the failure of criminal justice system. It is also correct to a great extent that prosecution department lacks competence and requires training to plead cases of hardened criminals involved in extremism and terrorism activities. In the same way, judicial system is the main pillar of Criminal Justice System; all the players of criminal justice system must be evaluated and their efficacy should be scrutinized in juxtaposition with the socio-political, cultural, and ethnic dynamics of our society to formulate effective criminal justice regime to combat violent extremism.

#### ***Research Questions***

- (i) How effective is the role of investigation and prosecution in the cases of violent extremism?

- (ii) What are the causes of high acquittal in the cases of violent extremism?
- (iii) What challenges are faced by the courts, investigation, and prosecution in the cases of violent extremism?
- (iv) What is required to be done for an effective Criminal Justice System against violent extremism?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the report on Rule of Law Index published by World Justice Project, the Criminal Justice System constitutes the conventional mechanism to redress grievances and brings action against individuals for offenses against society. An assessment of the delivery of criminal justice should take into consideration the entire system, including police, lawyers, prosecutors, judges, and prison officers. Substantial policy framework to bring the cases of extremism under the net of criminal justice system is never studied and analyzed. Despite the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997 and, subsequently, the creation of 54 anti-terrorism courts, conviction rates in Pakistan continue to be extremely low (Zaidi 2016). Numerous amendments to the law have increased the severity of penalties for terrorism crimes, but little attention has been paid to court administration and case management. Thus, Anti-Terrorism Courts (ATCs) are overloaded with cases. In addition to long delays, procedural errors and antiquated practices plague the investigation and prosecution of terrorism cases; and exacerbating the problem is that numerous special provisions of the ATA are not being applied. (Manzar 2016).

In its country report, the State Department of the United States (2011) observed that in Pakistan the acquittal rate of terror suspects remained 85%. Thereafter, a study conducted by Shah (2016) states that despite so many amendments over the years, the ATA has failed to secure a reasonable conviction rate for terrorists, who continue to slip through the cracks. Iqbal and Shah (2018) observed that high acquittal rate in terrorism-related cases in Pakistan (4% conviction ratio) has been a matter of serious concern. Riddled with the same problems faced by the regular justice system — inadequate funding, understaffing, trial delays, and corruption—ATCs cannot be relied on to ensure that suspected terrorists are served justice (Yousaf 2010). MQM-P leaders are indicted in 21 cases registered under hate speech case charges. MQM-P leaders and others were charged for being facilitators in hate speeches done by MQM founder in August 2016. (Farooq Sattar, Other MQM-P leaders 2021). In the year 2018, Peshawar High Court has set aside a conviction by an anti-terrorism court for attempting to plant an improvised explosive device and ordered his release. The Hon'ble court observed that the evidence on record didn't connect him with the commission of the offence. An anti-terrorism court had convicted him on April 23, 2018, and sentenced him to 10 years rigorous

imprisonment under Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act and Section 5 of the Explosive Substance Act. Hon'ble judges also observed that trial court had overlooked several important points and erred while convicting the appellant despite no concrete evidence was available on record. The Hon'ble Peshawar High Court (PHC) in its judgment in the case of *Abdur Rashid v. Federation of Pakistan* through secretary Ministry of Interior reported as PLD 2019 Peshawar 17 has set aside the conviction of terror suspects convicted by the military courts. The court acquitted the prisoners convicted by military courts on the grounds of admitted illegal detention of the petitioners, recording of confessional statements after five to ten years long illegal detention and that too without following the proper procedure, absence of evidence. More so, as published report suggests, that in reply to a query of the bench regarding delay in recording confessional statements, the deputy attorney general (DAG) admitted that the time was consumed in brainwashing of the petitioners. Hon'ble High Sindh Court has also set aside the conviction of five men in an illegal weapons and explosives case and ordered their release. According to the prosecution, the police had arrested the men after a shootout in the New Karachi Industrial Area and recovered illegal weapons and explosives from their possession. (SHC sets aside 2017).

At another instance, the court had acquitted 20 people of charges that they were part of a lynch mob who burned alive a Christian couple in 2014 for allegedly committing blasphemy. Brick-factory workers Shahzad Masih, 26, and Shama Shahzad, 24, were burned alive in an industrial kiln by a mob in the Punjab. After the attack, it emerged that the couple had been falsely accused. Police arrested scores of villagers in that case. Subsequently, an anti-terrorism court in Lahore in the year 2016 sentenced five men to death and 10 others were given varying jail terms for playing a supportive role in the killings. That court also acquitted 93 suspects in the case. Thereafter, as per the prosecutor of the case namely Abdur Rauf, the court acquitted 20 other suspects who had been indicted in the case at a later stage. (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2018). Angry mob led by local clerics vandalized and set on fire a Hindu temple. The attack took place in Karak district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Witnesses said the area police dispersed the crowd of about 1,000 people, but they had demolished the minority community's worship place. The Hindu temple had previously been attacked and destroyed in 1997, before it was reconstructed in 2015 on orders of Pakistan's Supreme Court. The anti-terrorism court in northeastern city of Lahore acquitted all 42 suspects, who had been indicted in 2016 for their alleged involvement in the lynching after the twin attacks on churches in the city's Youhanabad area. Two of the suspects died in jail custody. The court exonerated the accused persons, including those who passed away, after the victims' families confirmed that both sides have reached an agreement and they had no objection. Recently in the August 2021 Rahim Yar Khan temple attack, Hon'ble Chief Justice Pakistan took suo moto action after the failure of police and administration to

perform and arresting an eight-year-old boy. This reflects the capacity of law-enforcement agencies and also of the public administration and district management officers. The same forms the argument of this study.

The anti-terrorism court acquitted former Sindh home minister, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Mirza, in the Badin rioting case in 2015. Announcing the verdict, the court observed that the prosecution failed to prove the case. The Punjab's 14 Anti-Terrorism Courts had acquitted people facing terrorism charges in 370 cases within the span of 11 months. Acquittals in 255 cases were due to retracting / hostile witness on statements recorded by them earlier before investigation officer. Whereas in rest of the cases, acquittals were made due to lack of evidence or poor investigation. Major causes other than poor prosecution in Pakistan are the absence of professional autonomy, poor training, lack of access to basic data, in effective and old-fashioned investigation, absolutely ineffective witness protection system, political appointments in police and prosecution and unwillingness to deploy scientific sources for investigation, etc. (Hamid 2015).

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is purely qualitative and responses are collected through interviews of important stakeholders including, senior police officers, academicians, researchers on law and justice, practicing advocates of Anti-Terrorism Courts, Hon'ble High Courts and Supreme Court of Pakistan, Presidents of High Court Bar Associations, members of Pakistan Bar Council, human right activists / members civil society, Former Chairman of the Senate, senior journalists and Secretary Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (Annexure A). Interviews are analyzed through recordings and subsequently from transcriptions. However, few of the respondents did not allow recording, however their opinions and views were taken down after seeking their permission.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The study gathered responses from active stakeholders comprehensively to formulate constructive policy recommendations. The respondents belonging from multiple factions of law and justice sector hold a unanimous view when it comes to investigation, including policing, as well as prosecution. There is no accountability of either investigation officer or the prosecutor presenting the case nor there any performance appraisal mechanism. A judgment of Anti-Terrorism Court can be challenged by way of appeal in the Hon'ble High Court and further on in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of Pakistan where a verdict can be maintained, set aside, or modified. But there is no mechanism in place for poor investigation or if prosecution fails to establish a case against hardened terrorist. There is no accountability whatsoever for

investigation and shady prosecution makes things worst resulting in acquittal. There is no monitoring and scrutinizing mechanism over investigation officer submitting charge sheet in the cases where provision of Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 is, prima facie, attracted. Subsequently, prosecution department responsible for forwarding the charge sheet as contemplated under section 173 Cr.PC, that final report to be submitted through public prosecutor, in the court of law has proved to be ineffective. Even if there is no substantial material against the accused person, the prosecution instead of directing I.O to remove defects or simply declining to forward it to the court, rather sends the same for trial. The prosecution in the cases of lack of evidence and malicious proceedings may resort to what has been laid by the Hon'ble High Court of Sindh in its landmark judgment in the case of Muhammad Haroon reported as PLD 2009 KARACHI 120. Failure to observe what has been laid in law and judgments by the superior courts, results in the failure of prosecution at the stage of trial and accused persons find acquittal on the ground of lack of evidence or charges mentioned in FIR are not attracted to the accused. This brings the entire criminal justice system under question. Throughout this time, there is no check and monitoring over the investigation officer, nor on the prosecution services. Low conviction rate itself reflects the performance of Investigation Officers and prosecutors. It is disappointing to observe poor evidence and poor investigation in the cases being tried by Anti-Terrorism Courts. Delay in collecting evidence, washing the site of crime scene, tempering with the statement of witnesses under section 161 Cr. PC, foisting and not properly sealing the case property, inserting irrelevant section of Pakistan Penal Code in final challan, delay in completing formalities for exhumation of dead body to mention a few. So much so, in a high-profile case of Daniel Pearl, the investigation officer did not bother to obtain a post-mortem report. It is also noted in some of the cases, while narrating the incident, the complainant either himself or upon the insistence of author of FIR creates a story in a way which invokes the provisions of ATA 1997. Complainant also implicates more persons than just a perpetrator, including the ones with whom he holds personal grudge. This takes his case far away from the reality and merit. The entire case then stands on a false pretense which falls like a house of cards at the time trial. This fact is supported by the respondents in media sector while discussing the role of media. Respondents from media sector disclosed that in the press conferences the version of the complainant or victim is different from the one in FIR and then altered at the time of submission of the charge sheet in the court. This is mainly to give hype to the case through media to exert pressure on judicial system and also to implicate more persons from the locality against whom the complainant might hold personal enmity. One such hyped famous case was of Rinkle Kumari and subsequently the Mian Mithu saga that followed in 2012.

Besides, the respondents believe that defence counsel normally don't work to find out contradictions as the complainant and police have already damaged their own

case to the extent that it will turn out to be a case of acquittal eventually. Training of investigation office has been time and again questioned. The issue remains there because normally FIR is lodged by head mohrar and investigation is conducted by inspector. How can we expect a head mohrar to understand the jurisprudence behind the legislation and interpretation thereof; once the basis of any criminal trial which is FIR, setting a law into motion is wrongly laid, the entire structure of investigation is destined to collapse. Most importantly, neither our legislation nor our courts have distinguished terrorism from extremism. As far as interpretation of the statute is concerned, Hon'ble Justice (ret'd.) Asif Saeed Khan Khosa has settled a much-needed yardstick to quantify any act of violence whether qualifying to be tried under ATA 1997 or other scheduled offences in the landmark judgment in the case of Ghulam Hussain and others v. The State etc. in Criminal Appeals No. 95 and 96 of 2019, Civil Appeal No. 10-L of 2017 and Criminal Appeal No. 63 of 2013. However, extremism, as the study finds can be cultural or linguistic as well and the present law has nothing to curtail such instances where basis of extremism is laid through literature, academic or religious or through cultural and on the basis of language.

Moreover, in the cases of violent extremism such as setting fire on places of religious worship and practices, forced conversion, etc., neither investigation officer nor prosecutor is sensitized or trained to handle the mob pressure, then pressure of feudal lords and thereafter when the case is taken to the court of law. Until then, the entire complexion of the case is changed. Inclusion of military courts in our criminal justice system was an open admission by parliament through a constitutional amendment that our courts are not effective against terrorism neither in handing over convictions to hardened criminals nor putting them on trial. The result was even worst in the form of more than 200 judgments of military courts being set aside by Peshawar High Court on account of either extra-judicial confessions or confessions after a period of five and six months in detention and also due to not extending an opportunity to defend his case, violating Article 10-A of the Constitution. Reports show that many occasions, Hon'ble High Courts of different provinces changed the sentence or simply set aside the convictions given by the Anti-Terrorism Courts as well. This genuinely speaks of a serious and certain issue with the existing criminal justice system and maximum blame is put on investigation and prosecution services. There is no criteria on which Investigation Officer is appointed. Witness Protection Act is not followed at all. How can witness is protected for six months and for years when trial is not concluded within the span in which witness can be practically given a protection. Term "benefit of doubt" should be scrutinized. This term has extended maximum relief to the accused and due to minute short comings of the prosecution the benefit of doubt is always extended to the accused. It is said that the accused is a favorite or blue-eyed of law, but the courts have ignored that exercising this notion in the heinous cases of terrorism and extremism, the victim

has become a neglected child of law and prosecution has become a disadvantaged child of law. In many cases, it is observed that since the cases attracting sections of ATA 1997 are non-compoundable, the complainant or witnesses have started a practice of retracting from their statements. Prosecution prays to the court to declare them hostile and this result in the acquittal too. In addition, the standard of acquittal as discussed earlier also is too below par. Prosecution is totally incapable of dealing with such cases. At the same time, prosecution cannot do anything if the investigation is weak and corrupt, i.e, as weak as non-existent, as stated by one of the respondents. Element and instances of bribery during investigation is not unfamiliar. Besides being incompetent and incapable, investigation officers are said to be corrupt too. It is observed that the person, may it be a complainant or anyone who registers the FIR comes under massive difficulty. So much so, he is pressurized to either retract from his statement or refuse to identify the accused person. In both ways, the outcome is acquittal. In the cases of attacks on temples and churches, investigation officer is so untrained that he is unable to collect evidence properly. Name of abettors are normally deliberately not included in the FIR upon the insistence of some clerics and feudal lords. Then no forensic evidence is collected by IO. More so, where investigation officer tries to destroy the cases, he will not let the statement of witness before the magistrate under section 164 Cr. PC be recorded. It is not possible that in case of a mob attacking any religious place, there was no eyewitness, but the statement of witness is normally tempered. A lot of learned judges are not familiar with the difference between motive and intent. These two words possess the power to change the entire case because after the judgment authored by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Asif Saeed Khosa, it has to be ascertained that what was the motive and what was the intent behind the offence to arrive at the point whether the offence is an act of terrorism or not. It is an absolutely a specialized area demanding unique set of expertise from learned judges of ATC. In addition to that, fake encounter cases are also rampant in our society. Terms "half fried" and "full fried" is almost a normal practice by so-called encounter specialist in police department. Half fired refers to a situation where a gunshot is fired on arm and leg that leaves person injured only whereas, full fried is a person who has been killed in an encounter. In such cases, ATC has handed over punishments to police officials as well which leaves serious questions on the integrity of police department and serious violation of human rights. One such case was decided by Hon'ble XVIth Anti-Terrorism Court, Karachi in the year 2021 in the case of *The State v. ASI Tariq Khan* in which a police officer was sentenced over fake encounter. Unfortunately, in the cases of terrorism and violent extremism, a civil society is denied all important locus standi to file an appeal and contest / plead the matter in the court of law. One such instance happened in the matter of *Shahzaib Murder case*. State refused to proceed the matter and for obvious reasons was not willing to keep the case alive any longer, Pakistani civil society had moved Constitution Petition Leave to Appeal

(CPLA) against the verdict of the High Court of Sindh, which was then turned into suo-moto by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Another interesting factor which has surfaced by way of this study is that the prosecution is absolutely politicized. Prosecutors are appointed by provincial governments and hence paid and promoted by their respective provincial governments. Uzair Baloch who has been allegedly called as a "Hit Man" working for a political party, is on a winning spree with recent acquittal in 15th case of all other cases against him and tried under Anti-Terrorism Courts. While the courts have observed the reason of acquittal, primarily, being "lack of evidence". It has also come on record that investigation officer at times don't even visit the site of incident and prepare such formalities at police station. There is zero cooperation between investigation and prosecution. While there should have been an ideal coordination between these two but their non-support to each other also leads to acquittal.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study proposes multi-dimensional practical measures. It has now been cleared that serious and determined efforts are required to be taken. Hence, same are mentioned as follows:

- There should be a stern accountability/monitoring and performance appraisal mechanism for every investigation officer which should be updated on daily basis and maintained on a dashboard and the same should be available on provincial police website.
- Name of each and every investigation officer deputed to conduct an investigation should be mentioned against the number of cases in which he is doing investigation, already completed and outcome of the investigation. And that should be subject to reward or departmental displeasure/inquiry.
- Multiple respondents proposed heavy fines and penalties on investigation for destroying evidence collected in the cases of terrorism.
- Similarly, the same procedure is required to be adopted for prosecution services. When prosecutor knows that the case is not fit for conviction and bears loopholes and lacunas, the same should either be removed before submitting it in the court of law or simply declined. Still, if the same are left, this clearly shows the incompetence of the prosecutor and he should be transferred to ordinary trial courts or somewhere else but not retained in Anti-Terrorism Courts. Name of each and every prosecutor deputed to conduct an investigation should be mentioned against the number of cases categorically in terms of pending cases and disposed of cases and the dashboard to be maintained on the website of provincial prosecutor general.
- Most importantly, in the cases of violent extremism such as setting fire on

places of religious worship and practices, forced conversion, etc, investigation officers and prosecutors should be sensitized and properly trained to handle the mob pressure, pressure of feudal lords, religious factions etc. Exclusive appointments of investigation officers and prosecutors should be made in the cases of violent extremism and they should not be given any other case of scheduled offences.

- Investigation officer in the cases of violent extremism should not be below the rank of ASP.
- Third pillar of the criminal justice system is judicial system. It is proposed that in case of judgment of the Anti-Terrorism Court is being set aside, for the reason other than lack of evidence or failure of prosecution to establish its case beyond the shadow of doubt, such as failure in proper application of law and interpretation of the statute by the court, departmental capacity building measures may be devised for learned judicial officers.
- The courts too have to analyze the distinction between an act of extremism and an act of terrorism. This will have a significant impact on “sentencing” of the accused persons.
- It is strongly proposed that in every case of violent extremism, the investigation team should be comprised of a special team formed by DIG police himself and headed by SSP.
- Exclusive and comprehensive training of police, prosecutors and learned judges of Anti-Terrorism Courts is imperative on the lines of UNODC and best practices in the world.
- The interpretation of the term “benefit of doubt” has to be curtailed and made clear by the courts. It is expected from the Hon’ble courts if this term is quantified and interpreted, it will buffer the ratio of acquittal, rather misuse of this term which extends advantage to the accused at the same time the victim becomes disadvantaged. In such cases, courts have to raise the standard for acquittal.
- If any witness or a complainant deliberately extends favor to the accused in the form of retracting from his previous statement or giving false evidence, he should be dealt with iron hands.
- Learned judges need to have progressive and modern approaches. For that learned judges before their appointments in ATC should be identified before their nominations and trained exclusively for certain years before handing over charge to them. This is the time when judicial response against terrorism and violent extremism should be taken as a serious concern than ever before.
- Prosecution department may be included in the investigation process formally and then the performance appraisal system is deployed to ascertain

the collective performance. Task of the prosecutor should not be started from the time when final report under section 173 Cr.PC is brought to him by investigation process. Instead, he should also be formally and actively taking part in collecting evidence and doing other substantial tasks to obtain material necessary to produce in the court, and to remove the lacunas in the investigation.

- For the cases of violent extremism and terrorism, the entire criminal jurisprudence needs to be restructured. Courts have to develop or re-interpret the law of sentencing. ATA 1997 holds a very minimal scope in terms of punishment. In some cases, its either acquittal or straight away death penalty. Therefore, courts are normally moved towards acquittal even if a minor contradiction is created ignoring all other substantial material evidence against the accused person. Judges should be given all important discretion to decide the span of punishment in the cases tried by Anti-Terrorism Courts. This will also rightly improve the rate of conviction.
- For every fake encounter in which ATC has announced a verdict against police, not only the SHO concerned but also the entire chain of command till DIG police should be scrutinized and inquired. Thereafter the departmental dismissal of guilty officials should be intimidated to the court.
- In cases of terrorism and violent extremism, civil society should be given a locus standi, i.e. opportunity to lodge FIR and contest the case on merits especially when the state refuses or does not want to register FIR and proceed the matter.
- The prosecution department should be de-politicized. It must not come under any political influence. This is somehow near to impossible in the current socio-political and ethnic dynamics of the country especially Karachi city. However, unless the prosecution is not free from political prejudices, it will remain ineffective in the cases of terrorism and violent extremism. That's why it has been proposed to have a stern performance appraisal and monitoring mechanism for prosecution department.
- In the cases of violent extremism, media must play a responsible role as to who should be allowed to hold press conference and people should not be allowed in the media and legal heirs of the victim to give public statement in a case which is sub judice in the court of law until its verdict is announced. Certain information should be verified also before letting anyone do the press conference.
- Appointments of public prosecutors should be apolitical, i.e. through proper commission having members from judiciary, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP), Prosecution Department and Police. Their preliminary test

should be conducted and only the qualifying candidates should be allowed to appear for written test.

- Since the study proposes effective criminal justice system against violent extremism for resilient communities, hence it is strongly proposed to have a community policing model in some areas as pilot study and then comprehensive mass scale community policing should be introduced to deal with such cases. However, the investigation officer should not be less than ASP and SSP to supervise the entire investigation.
- Civil administration can also be included in investigation process. This by no means amount to influencing the investigation process but to assist the entire investigation team to extract the truth and bring culprits to book in accordance with law.
- Court and case management systems should be evaluated and monitored as there are many issues with the case management system. There should not be any adjournment granted by learned judges, in the cases of violent extremism and terrorism.
- Cases may be fixed on daily basis until disposal and instead of long cause lists, one case at a time should be decided saving time of witnesses and allowing prosecution to contest the case exclusively before taking up another case.
- Witnesses are normally returned on the ground of adjournment, added to their agony especially those appearing in court leaving their daily wages. Witness should not be returned, therefore, only summoned when the matter is ripe to lead their evidence.

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### ANNEXURE A

1.	Justice (Retd) Rehmat Hussain Jaffery (Former Judge, Hon'ble Supreme Court of Pakistan)
2.	Barrister Salahuddin Ahmed, President, Sindh High Court Bar Association, Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan
3.	Barrister Abid S. Zuberi, Member of Pakistan Bar Council, Former President Sindh High Court Bar Association, Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan
4.	Ch. Ishtiaq Ahmad, Former Additional Attorney-General-I, Punjab, Member of Pakistan Bar Council, Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan
5.	Mr Faisal Siddiqui, Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan
6.	Mr Salahuddin Gandapur, Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan
7.	Dr Riaz Sheikh, Dean, Department of Social Sciences, SZABIST, Karachi
8.	Dr Shabbana Fayyaz, Assistant Professor, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.
9.	Dr Farhan Hanif Siddiqui, Director & Associate Prof., Department of School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad
10.	Dr Shafqat Munir, Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute. Islamabad
11.	Dr Rasool Bux Raees, Professor of Political Science, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lahore University of Management Sciences
12.	Dr Shoaib Suddle, former IG Sindh, Visiting Criminal Justice Expert, United Nations, Asia.
13.	Dr Raheem Awan, Secretary, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan
14.	Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, President, PILDAT
15.	Javed Akhtar, District Public Prosecutor, Karachi East
16.	Imdad Somroo, The News, Karachi
17.	Riaz Ahmed, Correspondent, BBC
18.	Abdul Qadir Lashari, Correspondent, KTN, Sindh
19.	Imran Abbas, ATC Prosecutor

20.	Nasir Durrani, ATC Prosecutor
21.	Mr Iqbal Khwaja – President, Thatta Bar Association
22.	Nadeem Baig, Inspector, Station House Officer, Gharo, Thatta
23.	Shoaib Sahab – Shahrukh – Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan
24.	Mr Jibran Nasir, Advocate High Court, Social Activist
25.	Kamila Hayat, Joint Director, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan



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