SPECIAL REPORT

Understanding Pakistan's Deradicalization Programming

By Arsla Jawaid

Men learn to use computers in a classroom at Pakistan's Mishal Deradicalization and Emancipation Program in April 2012. (Photo by Mian Khursheed/Reuters)

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Summary

- Based on the evidence, the success of deradicalization and rehabilitation programs depends on the voluntary participation of individuals and the early identification of the primary and secondary factors that contributed to their participation in militancy.

- Worldwide, most programs focus on young men who show sympathy or peripheral support for militant groups, as they are considered to be at a phase where ideological refutation and disengagement is possible.

- Pakistan's program has borrowed heavily from Saudi Arabia's deradicalization model, but has also strived to adopt a more comprehensive approach toward understanding the root causes of radicalization.

- The Pakistan Army leads most deradicalization programming efforts in the country. The process of deradicalization and reintegration is costly and intensive, and the military's intelligence and investigation abilities exceed those of other potential actors in this space.

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Pakistan can and should be most active in the reintegration phase. Besides working with individuals, CSOs are integral in building resilience and trust in a wider community and ensuring a preventive approach toward further radicalization.

- Given the number of potential red flags pertaining to human rights violations, any deradicalization project should follow the best practices of an established international body to ensure transparency and coordination.

SPECIAL REPORT

VIOLENT EXTREMISM

ABOUT THE REPORT

Based on fieldwork conducted in Pakistan, this report explores the Pakistan Army's approach to deradicalization programming. The research discusses lessons learned from Pakistan's experience with deradicalization programming and formulates a set of recommendations based on international best practices. The research was supported by a grant from the Asia Center at the United States Institute of Peace.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Soldiers sit in a truck at the army-run Mishal Deradicalization and Emancipation Program in Gulibagh, in Pakistan's Swat Valley. (Photo by Mian Khursheed/Reuters)

Introduction

To deal with rising waves of violent extremism, militancy, and terrorism, states around the world have undertaken a variety of approaches to deradicalization programming—a practice that has gained further attention from policymakers following the decline of the Islamic State (IS) and a wave of returning fighters. One of those countries, Pakistan, has struggled with militancy for decades—from the rise of the mujahideen in the 1980s to the proliferation of militant groups after Pakistan became a frontline state in the War on Terror in the 2000s. A new generation of young men, vulnerable to militant influences, whether in the mosque or on the internet, was readily available to join militant groups. Only since 2014 has there been an overt shift, led by the Pakistan Army, in Pakistan's approach to its militancy problem. This shift—from kinetic and reactive approaches toward a focus on prevention—has led to much-needed introspection on the drivers of radicalization.

There is, however, a long way to go. The Pakistan Army has so far undertaken deradicalization programming efforts only in areas that it deems vulnerable (such as the Swat District in northern Pakistan near the Afghan border) or in which it has launched military operations. Its experiments with deradicalization programming are neither comprehensive in their approach nor easily replicable in other parts of the country. Furthermore, its overall approach is extremely limited in that it has focused only on individuals who have been on the periphery of militancy in these areas—such as helping with recruitment, providing information, or running errands—rather than

individuals who may have played active roles in carrying out violent attacks on behalf of a militant group. The army's approach is thus limited both in terms of the number of people it serves and the geographic areas it targets.

Pakistan's approach to deradicalization differs in significant ways from two other much-discussed approaches—those of Denmark and Saudi Arabia. Denmark and Saudi Arabia illustrate opposite ends of the programming spectrum: Denmark has adopted a more voluntary and community-based approach, while Saudi Arabia has employed a prison-based, mandatory rehabilitation program. The Pakistan Army's approach has endeavored to find a middle ground between these two extremes.

Unlike Denmark, which has a far more modest need for deradicalization programming, and Saudi Arabia, which has extensive experience in implementing deradicalization programs, Pakistan's chaotic national politics have made disengagement and deradicalization inherently difficult to achieve. For example, during the country's general elections in July 2018, Hafiz Saeed, the co-founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)—an officially banned organization in Pakistan that has been designated a terrorist organization by US and European governments—claimed to have renounced violence but continued to fan hatred and incite violence through various political platforms and charities linked to LeT. The sectarian group Ahle-Sunnat Wal Jamaat was also active in the elections, endorsing candidates in the mainstream political parties. Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, a relatively new arrival to Pakistan's political landscape, used street violence and divisive political messaging to tally the fifth-largest number of votes nationwide in its first contested election. As a result, the political mainstreaming of militant violence has created a difficult context in which Pakistan's deradicalization program functions. This report, based on desk research and field research in Pakistan and, to a lesser degree, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, examines Pakistan's approach to deradicalization and its attempts to identify and address the causes that drive young men to join militant organizations.

Radicalization, Deradicalization, and Disengagement

Understanding the different motivations that lead individuals to engage in militancy is critical in designing an individualized deradicalization program.[1] Motivations often vary, but it is usually the most marginalized and excluded who are the most susceptible to recruitment. Poverty, political and social exclusion, economic deprivation, and ideological adoption are among the factors that contribute in varying degrees to the pressure exerted on young, impressionable minds. Those already employed or able to start a business are less likely to join a militant group, even when they are sympathetic to the cause for which it is fighting.[2] In Pakistan specifically, large swaths of highly educated, unemployed, or underemployed young men provide a complex challenge in a country where violence can be viewed as a lucrative profession.

The experiences of young men who escaped from IS's takeover of Mosul in 2015 point to the same trend. Conversations with a group of former recruits in Kurdistan reveal that many

Men are taught welding and other vocational skills at the Mishal Deradicalization and Emancipation Program in Pakistan's Swat Valley. (Photo by Mian Khursheed/Reuters)

engineering students from the University of Mosul were among the first to join IS. By helping with recruiting, spreading propaganda, providing intelligence on fellow civilians, and securing resources, many students earned up to $300 a day—a hefty sum in a country where job prospects for young people are scarce and those with marketable skills are often unable to find employment commensurate with their skills. However, as IS's methods grew more brutal in the city and its ambitions became clear, it was the highly skilled students from the university who were the first to try to leave.[3] This emerged as a common practice as more fighters defected from IS and detailed their motivations for joining and exiting the group. Young men who were motivated to join IS in search of financial gain, a sense of adventure, or brotherhood with like-minded young men often found the reality to be quite different, and the factors that led them to join IS differed greatly from the factors that led them to try to disengage from it.[4] For those whose initial motivations to join were not purely (or mostly) ideological, requirements to perform mundane tasks such as running errands or cooking ran counter to their desire for adventure; others were traumatized and appalled by IS's displays of brutality in the form of beheadings, rape, and inhumane treatment of civilians.

> The success of any rehabilitation program depends on the early identification of the factors that contributed to an individual's willingness to participate in a violent movement in the first place.

The political psychologist John Horgan has described deradicalization as the "social/psychological process whereby an individual's commitment to, and involvement in, violent radicalization is reduced to the extent that they are no longer at risk of involvement and engagement in violent activity." As Pakistan's experience with the mainstreaming of political violence has illustrated, physical disengagement—a "change in role or function that is usually associated with a reduction of violent participation"—does not necessarily imply the deradicalization of an individual's views or an ideological renunciation of violence.[5] However, deradicalization cannot proceed without the prior process of disengagement.[6] Once disengagement has taken place, a series of tools and sustainable interventions must be designed to aid an individual's process toward deradicalization and rehabilitation as a productive member of society.

Alternative Models

Multiple countries have developed their own versions of deradicalization and rehabilitation programming—from European states such as the United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, and Sweden, to Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia in Southeast Asia, and Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the Middle East. The success of any rehabilitation program depends on the early identification of the primary and secondary factors that contributed to an individual's willingness to participate in a violent movement in the first place. With this information, a tailored program can be created to address these specific factors. Additionally, one of the key characteristics of effective rehabilitation programs is a voluntary basis for engagement.[7] Not every country adopts this best practice, however. Some states, such as Saudi Arabia, house participants in prisons, and detainees are forcibly enrolled in the program, thus raising serious concerns about selection and participant motive. Other countries, such as Indonesia and Pakistan, have adopted a state-selection process whereby state authorities identify the individuals who are in need and house them in separate rehabilitation facilities (similar to detention centers). Countries that have lower numbers of violent extremist offenders (or returning foreign fighters) and high state capacity to create individualized programs, such as Denmark, have adopted a voluntary basis for participation, thereby making it far more likely that the participant is sincere in his desire to disengage prior to beginning the deradicalization process.

In contrast to Denmark, Pakistan has a far greater number of violent offenders who could and should benefit from individualized deradicalization programming but far less state capacity to provide it. Deradicalization programming is not only an expensive and time-intensive process, but also one that requires buy-in from all parties to be effective. From a policy standpoint, the evidence suggests that deradicalization programming is most effective when participation is voluntary and programming is tailored to the individual and his particular motivations for engaging in violent extremism. Yet Pakistan, in order to make do with fewer resources, is dealing with a range of violent extremist actors with a single policy approach to cater to all of them. Adopting the best practices of voluntary participation and individualized approach will require a significant policy rethink and even greater resources.

Men pray at the Grimhojvej mosque in Aarhus, Denmark, where a number of attendees went on to fight for the Islamic State. Denmark's approach to fighters returning from the Middle East has emphasized rehabilitation over prison and punishment. (Photo by Jan Grarup/New York Times)

THE DENMARK MODEL

Denmark's deradicalization program—the "Aarhus model," named after the city in Denmark where the program is located—is often touted as one of the more successful deradicalization experiments. It incorporates preventive measures, such as focusing on youth who do not yet pose a danger but show signs of susceptibility to recruitment by violent movements, as well as deradicalization and exit processes tailored specifically to those who have already become radicalized and could potentially commit politically or religiously motivated violent attacks.

Denmark's approach to deradicalization is focused on reducing or halting the processes of radicalization. Learning from the experiences of other European countries, Denmark has been careful not to structure its program as a form of "religious policing" or for targeting specific groups, such as the Muslim community. On the contrary, the team that runs this program is highly regarded in Denmark's Muslim community for maintaining an open dialogue with mosques and religious organizations. The model is premised on the tenets of the "life psychology" theory, which is rooted in psychology, the social sciences, and the humanities. Inclusion, defined as "meaningful participation in common cultural, social and societal life," serves as the corner-stone of the Aarhus model, which seeks to transform political or religious frustrations into more

positive forms of energy and participation.[8] The program's multidisciplinary approach relies on collaboration among schools, social authorities, and the police in order to foster individual agency so that people exiting violent extremism and reintegrating into society have the life skills they need to succeed.

The model relies on a number of interventions. The "InfoHouse," staffed by the East Jutland police, serves as the first responder to information received from families, peers, social workers, police, or community elders regarding an individual exhibiting concerning behavior. The InfoHouse conducts its own assessment to identify whether the behavior is truly a case of violent radicalization or just a relatively harmless case of youthful rebellion. If the latter, social services or counseling may be recommended. For cases of actual radicalization, the individual's behavior is carefully studied, specific motivating factors are identified, and the individual's social network of family, friends, teachers, youth club workers, and others is mobilized to create a support group to help the individual find alternative, nonviolent solutions to resolve the frustrations and resentments leading them to engage in extremist behavior.

Mentoring is one of the cornerstones of the Aarhus model. As the University of Aarhus psychologist Preben Bertelsen, one of the developers of the program, explains,

> The Aarhus team has at its disposal a group of ten well-educated mentors . . . [who are] guided by a group of four mentoring coordinators. In order to form a broadly composed group who can meet the often different individual profiles and specific needs of the targeted persons, these mentors have been recruited with regard to age, gender, ethnic background, formal education and experience, first-hand knowledge of different cultural and social milieus, as well as political and religious knowledge.

Mentors play several roles in working with program participants:

> First, the mentor plays a significant role in the specific de-radicalization process by pointing to the pitfalls, the personal and societal dangers, the illegality as well as the mis-directedness of the particular activism. Second, the mentor helps to find paths of inclusion regarding the activities and tasks in the daily life of the mentee (family, work, education, leisure time). Third, the role of the mentor is to be a well-informed, interested and empathic sparring partner, with whom the mentee can discuss questions and challenges of daily life as well as the ultimate concerns of existential, political and religious questions of life.[9]

In addition to the program's preventive aspects, the Aarhus program's deradicalization exit process, launched in 2013, focuses specifically on returning foreign fighters. Participation in the exit program is preconditioned on the understanding and assessment that the individual has not committed a criminal act of violence. The program is not designed to be an alternative to criminal prosecution (individuals accused of committing violent crimes are prosecuted under Danish law), but is instead established for those who do not pose an imminent security risk and exhibit a genuine desire to abandon their violent trajectories and return to their communities. The individual is referred to specialists who assess which services and processes must be undertaken during the reintegration phase. Numerous interventions—ranging from the ideological to the vocational, as well as engagement with the individual's social network—factor into the creation

of an individualized program tailored to the participant's specific needs. The exit process also provides state assistance with employment, education, psychological therapy, and housing to minimize the likelihood of recidivism.

THE SAUDI MODEL

Saudi Arabia's approach to deradicalization is centered on psychological counseling and religious reeducation. Started in 2004, the program is administered by the kingdom's Ministry of Interior and is based in prisons, where detained offenders are selected for participation. The expansive, well-funded program is available only to militants who have conducted relatively minor offenses or who have been supporters or sympathizers of militant groups—as opposed to hard-core, dedicated, violent jihadis. Upon completion of the program, only those who are positively identified as having genuinely renounced violence and violent ideological beliefs are released from custody and reintegrated into communities.

Christopher Boucek, in his detailed study of Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism strategy, noted that the underlying premise of the program is the "assumption that the suspects were lied to and misled by extremists into straying from true Islam" by extremists who "prey on people who want to know more about their faith, then corrupt them through exposure to violent extremist ideologies." In this sense, the state positions itself as a benevolent actor, guiding those who have gone astray back onto the right path. A study of over six hundred participants in the program's early days found that most came from large, lower- to middle-class families in which the parents had limited education. About a third of them had gone abroad to fight in Afghanistan, Somalia, or Chechnya. Many of the participants themselves had never completed any proper religious education and were thus more susceptible to extremist propaganda.[10]

Within the Ministry of Interior, the Advisory Committee runs two counseling and religious reeducation programs that form the centerpiece of the Saudi approach to deradicalization. The first program consists of a series of two-hour sessions that focus on a range of interventions designed to encourage prisoners "to recant their beliefs." The second program consists of "long study sessions" that last up to six weeks, focusing on issues of loyalty, allegiance, terrorism, and the legal rules for jihad. Participants in the long study sessions also receive instruction "on the concepts of religious leadership, the centrality of scholarly jurisprudence, the importance of authority and the need to recognize legitimate sources of knowledge, as well as tutoring on how to avoid 'misleading' and 'corrupting' books and influences." Participants who pass an exam at the end of the course continue to the rehabilitation phase of the program.[11]

The Advisory Committee is comprised of four subcommittees—the Religious Subcommittee, which engages in religious dialogues and debates with prisoners; the Psychological and Social Subcommittee, which assesses the prisoner's psychological needs and behavior; the Security Subcommittee, which evaluates the prisoner's security risk, issues recommendations for his release, and conducts post-release monitoring; and the Media Subcommittee, which creates educational materials for the program. In addition to providing direct care to the prisoner, the Psychological and Social Subcommittee also engages with the prisoner's family, both during and after the program, to minimize the chance of re-radicalization and to mitigate the chances of another family member falling prey to violent extremism. Families that feel that the state gives

them agency are more likely to participate and ensure that the rehabilitation process is successful. However, by securing the family's buy-in, the government is firm and clear that it will hold the extended family responsible should the detainee commit any new offenses after release.

Upon the detainees' release from prison, they are transferred to an external rehabilitation facility known as the Care Rehabilitation Center (CRC), where they live in dormitories with other detainees and participate in communal, team-building activities such as sports and other recreational and leisure activities. Families are allowed to visit detainees at the center or to speak with them by phone in order to facilitate their transition back into Saudi society. Upon release from the CRC, program participants may also receive social support in the form of assistance in finding a job or stipends for renting an apartment or acquiring a car. In some cases, the government will also pay for weddings and dowries. This additional support is specifically designed to "prevent recidivism by addressing social concerns before they become grievances," according to Boucek.[12]

In the program's first four years, Saudi authorities claimed a success rate of up to 90 percent and a recidivism and re-arrest rate of just 1 to 2 percent. The government also claimed that no one released had participated in terrorist activity. However, given the state-controlled nature of the program, these figures are difficult to verify. Indeed, the success rate may have more to do with the fact that only relatively minor offenders were selected to participate rather than more hardened, committed extremists, for whom the Saudi deradicalization program may be far less effective at rehabilitating. Furthermore, as Georgia Holmer and Adrian Shtuni point out, state-controlled programs that mandate participation (as contrasted with the voluntary nature of many European programs, including Denmark's) "detracts from the credibility of claims of genuine deradicalization or even disengagement, and undermines the legitimacy of the programs, specifically because it is hard to make the case for forced cognitive deradicalization or behavioural disengagement."[13] In addition, the program's heavy emphasis on ideological refutation can be problematic given the complex array of drivers that propel individuals to engage in violent behavior or militancy; in some cases, religion may not even be a contributing factor. The reliance on state-employed imams further entrenches a state-controlled narrative, potentially replacing extremist propaganda with state-sponsored "truth" without imparting critical thinking skills.

Pakistan's Project Mishal

The Talibanization of Pakistan's Swat region can be traced back to the rise of the militant group Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law, or TNSM), spearheaded by Sufi Muhammad in 1992. In 2001, Sufi Muhammad was arrested by the state, and by 2002 the Pakistani government had banned TNSM.[14] Following Muhammad's arrest, his son-in-law, Mullah Fazlullah, assumed the leadership mantle and launched a series of activities ranging from relief efforts to broadcasting incendiary radio programming (earning him the nickname "Mullah Radio"). This coincided with the rise of other local militias that consolidated control over small territories within Pakistan, particularly in the Federally Administered

Taliban supporters pray at the Pakistan Army's deradicalization center in Tank, a border town in Waziristan, the tribal area bordering Afghanistan. (Photo by B. K. Bangash/AP)

Tribal Areas.[15] Following the 2007 Red Mosque siege, TNSM formed an alliance with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Taliban Movement), and Mullah Fazlullah was appointed as the head of the combined group's Swat chapter. Following Sufi Muhammad's release from prison in 2008 on the condition that he renounce violence and use his influence to maintain a cease-fire and negotiate a peace settlement between the militant groups and the government, President Asif Ali Zardari signed a bill in April 2009 that granted the TNSM de facto control over Swat Valley and allowed the implementation of sharia law.[16] Soon after, the Taliban attempted to expand its control into the neighboring district of Buner, and violence against civilians spiked. The following month, as the Taliban occupied Mingora city and advanced to within sixty miles of Islamabad, the military launched Operation Rah-e-Rast. The operation concluded with the Pakistan Army regaining control of Mingora, forcing Fazlullah to flee, and capturing a number of Taliban commanders and soldiers.[17]

That same year, the Pakistan Army began setting up centers to provide programming to deradicalize and rehabilitate former Taliban fighters and other militants and reintegrate them into their communities. The military currently runs five major deradicalization centers—Mishal, Sparley, Rastoon, Pythom, and Helia—that focus on adult detainees. A sixth center, Sabaoon,

established by the military but subsequently turned over to civilian management, administers to juveniles. Project Mishal and Sabaoon are both housed in the Swat region, while the other centers are located in different parts of northern Pakistan. From the time they were established in 2009 through February 2018, close to four thousand participants of these programs have been reintegrated into their communities.[18] Sabaoon, Mishal, and Sparley all employ a combination of psychosocial therapy, corrective religious education, vocational training, and formal education.[19]

Established in 2010, Project Mishal's Deradicalization and Emancipation Program works exclusively with the local community and aims to deradicalize and rehabilitate militants who worked with the Taliban in the Swat region and surrounding areas. The program is housed in the same building that served as Taliban headquarters in Mingora, which the army seized in 2009. Today, a number of walls are still marked with bullet holes, and numerous fractures can be seen within the structure. The facility contains dorm rooms, vocational training rooms, and recreation rooms as well as a gym, mosque, cafeteria, movie theater, auditorium, and patio. Mishal employs civilian psychologists, vocational training instructors, and social module instructors—all of whom work under the supervision of military staff.

All participants in Project Mishal are men between the ages of eighteen and fifty and have broadly similar backgrounds in terms of religion, ethnicity, low socioeconomic status, and a lack of formal education.[20] Some participants exhibit emotional instability or anxiety disorders. In Pakistani schools (and throughout Pakistani society more generally), the questioning of authority is discouraged and considered disrespectful—even more so in the more conservative parts of the country where recruitment into militant groups has often been most successful. While the factors vary from individual to individual, Project Mishal participants have cited coercion as well as familial ties to a militant group as the main reasons for engaging with the Taliban.

Participants are drawn from those who have either surrendered to or been apprehended by law enforcement or the military and are in army custody. A panel of officers conducts an initial investigation to determine the nature of the circumstances that led to the individual's engagement with the militant group and the nature of his offense. Officers recommend enrollment in Project Mishal only if the individual does not have "blood on [his] hands." Offenses meeting this criteria include serving as a local recruiter for the Taliban or as a cook or driver for mid-level militants. Hardened and active militants who may have been engaged in warfare or direct violence are not eligible for the program. Mishal's approach is premised on the idea that participants were coerced or otherwise persuaded to become involved with the Taliban as low-level militants through an erroneous ideological interpretation of Islam, compounded by their low socioeconomic status and precarious social and familial networks.

Corrective religious education is a central tenet of Project Mishal, a practice borrowed from the Saudi model but also a feature of programs in the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore, and Yemen.[21] The involvement of former extremists, religious scholars, family members, and others who can challenge the militant's ideological perspectives in a "credible and convincing way" is critical to ensuring the success of any deradicalization program.[22] To this end, some of Mishal's

lecturers are former participants, which has proven particularly effective in fostering engagement and dialogue. In the program's religious module, clerics hold daily sessions in which they discuss religious beliefs and texts in a manner designed to provide a corrective perspective to the militants' understanding of Islam. Off-hour interactions include monthly meetings with family members that focus specifically on redeveloping bonds and rekindling links to the community. Families are required to be the guarantor for the participant once he begins the reintegration process. Project officers discuss with family members the motivations of the individual, his influences, and the potential response of the community to which the participant is returning. This latter factor is critical: research in Tunisia and Saudi Arabia has shown that where communities are not welcoming to former militants, families serve as the safety net for integrating these highly vulnerable and ostracized individuals.[23]

Vocational training is another key aspect of the Mishal program. Participants can receive a three-month training course in a range of fields, such as carpentry, auto mechanics, computer programming, welding, appliance repair, electronics, and bee farming. While participants are encouraged to find employment in the formal labor market after their release from the program, on rare occasions Mishal has offered one-time seed funding to those looking to start their own business.

After the participant has completed the program's religious module, acquired a degree of vocational skills, and passed a post-assessment interview, he enters the reintegration process. Participants who do not receive a positive exit evaluation are not allowed to leave the facility and must remain in the program. Some participants have had to repeat the program as many as three or four times before being released.

During the post-release period, family members and community elders are enlisted to ensure that the participant returns to a welcoming and supportive environment. Unit commanders interact with the communities to solicit feedback on the returnees, and Mishal's project administrators offer additional counseling during weekly visits with the participants. A monitoring center collates information on the participant's interactions with police, community officials, and clerics in order to assess whether the individual is making successful progress in reintegrating into his community. For the first three months following release, the participant is required to report to a designated military official every two weeks; failure to do so can result in arrest. During this time, the participant is not allowed to travel outside his community. After the initial three-month period, the participant is required to report on a monthly basis for the following six months. Military officials may also conduct random spot checks and stay in contact with community members to assess progress.

THE ROLE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Rehabilitation—the ultimate objective of the deradicalization process—has been described as "a purposeful, planned intervention, which aims to change characteristics of the offender (attitudes, cognitive skills, and processes, personality or mental health, and social, educational or vocational skills) that are believed to be the cause of the individual's criminal behaviour with the intention to reduce the chance that the individual will re-offend."[24] Based on this definition, the change in behavior that entails ceasing violent activities is "disengagement," while the

There is an urgent need for CSO participation in the reintegration phase—where the focus is not just on the individual who is returning to his community but to building resilience in the broader community.

cognitive change is a result of the deradicalization process. Ultimately, the two work together in a mechanism that prepares and allows for the individual's social reentry, a process known as "rehabilitation."

Successful rehabilitation requires additional social service programs to help build community and personal agency for those being reintegrated. These programs should be community led and adopt a multidisciplinary approach that includes psychologists, law enforcement, faith leaders, family members, and social workers.[25] Yet rehabilitation programs in Somalia have shown that community-level leaders and government actors often work in isolation from each other. The same is true in Pakistan, where deradicalization and rehabilitation programming is primarily conducted by the army, with some civil society groups engaging in scattered, limited programs.

The deputy inspector general of police in Malakand, a district adjacent to Swat, said in a 2011 interview that rehabilitation was perhaps the weakest link in Pakistan's deradicalization program because of the program's overreliance on the authorities for carrying out the entire deradicalization process.[26] This remains the case almost a decade later. As a result, the Pakistani military is long overdue in finding ways to collaborate on a larger scale with civil society in providing off-ramp and aftercare programs for the rehabilitation of former militants. At the very least, military–civil society collaboration would open up more resources for the army and likely create more sustainable programming. Internationally, in its 2014 Hague-Marrakesh Memorandum, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) encouraged "a whole of government approach with full and proactive engagement with [local] communities" to better understand the contexts within which individuals become radicalized in the first place.[27] While the memorandum was crafted primarily for countries seeking guidance on how to address the wave of returning IS fighters, this practice may also be applicable to Pakistan's deradicalization programming. The Pakistani military has overcome this gap to an extent by engaging with community elders and leaders in the rehabilitation process and by relying on its own institutional and local knowledge, but more effective and sustainable programming could be possible with a more extensive government-community collaboration.

With limited resources and access, civil society organizations (CSOs) that have attempted to navigate this space have not had much luck. Many CSOs working in Pakistan's Peshawar and Swat Districts feel that the deradicalization space is best owned by the army, given its access to resources and knowledge of militancy. However, the real potential of CSOs is in the rehabilitation and reintegration process, which can complement, and perhaps even enhance, efforts by the security services in this space. Programming conducted in Somalia and northern Nigeria with militants formerly associated with al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, respectively, have shown that aftercare is an often overlooked but essential component of any rehabilitation process.[28] Security protection and social support from local communities can be critical for individuals at risk as they reintegrate in their communities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In Pakistan, deradicalization programming is exclusively led and overseen by the military. Efforts by civil society and the police have been sporadic and underresourced. Despite a fleeting mention in the five-year National Internal Security Policy announced in June 2018, there remains no comprehensive deradicalization strategy that draws in multiple stakeholders and adopts a cohesive, "whole of society" approach. Furthermore, the government of Imran Khan, which took office in August 2018, has done little to address or provide a concrete road map for targeting the root causes that breed radicalization. Khan's government deserves credit for ensuring that countering violent extremism continues to be part of the national narrative, but it has not yet developed a cohesive, sustainable, nonmilitarized approach to the issue. As a military-run program, Pakistan's approach to deradicalization lacks the more cohesive approach, with multiple levels of expertise and knowledge, that would be possible if coordinated by civil society. Input and oversight from domestic civil society and international nongovernmental organizations with knowledge and expertise in the area might allow for greater transparency and provide the necessary measures to create a more sustainable and inclusive deradicalization process.

Furthermore, the lack of financial and human resources poses serious challenges (limitations the military also recognizes). To date, the Pakistan Army has undertaken deradicalization programs only in areas where there is local need and where it has control: centers in Swat, for example, focus on the deradicalization of militants in a relatively small geographic area. The centers do not enroll participants from other parts of the country. As a result, the number of participants overall has remained low relative to what is needed countrywide. The real challenge for Pakistan will be in scaling up the model to meet this demand. For example, there is a strong need for deradicalization programming in places such as Karachi, where the nexus of crime and terrorism remains strong. Yet there is currently no centrally administered deradicalization program that can be used by counterterrorism agencies in the provinces.

Another criticism of Pakistan's deradicalization efforts at Mishal is the program's focus on low-cadre militants or peripheral supporters while doing little or nothing to address the problem of hardened militants and senior leadership. This argument, however, overlooks the fact that hardened militants with a history of committing violent offenses are far less likely to renounce and disengage from militancy and voluntarily—and genuinely—participate in deradicalization programming. Nor is Pakistan's deradicalization programming intended to function as an alternative to the criminal prosecution hardened militants may in fact deserve. Experience has shown that the disengagement of individuals who have a strong ideological and psychological buy-in is difficult. That is why most programs around the world, including Pakistan's, focus (mostly) on the young men who have provided peripheral support to or have otherwise shown sympathy for militant groups; they are understood to be in a position where ideological refutation—that is, rehabilitation—is possible. Furthermore, as case studies from European states, Indonesia, and Malaysia have shown, motivating factors for youth involvement are not always ideological, which makes deradicalizing and rehabilitating such offenders less difficult.

Conversations with civil society organizations in Karachi, Peshawar, and Swat suggest that they continue to have minimal involvement in deradicalization and reintegration programming in these areas. Part of the reason is because the army holds a comparative advantage due to its greater intelligence and investigative capacities. Another hurdle is CSOs' access to resources—deradicalization and reintegration programs are costly and work best when tailored to the local context and the specific needs of individual participants. When it comes to formulating deradicalization programming, as mentioned in the GCTF memorandum, a risk assessment should be conducted by trained professionals who understand the radicalization space within the local context and can formulate tailor-made interventions. A good risk assessment, according to the GCTF, will take into account the "needs of an individual (motivational factors), the narrative (adherence to an extremist ideology) and networks (the intent and capability to carry out terrorist attacks as well as the support of the social network for the extremist ideology)."[29] Not every CSO will have the financial and staffing resources to undertake such high-level programming. As a result of their resource constraints, some Pakistani CSOs may simply feel that the deradicalization space is better left to the army.

However, there is an urgent need for CSO participation in the reintegration phase—where the focus is not just on the individual who is returning to his community but to building resilience in the broader community in order to address the conditions that lead to radicalization. Monitoring is perhaps the most critical aspect of any reintegration exercise. Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, and Singapore all rely on police surveillance and family cooperation to monitor released detainees. In Pakistan, the involvement of the stakeholders and participants in the monitoring phase is more extensive, involving teachers, clerics, community elders, peers, and others in the individuals' social networks.

As in the Saudi program, a participant's family serves as a guarantor in order to help him stay on track after reintegration. Emotional and physical investment by the family has proven to be an effective way of increasing the likelihood of disengagement. CSOs that have experience working with mothers, teachers, and community elders can play a critical role not only in assisting the individual but in breaking down the social stigma associated with being a "returnee." CSOs have the added advantage of being able to build trust within local communities that may be suspicious of security agencies and the military. Sustainable involvement of CSOs can therefore ensure not only a more effective reintegration process steeped in local knowledge but that the post-release phase does not become oversecuritized. The army, facing its own resource constraints, could also benefit by collaborating with well-regarded CSOs that have both knowledge of affected communities and expertise in working with disengaging militants.

The challenges ahead are tremendous, but greater collaboration with civil society organizations will greatly aid the Pakistan Army in more effectively reintegrating individuals and creating communities that are more sustainable and resilient to drivers of violent extremism.
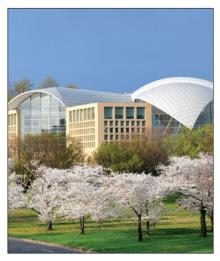
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