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## Recidivism and De-radicalization Programs in Pakistan: An Analysis of the Case Study of Swat

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### Abstract

*Swat was in 2021 struck by an unprecedented revival of terrorism with a trail of events. It started with the Taliban abducting two security agents, incidence of school van with young students being targeted, several assaults on security officers, and explosive device (IED) murdering a peace committee member and guards. The kidnapping of staff of international cellular company and the bombing of Counter-terrorism department headquarters were further indications of the revised terrorism in Swat. Swat conflict started in 2007 and it involved local and foreign militants trying to create extremist religious ideologies based on the Afghan Taliban. The government of Pakistan reacted to it through kinetic and non-kinetic counter-terrorism actions that reduced the physical dangers of militancy significantly. Nevertheless, radical opinions still remained. Nonetheless, the re-emergence of violence shows that people who went through rehabilitation and reintegration are relapsing. This paper looks at the reintegration performance on reintegrated individuals in Swat, which is a post-conflict area. Twenty-five former militants and fifteen program related respondents were interviewed and this provided information on recidivism factors. The results indicate that recidivism is caused by the ineffective reintegration into society and gaps in the de-radicalization programs. Reintegrated persons are not trained on how to get back into the society and the society finds it difficult to accommodate them back. As a result, the lives of isolated ex-militants are not easy, thereby creating a condition to perpetuate recidivism with a possible calamitous outcome in the already fragile state of security.*

**Keywords:** Recidivism, De-Radicalization, Rehabilitation, Stigmatization

### Introduction

War as a phenomenon has undergone a great change on the post-cold war period. From full-scale wars to irregular warfare, this trend has been dominated by insurgencies and civil wars. Since the end of Cold War era, the intra-state wars have increased, resulting in global security problems (Hippler, n.d.). In the wake of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), Pakistan has been facing the same challenge of intrastate conflicts. In retaliation to Pakistan's cooperation with the US-led Global WOT, a domestic terrorist organization Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerged and rose to significance. To counter TTP, from 2007 to 2009, various counter-terrorist operations were conducted. These operations proved successful in eliminating the physical presence of TTP. However, radicalized individuals emerged and then remained a persistent and deeply rooted problem in Pakistan. To tackle the ideological presence of the militants, the civilian government launched various non-kinetic operations, including de-radicalization, governance reforms, and economic development initiatives (Shahid Afridi 2016). After a decade of intermittent peace in the post-conflict Swat, the incidents of terrorism experienced a sudden yet an unexpected resurgence in the year 2021, following the revival of TTP in the wake of post-US withdrawal. The resurgence of terrorism in Swat unfolded with a

series of events starting from the targeted shootings on a school van which was followed by the abduction of two officers of the security forces by the Taliban (Hoodboy, 2023). These incidents were followed by the waves of target killings of the prominent members of the society including the police officials and the members of the village defense committee (Yusufzai, 2023). In April 2023, headquarter of the Counter-terrorism department was blown apart by explosives (Khan, 2023). These incidents indicate a considerable presence of TTP militants in Swat that poses serious inquiry about the post-conflict rehabilitation measures in Swat.

The De-Radicalization Programs in Swat, run by the government have yielded successful results. However, there is a visible critique on some of its policies and implementation methods. The complex scenario of extremism and violence embedded in society and its structures cannot be easily erased and obliterated. Lack of community participation, evaluation and surveillance processes and post-release initiatives among others make de-radicalization programs ineffective, which causes adverse effects on the individuals and amplifies the chances of recidivism. Such personal instances of recidivism might have additional disastrous consequences within the near future. Pakistan is one of the cases where recidivism has occurred on various occasions, which have not been considered by the researchers and thus deserve critical evaluation of the entire methodological activities of the rehabilitation and de-radicalization process.

The research gap is a significant gap in research due to the lack of studies on recidivism, which should be addressed deeply. A critical look at the pre-release and post-release stages of individuals (beneficiaries) is not only valuable to the existing knowledge, but it also provides a basis of future research. The study will identify the loopholes in the current systems, identify the factors that will result in recidivism, and, therefore, improve the rehabilitation and de-radicalization process.

The paper will fill these gaps by examining factors that push rehabilitees into violence and hence breeding ground of recidivism cases. The main question of the proposed research is to find out what causes recidivism and how it leads to the relapse of ex-militants into violent behaviors. The article is divided into three important parts. The first part provides the exposition of the conceptual framework behind the idea of recidivism. Thereafter, the second part presents an introduction of recidivism in a particular setting in Swat, Pakistan. Lastly, the conclusion segment will provide a detailed study of the causes of recidivism. The analysis is based on empirical research, which illuminates on major patterns and trends of the identified recidivist individuals in the Swat region.

### **Recidivism – A Conceptual Understanding**

The word recidivism is derived from the Latin word 'recidere', which means to 'fall back' and symbolizes a string of failures (Maltz, 1984). The former militant, when re-integrated into society and ends up failing to meet the expectations of society, take up arms, or in any way start assisting the violent organizations back, escaping the arrest and end up failing to utilize the rehabilitation programs he or she went through during their incarceration while continuing their criminal career, falls in the category of recidivism (Jawaid, n.d.). Recidivism as a phenomenon is closely associated with criminology and is synonymous with a notion of a repetitive pattern of violent or harmful behavior. There is no generally agreed definition or formal criteria for an individual being considered a recidivist. However, countries, according to their criminal justice system, define and classify individuals as a recidivist. Recidivism, defined by the US National Institute of Justice, is a "person's relapse into criminal behavior after undergoing sanctions or intervention for a previous crime (National Institute of Justice, 2022)." In the criminal justice system, recidivism is defined as "the reversion of an individual to criminal behavior after they are convicted of a prior offense, sentenced, and (presumably) corrected (Maltz, 1984)."

It is to be mentioned here that recidivism is not an isolated and detached phenomenon. Rather, it is closely linked to a series of interrelated processes that a former militant undergoes. These interrelated processes include: Disengagement, De-radicalization, Rehabilitation and Re-integration. Radicalized

or extremist individuals often exit their organization at some stage where their exit phenomenon is complicated to understand. Either they quit it voluntarily or sometimes involuntarily, influenced by some underlying factors. Disengagement means “refraining from violence and withdrawing from a radical organization,” while De-radicalization is defined as the “process of abandoning an extremist worldview and concluding that it is not acceptable to use violence to effect social change” (Rabasa, 2011). After that, rehabilitation follows, and it is an important step towards the reintegration of an individual back to the society. Effective de-radicalization process is a successive procedure that ought to be followed by an individual being subjected to the process which includes mainstream education, vocational training, psychosocial intervention, social support and religious counseling. After successfully attending the De-radicalization program, the beneficiaries are then released and ready to be reintegrated into the mainstream society.

To be more general, ex-militants can encounter five problems in a post-conflict environment. These challenges according to Ozerdem (Ozerdem, 2012) are: a) Deactivating militants and demilitarizing the society will be important in ensuring that the rehabilitated are not forced back into the hands of the militants. b) De-weaponization of the society is a crucial process. The environment after conflicts has the possibility of a proliferation of small arms that might be used in stoking up future conflicts. The Afghan War transformed Swat into a highly militarized region in which small arms were flooded to be used by locals in combating the Soviet Union. c) It is important to guarantee the total rehabilitation of all ex-combats. The combatant who has not been rehabilitated may still have the inclinations that may result in the unwanted behavior. It is imperative to respond to their complaints to deter the reformation of old organizations. d) It is necessary to provide both employment opportunities or financial assistance to the rehabilitation beneficiaries. A rehabilitee may be vulnerable to the temptation of going back to militancy without a stable income. It is necessary to have community-wide participation in the rehabilitation process. e) To ensure successful rehabilitation, community involvement is important. A rehabilitated person might have to endure social stigma in the absence of the support of the community, which might motivate them to rejoin their previous group.

In the context of terrorism, recidivism is generally defined as “an individual's relapse to activities related to terrorism after going through a formal period of sanction or detention”. In a broader sense, when an individual is disengaged from terrorism and upon reintegration, they join the old terrorist movement back and are considered a recidivist. More specifically, it refers to “the re-involvement of an individual after a period of disengagement” (Altier et al., 2012). Sylvene See, a counter-terrorism expert, defines recidivism as: “The process where a disengaged terrorist either reengages with the terrorist organization or becomes re-radicalized” (See, 2018). The reversed trajectory of an individual relapsing back can be manifested by returning to violent activities. However, calculating the rate of recidivism remains a challenging task because of the lack of a tracking system or not having national database convictions programs. The concept of recidivism is used to assess the success and failure of rehabilitation programs upon the re-integration of the rehabilitated individuals; countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Egypt, the US, and Britain use recidivism as an assessment tool for their rehabilitation process. This phenomenon is also often used by countries for their crime management strategies.

Sarah Canna and Jeff Day argue that the recidivism rates can be determined by evaluating de-radicalization programs (Canna & Day, 2020). However, there may also be many other indicators that make it difficult for researchers to gauge recidivism rates. When an individual is disengaged, upon re-integration into society followed by a process of de-radicalization, many factors come into play that becomes the catalyst for their recidivism. As discussed earlier, the de-radicalization process may assist the individual in forgoing violence and help them deconstruct their extremist ideology. However, the chances of recidivism are determined upon the reintegration of the individual. An individual's successful re-integration into society would minimize the chances of recidivism, but if the individual faces problems upon re-integration; it will catalyze the chances of recidivism (Jawaid,

2017). The de-radicalization program of Swat runs different modules for the rehabilitation of individuals. However, once the individual graduates from the center, they are faced with different challenges for which there is no proper mechanism that could assess the individual's status upon reintegration (Naseer, Amin, & Maroof, 2019). This shows that it is an essential component that creates hurdles and impacts the effectiveness of the de-radicalization programs of Swat (F. Zafar, personal interview, September 9, 2022). With many loopholes in the rehabilitation process, there have been many cases of recidivism that have occurred in the previous decade in Swat, which is much of a concern. There is a need for policy formulation and additional research to address this issue. While assessing the aforementioned definitions, recidivism in the context of the de-radicalization programs in Swat can be defined as "a detrimental behavioral pattern by a former militant upon their reintegration, who commit the same offenses they did prior to their rehabilitation".

### **A Critical Appraisal of Factors of Recidivism in Swat (Pakistan)**

The re-integration of the individuals who passes through the whole process of de-radicalization in society bears great importance. This post-release phase determines the status of the de-radicalization process. During this phase, the involvement of both civil society and law enforcement agencies holds a pivotal role in influencing its outcome. The successful reintegration of an individual stands as evidence of the de-radicalization process's effectiveness. Nevertheless, shortcomings in the reintegration process amplify the risk of recidivism.

This paper looks into the intricacies of case studies involving recidivists identified during fieldwork. It elucidates the factors found to potentially trigger recidivism among these individuals. These factors encompass societal isolation due to non-acceptance, the impact of labeling and stigmatization, financial constraints, family dynamics, unemployment, societal pressures, detrimental social networks, animosity towards society, discriminatory surroundings, and undue scrutiny. Through insights gleaned from fieldwork interviews, the identified factors are subjected to rigorous analysis.

### **Understanding Recidivism in the Context of Swat (Pakistan)**

Combatants are typically the aggrieved citizens of a state. Moreover, their frustration is caused by relative deprivation coupled with social and political inequalities fueled by the misinterpretation of religion, which ultimately leads to aggression. Post-conflict rehabilitation is critical for reintegrating these aggrieved individuals into society in order to build a productive society. Identifying the grievances that prompted these individuals to take up arms and working to alleviate those grievances through improved rehabilitation processes holds greater significance. Nilsson (Nilsson, 2005) pointed out four fundamental challenges that a post-conflict society faces, which is also evident in the case of Swat (Pakistan): First, the former militants are usually considered as a threat to post-conflict societies, Second, the society does not welcome the former militants as they have faced atrocities and heinous crimes at the hands of these former militants, Third, the socially weak or marginalized former militants will need special attention in the post-conflict reintegrated environment, and the fourth challenge is the labeling and social stigmatization that these individuals face.

As noted earlier, the de-radicalization program in Swat has successfully graduated hundreds of individuals (ex-militants). However, during the field visits, it was observed that many cases of recidivism that had occurred during the post-rehabilitation period in Swat. In the context of Swat, two phases could be discern when examining the phenomenon of recidivism. One is the pre-release period, i.e., when an individual goes through the de-radicalization process. The other is the post-release period, i.e., when an individual is released and is reintegrated into society. To measure recidivism, most studies follow up a period of six months to three years. The evaluation of the de-radicalization programs (pre-release period) is often taken as a way to gauge the reasons for the re-engagement of the individual. In an interview with a lecturer at the Mishal de-radicalization center (Naveed. ul. Haq, personal interview, September 9, 2022), he argued that "the modules implemented in de-radicalization programs sometimes do not yield the expected utility and sometimes flops to de-

radicalize the individuals. Such as the modules on religious and psychological counseling and assessment. Since these are not the exact sciences, therefore it cannot guarantee to alter the behavior of the individuals”. The evaluation of de-radicalization programs is not the only measure to determine recidivism in released individuals. It is important to note that the individuals sometimes show disguised compliance and often project through a deceptive strategy their redemption by the process of de-radicalization. Therefore an individual, through disguised compliance, may successfully deceive the authorities while not being appropriately de-radicalized.

According to a Member of the Village Defense Committee (personal interview, September 12, 2022), “In the post-release period of the individual rehabilitees, the whole process of de-radicalization that the individual has been through is tested upon. The individuals are exposed to a new environment where they start a new life. This transition from the rehabilitation center to the outside environment is also challenging. They are reintegrated into a society they had rejected in the past and, in some cases, merge with their family members who have suffered a lot because of the activities in which these individuals were involved. They do not have an immediate source of making income and are often subject to hate and stigmatization in society. In addition, they are being monitored by the authorities and are frequently called upon for any misshape associated with terrorism if it occurs”. They are also closely watched by the officials of Counter Terrorism Department (CTD); the primary goal of this post-release monitoring is to assess the behavior of these individuals.

Amongst these factors and others mentioned above, certain elements can occasionally act as catalysts, driving these individuals back into violent engagement. Dr. Ilam Khan (I. Khan, personal interview, December 20, 2022), a specialist in Swat's rehabilitation process, underscores the significance of post-graduation support, stating, “Upon completion, these graduates need specific financial and material assistance to initiate their own ventures. Regrettably, no plan was established to counteract the stigmatization faced by ex-militants. They found themselves unwelcome in social circles and similar contexts. Consequently, a notable number of these graduates opted to rejoin their previous affiliations.

These and other factors, were pointed out during the fieldwork to have worked as a catalyst for the identified recidivists in their re-engagement in violence back. For some, the reasons were financial issues; for others, it was societal unacceptance, and so on. These cases, upon their occurrence, yielded some cataclysmic repercussions in the past and could do damage to society in the future too. Upon the field visits, many experts believed that a major portion of these beneficiaries are not adequately de-radicalized and are waiting for an opportunity to re-engage in the violence. One of the members of the VDC (Hilal, personal interview, September 15, 2022) argues that “although most of these beneficiaries are successfully rehabilitated, there are individuals who are not committing any terrorist act practically, but still their ideological orientation is of considerable concern, which could drive them towards inflicting damage to the society in the foreseeable future.” Other interviewee (F. Zafar, personal interview, September 9, 2022) added that “their example is just like that of a snake, if you keep them alive they will wait for the opportunity to bite you.” Furthermore, a journalist (F. Khaliq, personal interview, September 20, 2022) who has been working on this process was of the view that “there is an issue with the categorization (The categories formulated were Jet-Black for high-level cadre, Black for mid-level cadre, Grey for low-level cadre, and White for facilitators) of the individuals, he added that are some cases where those who were involved in heinous crimes and were of Jet-Black category were released by declaring them clear and on the contrary some individuals who were from the white category but still suffering while being labelled as hard-core militants”.

### **Methodology: Sample and Data Collection**

From the perspective of de-radicalization processes and its outcomes, Swat is an appealing case study. It provides good data and assist findings about the factors of recidivism. More so, the case of post-conflict Swat emphasizes the investigation of the rehabilitation process. This notion reinforces further exploration to understand how effective were the de-radicalization and reintegration processes? Moreover, what factors contribute to the recidivism of former militants? In order to understand these

research questions and objectives, a qualitative research design using chain-referral method was used. The tools employed during the fieldwork consist of Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, and personal observation. The sample formulated for the research comprised four types of stakeholders; the relatives and affiliates of the individual (ex-combatant); Academics and Experts, Members of the village defense committees, and officials from the law enforcement agencies (see table 1). The questions asked from the respondents were mainly focused on inquiring general information about the strategies of government regarding the rehabilitation process and the after-care process of the beneficiaries of the DREPs, respondent's views about the factors behind Recidivism, their views about the role of society in assimilation and reintegration of the individuals (ex-combatants); general questions regarding the De-radicalization programs; Community's behavior towards the individuals (ex-combatant) and other similar questions. With the help of this, the author was able to dig deeper into the loopholes and issues in the processes of De-radicalization and reintegration and that how certain factors lead the beneficiaries of the de-radicalization programs to the pathway of extremism again. Formulating a questionnaire was not an easy task for the author as the questions had to be formulated according to the nature of the respondents. It is difficult for the author to ask each and every question formulated in the pre-made questionnaire. However, the author made an adaptive questionnaire which allowed him to make certain changes according to the strata made for the interviews and several other considerations, including the social norms, aspect of security, and the sensitivity of the topic.

**Table 1.** Stratified Interviewee Sample

| Sample     |                                               |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Strata (a) | Relatives and Affiliates of the Beneficiaries |
| Strata (b) | Academics and Experts                         |
| Strata (c) | Members of the Village Defence Committee      |
| Strata (d) | Officials of the Law enforcement agencies     |

The researcher collected and relied on primary data for analysis in this paper. The author's preference for investigating the present status of recidivated individuals (ex-militants) led to the collection of primary data. Nevertheless, the current global research on recidivism has contributed to the development of the knowledge of the author as it is a helpful secondary source. Qualitative research techniques were used as the main source of data collection because it included the use of semi-structured interviews which were conducted in an exploratory way. Selection of respondents was made easy by the use of snowball sampling technique. Data analysis in the study was done using descriptive and interpretative methods. The ethics issue was considered the most important aspect to guarantee the safety and confidentiality of respondents. These were their voluntary participation, the right to refuse to answer questions, note-reviewing during an interview, and anonymity provision in case of willingness. In order to overcome this issue, pseudo names (R1, R2, R3, etc.) were assigned to the respondents. All the respondents were briefed on the nature, scope and objective of the study before the interviews. Verbal consent was directly taken prior to each interview and subsequent written consent was taken after the interview. Thematic analysis was used to further analyze data that was collected via interviews. The data of the interviews were studied and interpreted with the help of common ideas, themes, and patterns.

### Study Limitations

This research study had a few limitations. The use of primary research was done in places where recidivism cases are commonly experienced, which resulted to security, transportation, and financial constraints. There were also limitations by the access to respondents and rehabilitation centers. Another issue was the respondent bias which could result in positive responses. To curb this, fieldwork and interviews were carried out in large numbers. In addition, fieldwork was under increased restrictions because of the abrupt reappearance of the TTP that deteriorated the security situation. Respondents became more reserved, avoiding open discussions on the topic. Given these

limitations, the interview sample was adjusted based on security and participant willingness. The original four-stratum sample was adapted, with emphasis on more reliable and engaged participants, while approaching relatives and affiliates of ex-militants was curtailed due to safety concerns, except for a single case study.

## Results and Analysis

### Factors of Recidivism in Swat

Following are the identified factors of recidivism that play a crucial role in the re-engagement of the beneficiaries in their former violent activities. These factors are determined by examining five case studies who are given pseudonyms R1, R2, R3, R4 and R5.

**Table 2.** Description of identified Recidivists

| Name | Age | Associated labels/Stigma                       | Profession      | Financial Status     | Duration in Custody | Rehabilitation Centre | Current status                                 |
|------|-----|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| R1   | 27  | Talib                                          | Mining          | Middle income family | 4 Years             | Mishal                | Recidivated and Arrested in 2016               |
| R2   | 22  | Tasleem Bibi (the one who surrendered - woman) | Unemployed      | Poor                 | 2 and half Years    | Mishal                | Escaped – involved in terrorist activities     |
| R3   | 20  | Khudkush (suicide bomber)                      | Student         | Poor                 | 3 Years             | Sabaoon               | Executed in Intelligence based operation (IBO) |
| R4   | 28  | Salender (surrender)                           | Watchman        | poor                 | 2 years             | Mishal                | Escaped to Afghanistan                         |
| R5   | 25  | Talib                                          | Scrap Collector | Poor                 | 3 Years             | Mishal                | Recidivated and Arrested in 2017               |

### Societal Exclusion and Relegation

The social isolation and social unacceptance of a former militant is a major hindrance in the reintegration process. It was found in the field research that the primary factor that leads to the individuals' recidivism is that society is not ready to accept these individuals. In an interview with Fazal Khaliq (F. Khaliq, personal interview, September 2022), a journalist who has been actively working on this process, argued that “the Pukhtoon cultural code of life prioritizes the value of revenge, which is strongly upheld and not easily compromised. As a result, individuals who have previously caused harm to society may face challenges upon their return due to the societal unacceptability of their past actions. This may manifest in various forms of discrimination, including hate and rejection from society”. The role of society in the reintegration process of the former militants is very important. The foremost ground for the unwelcoming and unaccepting attitude of some members of society was their inability to forgive and forget. The reintegrated individuals, each in their capacity, were either directly or indirectly involved with atrocities and outrageous acts against family members of these members of the society. While those who did lose loved ones to the former militants still remained bitter over the horrific atmosphere that the Taliban had created.

The fraction of the society was unwelcoming to the reintegrated individuals because of certain reasons. However, the government pardoned these individuals, and society had a significant role in their successful reintegration. One of the interviewees (Shabir Ahmed, personal interview, September 13, 2022) said that “Society's biggest fault is that it does not accept them because they fear them; he

further added that society should accept these individuals, as the government has pardoned them for the mistakes they committed in the past; otherwise, these individuals would re-engage back in the violence.” On the other hand in some cases, even the family members of the individuals do not welcome them, as one of the interviewees (Graduate of Mishal Program, personal interview, September 22, 2022) recalled,

“Following my release, I found myself in an entirely new environment where I experienced profound feelings of isolation and estrangement from my family and community. Despite having undergone punishment for my past mistakes, I was treated as a stranger and avoided by others, leaving me without any social support or means of confiding in others”.

It is also noteworthy that no proper initiative was taken to train the individuals of the society to Heal their Traumas that would resultantly generate the inability to forgive the former militants. The approach to reconciliation given by Johan Galtung includes the Apology and Forgive step, where both parties to the conflict address the issue (Galtung, John, 1969). In the case of Swat, this approach would be viable. The victims of the conflict address their grievances, while the assailants acknowledge their actions and the hurt they have caused the victims. Similarly, other approaches to reconciliation are present, but none were instrumentalized in the post-conflict period in Swat.

The society is not prepared and not trained for the reintegrated individuals. It reacted naturally, a blend of mixed attitudes. Some of them were adjusted back into society by the welcoming members and were granted another chance. However, most of these individuals face social isolation and unacceptance that fuels the cases of recidivism. Therefore, societal training is important as it assists the reintegrated individuals, eases possible societal pressures, and reduces the chances of recidivism. A respondent (M.Zeb, Personal interview, September 24, 2022) added,

“It is the foremost responsibility of the society to accept them and help them to be rehabilitated and reintegrated back. There should be awareness-raising campaigns by the government regarding this aspect. Media also should play an important role in this aspect. It will help build awareness in the society, and it, in turn, might enable society to accept these individuals (ex-militants)”.

This exclusion from the community hampers the individual’s ability to reintegrate into society and often opts for violence again. The role of community in this regard bears great importance. Therefore there is a need of capacity building and awareness raising campaigns that could pave a way for strong social bonds and connections. It would create a positive and inclusive environment, thereby increasing the chances of successful reintegration of former militants.

### **Labelling and Stigmatization**

Another major factor that fuels recidivism is the labeling and stigmatization that the individual (former militant) faces upon reintegration. The continued labeling of these individuals by society, and even the government institution, continue to be a significant hindrance to the process of reintegration. In almost every interview, the impacts of stigmatization on the re-integrated individuals paving the way for recidivism were highlighted. The beneficiaries of the de-radicalization program are known to everyone in society. As mentioned earlier, these are the marginalized section of the community. Various labels are associated with these individuals by society, which leads them towards aggression and frustration. Words such as “Khudkush,” which means suicide bomber, “Salender,” which connotes the meaning of being surrendered, “Saleety,” which means ‘the one tagged with,’ “Tasleem bibi” used for the people who surrendered themselves to the LEAs, for females who initially donated something for the cause of Talibanization, the words such as “daa staaso kaali di kam che os dazegi” means these are the jewels that you donated, now coming back in the shape of bombings.

Among the identified case studies, in the case of R3, one of the contributing factors for his relapse that almost every respondent believed was the social stigmatization and the association of the title Khudkush (Pashto word meaning Suicide Bomber) with R3’s name. Upon reintegration, he was titled

R3 Khudkush. During an interview, a former schoolmate of R3 revealed the popularization of his name in the community. He gave the example of R3 being an excellent cricketer; everyone would refer to him as Khudkush. An interviewee (A. Ali, personal interview, September 16, 2022) revealed “that one of his own friends, who is a social activist and a poet, was once inspired by the radicalization before military operations, who was later declared cleared by the state, is still facing stigmatization. The interviewee referred to the recent peace protest of the time in which his friend was an active participant, and still, people were calling him with the name “Talib,” which means militant. Even though the government pardoned him, but still faced stigmatization; he might also re-engage back, he added”. Almost all the identified case studies faced stigmatization in society, among other factors, which played a significant role in their recidivism. This critical factor is also highlighted in criminal recidivism, which says that the community's attitude towards the ex-offenders and the labeling and stigmatization they face after their release increases the tendency of the ex-offenders to re-offend (Ahmed, 2015, p. 23).

### **Unemployment and Monetary Complications**

For the individual's successful reintegration, the vocational training modules have been formulated. The individuals learn various skills in this phase so that they can utilize them upon their reintegration. Since this module lacks funding and resources and is subject to limitations, it creates hurdles for individuals during the post-release period. It is also noteworthy to mention that the government provides very little or no financial assistance to the individuals upon their reintegration. These individuals, as discussed above, face social isolation and exclusion coupled with stigmatization, which makes it difficult for them to secure employment. An official (N. Khan, personal interview, September 15, 2022) revealed that, “the reintegration of these individuals cannot be successfully done, unless and until they are provided with business opportunities or with Jobs, and it is clear that majority of the people who joined militancy were poor and the only motive was to acquire money and power.”

In addition, employment provides a structural routine, a sense of security, and an expanded social network that enhances an individual's self-esteem and improves their psychological health, ultimately making them productive community members. Employment provides more than the income necessary to support adequate material conditions. It also provides structure and routine while filling time. It provides opportunities to expand one's social network to include other productive members of society. In addition, employment can contribute to enhanced self-esteem and other psychological health (Graffam et al.,).

The identified recidivist case studies also indicate that all the individuals who re-engaged were unemployed and earning very low wages for survival. R1 was unemployed, R2 used to work in mining, and R5 was a scrap collector, with the exception of R4, who was a watchman. One of the graduates of the Mishal program (Graduate of Mishal Program, personal interview, September 22, 2022) recalled, while citing his story that “during my vocational training period, I learnt skills related to electric repairing. Upon my reintegration, I faced stigmatization and hatred in society, which became a hindrance to opening my shop. I utilized 10,000 Rs given by the government and started selling scrap materials for survival”. It appears plausible that individuals from a weak financial background, having low literacy, facing discrimination in society and unemployment, or any of the above issues would find it difficult to find alternatives other than re-engaging back into violence upon release.

### **Familial Psychoanalytical Framework**

In Swat's de-radicalization modules, one of the important modules is psychoanalytical counseling and treatment of the families. The aim is to work on the families of the former militants, so as they are psychologically healed and resultantly they would better assist and equip the former militants to survive in normal social life the after their release. However, this module in practice has shortcomings and is ineffective in Swat (F. Khaliq, personal interview, September 20, 2022). In some cases, the

radical family of the individuals motivates them to join the militancy. During the de-radicalization process, the family members who play a role in motivating the individuals to join the movement, especially the female members of their families, go unseen. Thus “when the individuals join the society back, among other challenges, they are merged with the same family members who had once motivated the individual for radicalization. They, in turn, start motivating them again” (Sawab. Khan, personal interview, September 09, 2022). One of the contributing factors in the recidivism of R3 included the role of the family that pressured him into returning to his former position in the Taliban. It was highlighted during an interview by the interviewee that R3’s mother pressured him to return to his former position with the militants. R3, as confirmed by his former schoolfellows, teacher, and local elders, belonged to a religious fundamentalist family inclined towards the ideology of the Taliban.

Similarly in the case of R4, whose brother was a high-profile militant, it was discovered that he went to Afghanistan with his brother upon recidivism. This case also indicates an active role of the radical family of the identified recidivist in his recidivism. On the other hand, these individuals' families are also subject to stigmatization, harassment, societal hatred, and ignorance by the state, et cetera. One interviewee (F. Khaliq, personal interview, September 20, 2022) added from his investigations that, “In the village of Pora Ghara (A village in district Swat of KPK, Pakistan), I observed around forty families consisting of women and children whose primary breadwinners were absent, deceased, or detained. These families lacked a reliable source of income, and therefore faced significant financial hardship. ...it is the responsibility of the state to address the needs of such vulnerable populations, and failure to do so could result in increased frustration and dissatisfaction among them”.

Another interviewee (Fayaz. Zafar, personal interview, September 09, 2022) added that, “The law enforcement agencies (LEAs) were reported to have been engaged in multiple forms of harassment towards the Pashtoon community, encompassing unauthorized entry into homes, mistreatment of women, and disrespect for the pardah system, which holds significance in Pashtoon culture.” He further argued about the recidivists that; “In some cases, the families of these individuals became increasingly frustrated by the repeated investigations, to the extent that they eventually started supporting them once again to go against the state and LEAs. If the state had provided adequate support and protection to these families, including shelter, food, and opportunities for livelihood, it is likely that they would not have resorted to supporting militancy again.”

Similarly, in the context of terrorism, it appears conceivable that individuals with a childhood background of family members or peers participating in terrorism are more prone to terrorist recidivism. Since these individuals may have been socialized at a young age toward terrorism or its ideology, it can be said that if a former terrorist has a history of family or peer engagement in terrorism, they are more likely to re-engage. In light of the above discussion and by exploring the identified case studies, it was evident that the role of the family in the re-integration of the individuals and their recidivism is vital.

## State Disproportionate Surveillance and Disciplinary Monitoring

After the release of former militants, they go through the trauma of exhaustive surveillance and excessive monitoring and round the clock, which result in cultivating thoughts of recidivism in the individuals. With the cooperation of local law enforcement agencies, the military carries out the post-release monitoring task, which in turn monitors the behavior and activities of these individuals. The individual is set free through a member of VDC, who acts as a liaison between the reintegrated individuals and the concerned authorities. An official (N. Khan, personal interview, September 15, 2022) added that “these re-integrated individuals are enlisted in the schedule fourth (Schedule fourth is the list of proscribed individuals who are suspected of terrorism under Anti-Terrorism Act); upon their release from the de-radicalization center, they are arrested by the CTD, who would then undergo a formal judicial proceeding to get clearance. The reintegrated individuals would report to their respective local police stations and are bound to mark their attendance in the vicinity of the police station. If an individual does not mark his attendance, the police visit their home for inquiry. Before leaving their localities, they submit a report to their concerned police station, providing information about the area they will be traveling to, the purpose of their visit, and their date of return. This monitoring or surveillance was a debated topic during the fieldwork. Some factors that negatively affected the re-integrated individuals, especially those who re-engaged, were identified during the field interviews. Such as the mistreatment of reintegrated individuals followed by the rude conduct of police officers.

Arresting and detaining reintegrated individuals without any warrants after occurrences of domestic crimes, and these reintegrated individuals would remain in detention for a prolonged period of time. While explaining this factor, a respondent (Graduate of Mishal Program, personal interview, September 22, 2022) cited his case by mentioning the impact of excessive investigations and mentioned that “after my release, I wanted to continue my higher studies as I secured good marks, but I faced difficulties because of the strict procedure for the permission to do so, he further argued that whenever some incident of domestic crime would happen, the police used to take all the rehabilitees into custody, these repeated and unlawful arrests have negative psychological implications for me that I am still unable to cope with.” The interviewees believed that these excessive arrests and investigations fueled their frustration and played a huge role in their recidivism. These re-integrated individuals used to face derogatory, belittling, and offensive name-callings by police officials.

Some reintegrated individuals, although consummating their period of post-release monitoring to date, report their presence in their respective police stations. One interviewee (A. Ali, personal interview, September 16, 2022) added that “The repeated surveillance and excessive arrests and investigations of individuals who have already been granted pardon can exacerbate their trauma and are cause for concern. Once an individual has received pardon, they should be accorded the same treatment as any other citizen.”

The above-mentioned factors are the key practices that the re-integrated individuals face, which in turn catalyzes their recidivism. It has been noted that low-ranking police officials follow these practices; however, high-ranking police officers are well aware of these sensitivities. During the interviews with the beneficiaries of the de-radicalization program, almost all shared this concern and complained that it fuels their trauma and affects their psychological health.

## Concealed Intentions Toward Society

Another important factor that is often ignored is the hatred for the people in society that some individuals carry with them. One of the interviewees (Naveed. ul. Haq, personal interview, September 9, 2022) added that “The de-radicalization process may not always produce the desired outcomes, as some individuals may engage in “disguised compliance” during certain modules, which involves deceiving the authorities or putting on a false front of conformity. Furthermore, even after

reintegration into society, some individuals may still retain negative tendencies that pose a risk to the wider community.” This factor was identified in the case of R3 as he had targeted some society members based on previous experiences that may qualify as grudges. It is also noteworthy that some recidivists may not have dangerous attitudes toward the whole society but toward particular members. The recent violent episodes in Swat support this factor since the targeted individuals had previous experiences with their targets. As mentioned in the previous section, while de-radicalization programs may assess the beneficiaries in some aspects, it is impossible to identify their intentions truly. In addition, the factors discussed in the above sections sometimes fuel the frustration that leads the individuals towards aggression and ultimately triggers the hatred and negative attitudes they had before their de-radicalization. This, in response, leads the individuals into the path of violent activities, thus undermining all the hard work put in by the de-radicalization program.

### **Stigmatization and Social Marginalization**

Re-integrated individuals face considerable stereotyping, standardization, and social exclusion. These factors enormously hinder their ability to utilize the skills they are equipped with during the vocational training, ultimately leading to unemployment. One of the interviewees (F. Zafar, personal interview, September 9, 2022) revealed that, “there are still radical individuals who want to connect with the needy to offer compensations (financial mostly) for active or inactive involvement.”

The interviewee’s response highlights not only the presence of these radical individuals but also the individuals (ex-militants) being exposed to vulnerabilities and a chance of re-involvement in recidivism, by actively turning back to militancy, target killings, intimidation, and burglary. While non-active involvement includes information sharing, spy activities, or acting as sleepers. The practices for active and non-active involvement may not be limited to the aforementioned factors, but are mostly connected to them. A fear exists within the local population regarding the re-integrated individuals for their involvement in violent activities again. Cases of recidivism further reinforce this fear and, as a result, damage the community bonds and social connections. Fayaz zafar (F. Zafar, personal interview, September 9, 2022) further shared, “the people have been tormented to the point, have lost so much, and endured to the point where they would require another decade for some degree of trust to be formed.” His statement highlights the necessity of an important peace-building aspect that would create trust between the aggrieved and the perpetrator. The formation of social connection is a prerequisite for sustainable social bonds that ensures a stable environment for successful re-integration. In the case of Swat, the views of the respondents and the author’s personal observation reflect an environment of mistrust against the reintegrated individuals that is caused by other connected factors such as stigmatization, social isolation, unemployment, discrimination, unlawful and excessive arrests, et cetera. When reintegrated individuals do not feel secure or trusted in such an unstable environment, the present radical individuals may easily identify such cases and, based on their previous connections or affiliation with the same organization, may offer a way out, as mentioned earlier. Research suggests that individuals who stay associated with criminals/radicals after their release from prison are also more prone to recidivism. It also indicates that the influence of peer pressure on the released individual may also be a catalyst for them to re-engage in crime again (Samuels, 2010).

In R3's case, a similar factor emerged; upon his recidivism, he fled alongside three close friends, all of whom were also reintegrated individuals. A successful approach to these factors would possibly prevent the tendency of reintegrated persons to go back to their former activities or affiliations. Criminologists claim that people, who still stay in touch with criminals after leaving prison, are prone to recidivism. This highlights the possible influence of peer pressure on the possibility of reentry of the reintegrated individual into criminality. The above issues play a major role in reengagement of violence among individuals. Addressing these post release issues has a potential to rehabilitate former militants in the country.

## Conclusion

The process of rehabilitation has been taking place in Pakistan over a decade. The rise of terrorist activities in the country is a pointer to the fact that militancy has always been a part of the country, which requires a total action on the ideological as well as the physical part of it. Cases of recidivism that follow the release of individuals are extreme threats to the society with potential catastrophic outcomes. This has become a global trend that different nations have devised mechanisms to deal with it. With the current revival of the terrorism, a comprehensive system should be developed to ensure that recidivism is countered effectively by applying efficient de-radicalization and integration of former militants. The allocation of resources and proper utilization of the resources are key in this venture. The process of reintegration is hampered by financial constraints of the authorities and institutions. Since reintegration is a prolonged process, there is a need to have sustained resources. In addition to human resources, financial resources are also necessary, but the lack of funding on de-radicalization programs has caused compromise in important areas. The increased efforts should have been put where money was not as critical and more serious areas were to be accorded more serious consideration. The state has the responsibility of offering comprehensive programs to the reintegrated individuals. Society is also an important factor as these people need redemption and constructive reintegration. Hence, they can only be reintegrated successfully through societal acceptance and favorable attitudes. Recovery of the Jirga process, which is a pillar of reconciliation within the Pakhtoon society, may also prove useful in addressing grievances of the society and reintegrated persons. This could ease the stigma they experience which otherwise increases their predicament. The multi-pronged strategy that entails resource allocation, community support, and cultural restoration is important as Pakistan manages these complexities to curb the revival of militancy and the problems that come with it.

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