

Understanding the Role of Women in Conflict: A Case Study of Swat



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I certify that this research work titled “Understanding the Role of Women in Conflict: A Case Study of Swat” is my own work. The work has not been presented elsewhere for assessment. The material that has been used from other sources it has been properly acknowledged / referred.

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Dedicated
To
Pakistan Army

For their continuous struggle to counter insurgencies in the country.

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Understanding the Role of Women in Conflict: A Case Study of Swat

Abstract

The armed conflicts across the world have depicted an increased threat to women in numerous ways, but their (in)direct role in violent conflicts remains largely unexplored. A similar trend is observed for Pakistan where the radicalization of women has not received significant attention from the researchers. One probable reason for this dearth of literature is that women are not perceived as an equal part of socio-political activities as men are. The violent conflict in Swat, from 2007 to 2009, presents itself as a case study in this regard. This research is an in-depth effort to explore the ways in which the Taliban movement exclusively targeted and influenced the local women and the consequent support they received from this particular segment of society. The study was based on semi-structured interviews conducted in different regions of Swat, which remained as the safe havens of Taliban. The objective of this research was to comprehend the relationship between women and conflict and to explore their ways of involvement in the conflict. The researcher also investigated the communication strategies employed by the Taliban to enable the correspondence of women with the Taliban movement. Their sermons and speeches, employing religion as a manipulative tool, were aired on the radio to encourage the women for supporting Taliban. This support was realized through the contributions of the local women towards the violent conflict in the form of economic and human resources. Understanding the role of women in the conflict and the radicalization they have experienced is important for carrying out de-radicalization attempts and preventing radicalization in future.

1. Introduction

South Asia in general, Pakistan in particular, has significantly suffered from human, social and economic costs due to terrorism (Daraz et al, 2012; Hyder, Akram & Padda, 2015). Though Pakistan has been fighting the menace of terrorism as a front line state, yet the country has been perceived or dubbed as the exporter of extremism and terrorism. Particularly during the last two decades, Pakistan has experienced the grave levels of insecurity and instability in the country due to its continuous fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Evidently, the issue has threatened not only peace but also the economic growth of society (Khan, 2011). The prevalence of terrorism in the country has brought devastation by adversely influencing the social setup, bringing political instability and deteriorating the economic growth of the state. According to the reports to the supreme court of Pakistan in 2013, Pakistan lost about 49,000 lives because of the war on terror — from 2001 until that time (Express Tribune, 2013). Internationally, Pakistan has remained constant among the topmost hit countries by terrorism (Hussain, n.d). With regards, various scholars have tried to understand the multifaceted dimensions and drivers of terrorism and violent extremism in Pakistan. Within this debate, scholars have attempted to understand the pathway that leads towards the manifestation of violent extremism and terrorism in its various forms.

The term radicalization is frequently linked with terrorism and (violent) extremism in Pakistan (PIPS, 2010). It has been widely argued that the process of radicalization has played an important role in the manifestation of (violent) extremism in the country. To this end, the vulnerable areas of FATA and PATA (along with the Pak-Afghan border), have been considered as the breeding grounds of violent extremism and terrorism. In addition, the strategic role of Pakistan in the US-led war on terror and its scope to religious extremism has made Pakistan focal point of discussion on religious fundamentalism (Rathore & Basit, 2010). Arguably, in light of this research, religious

extremism has been considered or conceived as the major factor behind the development of violent extremism in Pakistan. Researchers and scholars have been studying different factors of radicalization to comprehend religious and fanaticism within different Muslim societies. Nevertheless, there is a consensus among the scholars that, it is difficult to comprehend the multifaceted dimensions radicalization and their root causes in a diverse society like Pakistan — ethnically, ideological and linguistically heterogeneous. The available theoretical and conceptual explanations behind the manifestation of violent extremism and terrorism (both at a structural and individual level) can be explained in the context of Pakistan (Rathore & Basit, 2010).

The terrorist ambitions cannot be achieved unless they have the required resources to carry out the (desired actions) actions. To this end, understanding the economy of conflict can possibly explain and unfold the factors (as structural determinants) such as structure of society, particularly poor and incompetent economic governance. While considering the post-conflict Swat, this research aims to explore the factors behind the development and manifestation of violent extremism. However, one the main contribution of this research will be (as explained below) the so far ignored understanding of gender dynamics embedded within the case of Swat. Such an analysis will enable us to not only expand the dimensions of the violent conflict in the region but will also explicate the mobilization of the resources and employed strategies (financial and human) that significantly assisted the Taliban movement to perform their kinetic agendas.

1.1 The Emergence of Tehrik-e- Taliban Pakistan and the Case of Swat:

The conflict in Swat can be traced back to the emergence of Sufi Muhammad Khan and Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariah-Mohammadi (TNSM) during the 1990s. TNSM emerged as a movement and at a national level in 1994 and was interpreted as “Tor Patki” (Black Turban). Their movement placed and presented itself in the public realm as committed to introducing Sharia and Islamic courts in

the region. However, the State of Pakistan through military actions and the forces deployments (Kronstadt, 2010) countered the emergence of the movement. It was a short time operation, which ended following negotiations between the two parties, which led the government to approve selective terms of TNSM regarding the sharia courts. However, this negotiated settlement does not last for long (Orakzai, 2011).

Later Sufi Muhammad was found to play an active role in the Afghanistan conflict in 2001, with almost ten thousand followers against US forces (Roggio, 2007). At that time the president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf imprisoned the leader Sufi Muhammad and put an end to TNSM. After the imprisonment of Sufi Muhammad, his son-in-law Mullah Fazlullah took his mission forward and associated the movement closely to Tehrike Taliban-e-Pakistan.

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerged in several settled regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in 2006. Malakand division was one of the worst affected regions at the hands of extremist/by-terrorist activities, comprising Swat, Shangla, Buner, Upper and Lower Dir. The insurgency of the Taliban in the area of ‘Switzerland of the East’ (i.e., the valley of Swat) (Elizabeth II, 1961) under the leadership of Mullah Fazulullah, distressed the peace of Swat and made the life of its natives challenging since 2007. During 2007-2009, Swat witnesses the conflict at its peak, which resulted in the huge internal displacement of more than 2.3 million people from Malakand division (World Bank and Asian Development Bank (WB and ADB) and cost thousands of lives. This chapter of terrorism nor only distressed the lives of locals desperately but also disturbed the economy of Pakistan in several ways.

1.2 Framing ‘Women’ in the Context of TTP:

In the case of Swat debacle in 2008, the combatants along with using their existing ways of fundraising mobilize women to act as a contributor to the conflict. For this, the combatants in Swat

relied mainly on FM channels to propagate their message among locals in the best version they could. It was very interesting to observe that, the primary target audience of combatants through these (illegal) FM channels was women in particular. The tool they used to manipulate the local women was religion, which is considered the easiest way to mobilize. These FM channels were largely used for preaching their ideology of Islam and highlighting the rights of women according to Sharia. The way they had sermons and speeches through different FM channels was so appealing, that ensnared and trapped the minds of women that manipulated their thoughts and convinced them for supporting the Taliban's agenda. In brief, it was overall observed that TTP effectively mobilized the women segment of the society and their involvement in the violent movement emerged as 'active'.

In view of the above, the decision to have women-centric research was made because the women in conflict are normally depicted as victims, sufferers and kept in distress at the hands of militants. Indeed, the women suffer more in the conflict, due to an increased threat of sexual abuse. The armed conflict across the world has shown an increased threat to women in numerous ways, but their active participation in a particular violent remained largely ignored (particularly in the context of Pakistan). This research observed the strategies used by the Taliban to mobilize the women varied depending upon the different motivations and goals these women had. This research is an in-depth effort to explore the ways how the extremists target and influence the local women, how they supported the Taliban in Swat. It will be based on interviews conducted in three main communities of district Swat: Imam Deri, Kuza Bandi and Matta. These interviews would help to know the opinions of women and the manner they influenced by airings of Taliban.

1.3 Research Inquiry

The existing literature has not explored the role of women in conflict in the case of Swat: this made the researcher attentive to focus on this issue. The objective of this study is to comprehend the relationship of women and conflict and to explore their ways of involvement and activities. In doing, so this research aims to explore the following simple but important questions: first, how we can understand and frame the role of women in the Taliban movement in Swat, secondly, what strategies were employed by the Taliban movement in order to radicalize and mobilize the women of the district Swat as a resource? The researcher further aimed to investigate the strategies employed by the Taliban to mobilize women in their favor. The study in this area will not only contribute to identifying the root causes of conflict but will give knowledge about the need for essential involvement of women in conflict resolution, which will ultimately help to make the authorities able to understand the vulnerabilities which need proper attention in future. The researcher being a resident of Swat at the time of conflict adds to the significance /credibility of the research.

1.4 Research Methodology and Considerations:

The current research design is a case study, with an explanatory qualitative approach. It is a case study given the emphasis and focuses on Swat conflict, with particular reference to the role of women during the conflict. The study relied on primary data collection in order to understand and ascertain the experience and views of Swat women. To this end, the data was collected via semi-structured interviews, premised on open-ended questions. Such an approach, enabled the researcher to engage with the respondent in an open and receptive manner, to an extent whereby the respondent(s) are willing to narrate their experience and views with the researcher. The

questions were designed to find out the strategies used by the Taliban to radicalize the women and how the females actively participated in their movement.

Fifteen individuals were interviewed for this research. Interviewees were selected using on a convenient sampling strategy, included 11 women, and 4 men. The respondents belonged to three different villages of Swat, which continue to be their places of residence. These villages were selected based on their role at the time of Taliban movement. Imam Deri, Matta and Kuza Bandi, were the most affected regions of Swat conflict and were considered as the safe Heavens of Taliban. Imam Deri was the hometown of Mullah Fazulullah (the founder of Taliban movement in Swat) and he started the mission from here before conducting the interviews the respondents were briefed about the purpose of interviews to acquire their confidence. The interviews were conducted in the respondent's personal setting i.e. home, that they could easily response to the research questions. All the interviews were conducted in Pashtu, which were then translated into English by the researcher and then transcribed. To analyze the data, recurring patterns were observed that lead to the categorization of data into three different themes, i.e. the emergence of Taliban, mode and impact communication, and the contribution of women towards Taliban movement.

1.5 Thesis Outline:

The remainder of the thesis is organized in four chapters. The next Chapter 2 explores the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings in order to understand the process of radicalization and violent extremism. It also discusses the structural determinants that function as drivers of violent extremism at a broader societal level. With regards to this research, these conceptual insights have been explored while considering the gender dynamics, that is to say, the (active) role of women in violent conflict. I pursue this approach by exploring the cases where scholars have identified and

explicated the role of women in (violent) conflicts (such as Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Germany, Spain, Nepal etc.).

Chapter 3 presents the case of Swat and introduces the readers to the contextual dynamics within which the Talibanization emerged. It also discusses the intensity of violence in the region and severe socio-economic impacts faced by the local communities. This chapter will be followed by a detailed account of the (active) role of female in the violent conflict in Swat (during 2007 – 2009). While framing the women, the chapter will analyze the mechanism that was adopted by the Taliban regime to mobilize the female segment of the society to support their kinetic agendas. To this end, various exercised strategies will be explored which were gender-centric in nature. Overall, this analysis will suffice to highlight the unique role that women in Swat played in order to (actively) support the objectives of Taliban movement under the leadership of Mullah Fazlullah.

Chapter 4 returns to the research objectives and reframes the women in violent conflict with regard to the case of Swat. It explores the significance of the findings for violent conflict emergence in a context where women have played a prominent role. Such an empiricist and theorized explanation are important to assist the post-conflict development-related policies that aim to ensure sustainable peace in Swat. Finally, the thesis summarizes the key findings of the research and provides (gender-centric) recommendations that may be considered to enhance a positive and productive role of women in peace and security.

2. Literature Review

After the 9/11 attack in 2001, terrorism, jihad and the radicalization process has received immense attention from researchers and scholars (e.g., Koehler, 2014). Even then, the term radicalization has no universally accepted definition. Different scholars and policymakers have defined it differently. Policymakers have given two definitions, which emphasis on two different ideas. Firstly, it focuses on violent radicalization, which is all about the use of violence to achieve the targeted aims. Secondly, on the wider lens, it emphasis the acceptance of bringing change in a society, which could be risky for democracy and it may involve in the use of violence to get the specified intentions (Borum, 2011).

Danish intelligence service (PET) has defined violent radicalization as: “a process by which a person to an increasing extent accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means, including terrorism, in an attempt to reach a specific political/ideological objective” (Borum, 2011). Borum (2011) is of the view that radicalization is the adoption of certain beliefs and actions by an individual that motivates him/her involvement in extremist activity, specifically toward civilian.

Wilner and Dubouloz (2010) conveys a similar notion, while discussing on home-grown extremism: “Radicalization is a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence. It is both a mental and emotional process that prepares and motivates an individual to pursue violent behavior”. It has been further argued that the available literature on radicalization is rather limited: it primarily answers the question “why” and often ignores the “how aspect” (Borum, 2011).

To get a deeper understanding of the radicalization process, it is necessary to shed light on the setting, which exposes individuals to radicalization. Such a Setting is formed through direct interaction of a person to events and objects through their senses and the way they react to media, like television and the internet. It depends upon the features and characteristic of the setting that either to what extent it influences an individual tendency terrorism tendencies or routine socialization practices. These characteristics also include networking with authorities' family and friends (Bouhana & Wikström 2011). Different settings have been discussed in the literature that provides an enabling environment to the radicalizing agents; they consist of educational institutes, bookshops, mosques, prisons and refugee centers (Munton et al. 2011). In recent times, it has been noticed that these settings are moving towards private areas due to an increased investigation by authorities (Bouhana & Wikström 2011). The cause of these settings is to provide a proper arrangement to make possible the social bond between agents and the one who is being targeted (ibid). The cause of these settings is to provide a proper arrangement to make possible the social bond between agents and the one who is being targeted (ibid). In the context of the growing rate of radicalization, CTD observing that the radicals next generation would be more likely from formal educational institutes rather than madrasas (Ali, 2017).As already been witnessed in the case of Saad Aziz from IBA in Safora incident of Karachi (Ali,2017).

The authorities have majorly regarded the internet as an important setting to encourage radicalization (Silber and Bhatt 2007). The role of the internet has been witnessed in multiple cases of radicalization of individuals. In case of Germany, the existed data showed the importance of the internet in the process of radicalization in the case of 249 individuals out of 789 who left or wished to leave for Iraq and Syria from Germany. The internet was the only influencing factor at the initial stages of the radicalization process for 17 percent of these people. Other factors, in addition to the

internet, such as peer groups and religious seminars also had some influential role in the radicalization of the remaining individuals. However, it is quite challenging to determine that to what extent the internet play a role in the radicalization process (Leede, Haupeleisch, Katja & Natter, 2007). For youth, the internet is as much important as the peer group when considering the process of radicalization. The internet is generally found to be more common in the radicalization process of women than men are; rendering women is relatively more vulnerable for radicalization through the internet than men (Leede et al., 2007).

In 2016 a German journalist investigated why the young segment of society finds the extremist so attractive on the internet. After making Facebook account of a teenager of 18 years old girl and liked the famous German Islamic preacher named as Pierre Vogel. Which led to contacts with different individuals i.e. men and women who were available to answer any query she had. Soon after, she started getting friend requests from various accounts who presented themselves in veils, arms, and disguises. They guided her according to their understanding and thought her their rules and regulations, for instance, wearing the veil and avoiding listening to music. Similarly, over time they start sending them videos to show them their way life and try to appeal them towards the teaching of Daesh/ISIS and depicting the violence exercised by the West over Muslims. In this way she was invited to Syria finally, this whole process took only two weeks from initial contact to the invitation of Syria (Leede et al., 2007).

The ideal type of radicalization through the internet can be explained in four different phases. After a short introductory coordination phase with an ordinary user, the direction heads towards Salafist content. *Which* is connected to joining various Facebook groups and websites, and increased contact (friendship) with the like-minded people characterized as Islamist this results in a change of display picture and variation in interests? In the next level, violent Salafism is clearly supported.

In the end, the old friends, who do not agree with the person's newly adopted ideology are blocked on the social networking platforms and tend to share the videos in which the Muslims are shown as victims by West. This entire process leads an individual to join the Jihadist movement and encouraged him/her to live his/her lives according to sharia (Leede et al., 2007).

Numerous cases in Germany have exhibited, that women not only get radicalize through the internet but they also play an active role in the propagation of messages in order to attract other women of society. Through these messages, they are encouraged to move to Syria where they get married to the combatants. The marriage with a man from their circle (jihadi Fighter) is adored and romanticized for religious women. As a propagandist, they present their lifestyle to other women in a glorified form, which is free from all sorts of religious discrimination. (Leede et al., 2007).

Blogs are also used for this purpose, as witnessed in the case of a Blogger from Germany, who named herself as muhjira (immigrant). She wrote under the title of 'True Heroine' in which she idealized her life in Syria in terms of a fairy tale. She expressed her freedom of wearing a veil without hearing mockery. She also mentioned her role in finding girls for jihadi men (to get married) (Diehl, Gude, & Schmid, 2015).

This, however, is not restricted to Germany: incidents of women moving from Spain to Syria and Iraq, for the cause of ISIS, have also been reported. These constituted 10 percent (21) in a number of the total 218 individuals: the majority of them were of the age group from 19 to 28 years (Carvalho, 2017). According to Winterbotham and Pearson, the percentage of women is more than men in the radicalization process through the internet. As 55.6% of the arrested women were radicalized through the internet and 30.8% of men on the other side. Silvia Celestin, who was

working as a cleaner at the hotel. She was converted Muslim and was living in Cadiz where she had married to Moroccan man and arrested in the age of 44 from Lanzorota island (Canary Island). She started working a propagandist to make other people radicalized and particularly young girls. She was more focused to get the potential candidate from Facebook candidates, active from her two fake Facebook accounts and later the contacts were directed on WhatsApp and telegram. Women on Facebook revealed during a public conversation that Celestine had contacted her somehow and properly invited her to Syria as she was a supporter of Daesh (Carvalho, 2018).

The female Jihadist group through the internet was bonded by the common ideology and given the name *Umm* that means mothers or mothers to be in the future (Carvalho, n.d). They are aimed to bring on the same platform for the common ideology and to induce that particular ideology in the future generation of embracing a jihadist mindset. Their contact with each other on the internet considered themselves as a sister who shares the same ideology (Carvalho, 2014).

The growing use of technology, particularly the internet (in the form of Social media) is one of the important sources of communication, which is largely used by the militants for expanding their circles in terms of recruitments training, fundraising and circulating their propaganda. Social media become the easiest way of communication, not only within the terrorist organization but also to target society. 30 million people active users of Facebook in Pakistan, which is one, click away from the world to access. (Khan, 2017). Terrorist organizations in Pakistan target the educated youth to radicalize through Facebook easily. It is shocking to know that these terrorist groups have such large circles on Facebook, like Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASJW) has around 200 pages and Jeay Sindh Muttahida Mahaz (JSMM) circle is consist of 160 pages, Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP) using 148 and Sipah-E-Muhammad with 45 pages (Khan, 2017).

Similarly, the NYPD intelligence division study on the internet has recognized it as a contributor to the process of radicalization (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). In this study, the author further describes the significance of the internet during the process of radicalization (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). Today in this modern time, the internet has been facilitating the terrorist organization in their activities. It is an easy, cheap and feasible way to communicate or to convince thousands of people across the world to join their movement and to become a part of their network, which in turn leads to change their nonviolent behavior into violent. (Koehler, 2014). ISIS largely use social media to increase their supporters by propagating their propaganda like one of the Australian doctor, who serves in the ISIS hospital in Raqa as well as work as a recruiter on youtube. US and UK are fourth and tenth respectively in the world for IS supporting twitter users, indicate a strong online support for ISIS.

Another recent case of Noreen Laghari medical student of Pakistan was radicalized through social media from Iraq and was prepared to attack Easter. Initially, females were encouraged to support these groups in fundraising and Logistic support but later they are motivated for an active role to pick up the arms in battlefields if it is necessary (Khan, 2017). These recruiters of the extremist groups make their minds in the way to reject their husbands and parents if they are forbidding them from Jihad. TTP's induction of females in Jihad is a harder shift in the soil of Pakistan (ibid). The fanatics have different narratives to influence people in terms of radicalization. (Bouhana & Wikström, 2011). In AQIR perspective, radicalizing settings are the settings that justify the use of violence in the context of social, religious and political motives through a favorable interpretation of Islamic faith. The encouraged way of Al Qaida narrative to radicalize people is the use of Quranic verses to indicate that they are grounded in religion and whatever say or act is religiously

justified (Thornton). This has been witnessed in Pakistan and Palestine, where suicide bombers are being satisfied with the obsession of glorification of martyrdom (Hafez, 2006).

Terrorists are not terrorist or extremist by birth, but the process which leads a normal person towards this mental 'illness', generally referred to as radicalization, consist of certain phases. A person, during the process of radicalization, undergoes three stages as elaborated by Doosje et al, (2016). Firstly, an important factor that drives a person towards radicalization is "the sensitivity phase" in which a person experiences cognitive disturbance. This can either be caused by the loss of significance in society in the form of poverty, poor career in terms of uncertain future or domestic conditions as well as it can be due to something which he understands is not good or is unjust and which should be changed according to his will. Therefore, a person who understands that the government does not work properly will show less trust in the system and would prefer to change the society to bring justice. (Slootman & Tillie, 2006). These are the factors, which encourage a person to look towards terrorist mastermind instructions in quest of satisfaction. As these minds are notably young, and they are being thought or showed their certain futures and ultimate happiness hereafter, so the feeling of injustice in a person within the society makes him vulnerable to terrorist groups. This makes it easy to control the mind of that particular person or group (ibid).

For example, In case of FATA as they think they are being discriminated in their own state and these feelings of injustice becomes the main factor of hatred against state. Following the sensitivity phase, group affiliation is the central phase of the radicalization process. In this phase, a person is committed to a particular extremist group, and become clear about his path, or way of actions, which he has to follow to achieve his intentions. Strengthening his relations within the group, the person tends to weaken his ties with other close relations. It is the time when a person gets bound

to the orders and instructions being received from their masterminds, in this way over the time he turns into a long-term member of that particular group. At this level, the radicalized person gets ready for future actions in the form of different coaching or training that impart him with the skills and abilities to perform task like suicide bombing etc. The third and final phase of this process is violent action, in which the person is mentally prepared to harm himself and as well as to bear the loss of even the close relations. This is when he is completely transformed into a terrorist.

Violent radicalization and extremism are generally associated with a male segment of a Society. In terrorist organizations, men usually occupy the role of combatants. The small number of women in terrorist groups is misconstrued and as perceived as insignificant in the group. The deployment of women helps the terrorist circle to achieve its aims in different possible ways. In a conflict situation, the women are frequently showed or perceived as helpless, inferior, kind and victim, which also promote gender stereotypes. Therefore, women in society are either not perceived as a potential terrorist or their involvement in terrorist activity is not perceived as dangerous as that of the men. For this reason, women have been a great attraction to the terrorist organization in recruitment/mobilization activities.

The available literature on the LTTE tells that both segment of society; i.e. men and women, can have the same opportunities, employment processes and training (Davis, 2008). One-third of LTTE members are consist of women according to the project of Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies Terrorism, which shows that they did not face any discrimination on the bases of sex at different levels like in exercises and conflict operations (Manoharan, 2003). Similarly a large number of women involvement has been observed in the case of Sierra Leone War that lasts for eleven years (1991-2002), the observed percentage of females of different age groups was between 10 -30 percent (Richards, 1996; Mazurana & Carlson, 2004; McKay & Mazurana, 2004). The fighters of

another group abducted a large number of these female fighters during attacks on their rural villages (Coulter, 2008).

A similar trend has been observed in the case of Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan, Central Asian republic, which serve as an important example to observe the relationship between gender and violent extremism in post-soviet. Kyrgyzstan is the country having the largest number of citizens in the region, moving to Iraq and Syria to join Dash/ISIS. During 2011-2016, the number of individuals traveled to Syria and Iraq was 863. The number of women was 188 or 20% out of those who traveled from Kyrgyzstan to join ISIS at the end of 2016 (Speckhard et al., 2017). The extremist involved in different incidents, St. Petersburg Metro attack in 2017, Boston Marathon bombing and the attack of Istanbul Airport in 2016 had links with Kyrgyzstan (MacFarquhar & Nechepurenko, 2017). The local data indicate that more than 400 people are imprisoned, who are involved in different extremist attacks (UNODC, 2018).

Indonesia has witnessed the involvement of women in armed conflicts in three major waves, initially from Darul Islam to Jemaah Islamiyah and lately IS running groups (Nuraniyah, 2018). Darul Islam (DI) started working in 1942 and struggled to form an Islamic state in Indonesia (Mahmood, n.d). They started recruiting females in the 1980s in order to convey their ideology through various religious gatherings in institutes like universities and schools. Similarly, JI also focused on recruiting females through family networks. Another extremist group working in Indonesia known as Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) employed the female fellows as an active combatant.

Back in 2014, the women in Indonesia receive proper training of firing, self-protection and lobbing grenades in order to prepare them against security forces. The females themselves wished to secure

martyrdom through these activities. The role of women in terrorism is evident from different activities. For example in 2017 the authorities of Philippine arrested Farhan Maute identified as the leader of Maute group, her two sons, named Abdullah and Umar, were associated with the same Maute group and were involved in the siege of Marwai city. According to authorities, she was the one who leads her sons into such activities who were also later arrested (Fonbuena, 2017).

The same pattern has observed in Pakistan in the form of three major waves- firstly the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s; Secondly the Kashmir conflict; and contemporary in the formation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan as well in IS activities. In Afghan Jihad the women provided the financial and logistic support to mujahidin (Noor, Saba, & Hussain, 2005). In the case of Kashmir conflict, women had supported the combatants in terms of playing the role of carriers for arms, informants for militants as well provided them food and shelter. Women also helped them in escaping during the Indian army crackdowns in the regions of civilian (Anjum, 2011). After the emergence of Tehrike Taliban Pakistan, women's role in the conflict has become more visible as the Taliban leader (Mullah Fazlullah) motivated the feminine gender of Swat to contribute in the conflict (Mohsin, 2013). Women also played the role of informants for the male fighters of TTP and help in generating funds by conveying their message.

The radicalization of female in Pakistan has not yet been seriously worked upon because women are not perceived as an equal part of sociopolitical activities as men are. Furthermore, they are also considered less likely to resort to any such (radical/terrorist) action (Yusuf, 2017). However, it is largely possible as many such incidents are seen in society. One such example is suicide bombing in Peshawar of 8 August 2011, where 14 years old girl blew herself up close to police check post near Lahori gate, before blowing herself she shouted as (Allah-o-Akbar) Allah is great and took the lives of seven persons (Saif, 2013). The suicide bomber of Qazi Hussain Ahmed convey (the

late leader of Jamiat Islami) on November 11, 2012, was also a woman, she was attired in a burqa and attacked a check post in Mohmand Agency. (Saif, 2013). Noreen Leghari, medical student and daughter of an academician was arrested in Lahore due to her plan of suicide bombing on the Christian community in an Easter. She is clear/distinct (Yusuf, 2017).

Pakistan has seen a large number of women involvements in the worldwide jihadist organization since 2015, like Al Qaida in Indian sub-continent and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Shaheen wing for females of AQIS has reportedly skilled 500 female suicide bombers and Al Zikra academy network of women in Karachi working for ISIS in terms of raising funds and matchmaking happenings.

The case of three women with their 12 kids who left Pakistan for Syria in 2015 indicates the active role of women in Militancy. As women play a central or an important role in societies like Pakistan, and if they are being a part of a terrorist organization, indirectly they are making the generation of jihadist minds. Moreover, a woman from TTP, which took the lives of 45 persons, also attacked World food program distribution center in FATA in 2010 and more than 80 people got injured. Bushra Cheema with her children left for Syria and sent a voice message to her spouse that she loves Allah and his religion, and asked him to at least pray for her and their children if he is unable to join them. The recruiters of AQIS and ISIS reportedly target the upper-middle educated class of society from main cities like Lahore, Karachi, and Sialkot.

TTP has attempted to radicalize the educated women in Pakistan through releasing a magazine in English language, titled Sunnat -e- khula termed after Muslim female fighter in history, consist of 45 pages (Jadoon, Mahmood, 2017). It seeks to gather women to have wage jihad against the discrimination being faced by Muslims in Afghanistan Syria and Iraq. It was not the first time to influence the women in Pakistan; they have published other propaganda magazines named Dabiq

and Rumiyaah, which has a separate portion for women's status, role and involvement in the global caliphate. Attracting Female jihadi recruitments, which had played supportive roles in case of the Middle East and Africa, is also being practiced in Pakistan by TTP. Attempts of TTP and ISIS showed that their focus is to the trapped educated class of women in Pakistan, which can later spread their ideology among other women in society.

Traditional madrassas are not the only breeding place of terrorists. It can be achieved through isolating a person from the mainstream segment of society, where his mind is made to reject the dominant norms and values. Home-based gatherings or Dars group has played an important role in radicalizing women in different cities of Pakistan. One of such important Dars groups is Al Huda. Headquarter in Islamabad, it has and continues to expand its presence and functions to other cities of the country (Ahmad, 2010). Sadaf Ahmad, In Her book *Transforming Faith: The story of Al Huda and Islamic Revivalism among Urban Pakistani Women* has argued organization learned by Farhat Hashmi tends to radicalize women by encouraging them to dissociate themselves from certain routine practices of the society. The institute run by Farhat Hashmi supports radicalism and rigid way of leading the life (ibid). This also invited criticism on Hashmi when she was abroad. Considering her views or her interpretation of the religion Islam as radicle, a part of the Muslim women population of Canada wanted her to leave the country. The cause of this tension was Hashmi's rejection of different practices, such as photography, celebrations of birthdays including that of Prophet (PBUH) etc. Arguably, the teachings of Al Huda transform the women into narrow-minded individuals who tend to exhibit lesser acceptance towards diversity (ibid). An example of Hashmi apparent extreme perception is her previous assertion about the people who lost their lives in 2005 earthquake that it was due to their involvement in irreligious and disreputable activities (Ghyas, 2015).

The eruption of conflict needs ignition and fuel to propagate and expand; this fuel comprising of both military and economic aspects. According to the studies of Philippe Le Billon and Sara H. Collinson on the political economy of war, Since both sides of the conflict, neither State nor combatant relies on superpower but they choose their own ways of financing the conflict (Thompson, 2007). The warriors or combatant groups hold a certain niche of self-regenerating mechanisms that adheres to a set of ideologies they want to be implemented. At the same time, they strategize a selective mechanism to keep their cause budgeted and well economized. That can be accomplished by reliance on natural resources and criminal activities (drug trafficking, extortion, illicit taxation, charity, ransom). To identify or examine the root causes of conflict, it is necessary to have a better understanding of gender relationship with conflict as they can be the economic engines of conflict.

In survey active participation of women is seen in 38 out of 55 countries (Stewart, 2010), where women have different causes and motives, those are either religious, economic or political (USAID, 2007). The relationship between women and conflict are found differently as they may have different roles individually or being a group of a community like forced participants of conflict or as an active participant or supporter of warriors as a cook, caretaker, informant, fighter, as well financing them through numerous ways. Active participation of women is seen in history from the female Amazon warrior tribe of ancient Greece to the female suicide bombers of South Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East (Vogel, Porter & Keibell, 2014). Increased number of women has been observed as suicide bombers, which has attracted attention worldwide. 43 percent of women were suicide bombers in Russian /Chechen conflict and women were involved in some manner in the execution of 81 percent of these attacks (Vogel, 2014). Women in most of the conflicts are observed active in previous times i.e., Mozambique, Vietnam, Nepal, Sri Lanka,

Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Rwanda (USAID, 2007). The Christian Fair has attempted to height light the role of Pakistani women in supporting terrorism. She finds out that women are more supportive of the militant group which has women outreach programs like Siphah-e-Sahaba -e-Pakistan (Fair,2018).

3. Understanding the Emergence of the Taliban (2007 – 2009): A Gender Perspective

This research aims to explore the strategies used by the Taliban during the violent conflict of Swat, which continued for two years (2007 to 2009). Furthermore, this study also unveils the impact of these strategies and how the women were targeted, in particular to mobilize them to contribute towards the movement and the subsequent role they played. In-depth semi-structured interviews led to a rich data collection. While analyzing this data, various themes were identified concerning the Taliban movement and the consequent multifaceted experiences of the Swat community. These themes include the emergence of Taliban; mode and Impact of communication; and contribution towards the movement.

3.1. The Context: Swat, Taliban and Violent Conflict

The conflict in Swat can be traced back to the emergence of Sufi Muhammad Khan, and subsequently the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariah-Mohammadi (TNSM), during the 1990s. TNSM, as a movement, gained national significance in 1994 and was interpreted as “Tor Patki” (Black Turban). The movement placed and presented itself in the public realm as being committed to introducing Sharia and Islamic courts in the region. However, the State of Pakistan through military actions and forces deployments (Kronstadt, 2010); countering the emergence of the movement. It proved to be a short time operation that ended following negotiations between the two parties; this led the government to approve selective terms of TNSM regarding the sharia courts. However, this negotiated settlement also did not last for long (Orakzai, 2011) owing to various reasons.

Later, in 2001, Sufi Muhammad was found to play an active role in the Afghanistan conflict with almost ten thousand followers against the US forces (Roggio, 2007). The then-president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, imprisoned the leader Sufi Muhammad and put an end to TNSM. Following his imprisonment, his son-in-law, Mullah Fazlullah, took his mission forward and (closely) associated the movement to Tehrike-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP); which had appeared in the tribal regions of Pakistan – along the Afghan border – as a result of 9/11 incident in Afghanistan. It later spread to other regions as well, including Swat and its adjacent areas i.e. Buner, Upper Dir, Lower Dir and Shangla (Rome, 2008); making Swat among the regions affected the worst due to militancy. The activities of the Taliban, in Swat, reached their peak in the years 2007-2009 when the Taliban targeted the government buildings, like schools, police station and hospitals, and murdered innocent people including the elected government representatives, security personnel and local Mashran (leaders) (Ali, 2012; Rome, 2008). Taliban constructed their Markaz, which also was used as a court based on Islamic teachings in order to handle cases of varying natures (Orakzai, 2011). To get control over the region, the Taliban also challenged the local Masharan system of Swat (ibid) and weakened the working of government and local customary systems (Rahi, 2011).

To settle this conflict through negotiations, several attempts had been made, but they stayed ineffective. Consequently, the government deployed forces to counter the militants and launched the operation Rahe-e- Rast in the Swat valley (Elahi, 2015). The operation resulted in the internal displacement of about two to three million people from Malakand division, which also includes Swat (WB and ADB, 2009). These people were temporarily settled by the government and/or nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in different regions across Pakistan or else they rented houses for themselves mostly in the regions of Swabi, Charsada, Peshawar, Mardan, and

Islamabad. The internally displaced persons (IDPs) faced many social, economic and physiological difficulties during that time. The episode of militancy/terrorism in Swat not only affected the economy of the residents but also of Pakistan in general. According to the government of Pakistan, the state faced a loss of 35 million rupees in the Agriculture sector only, which is a huge amount for any developing state like Pakistan. Conferring the local media, it is estimated that 55 to 70% of fruits wasted due to this militancy in Swat period. Since Swat is well-known for its tourism and attracts the tourist from across the world, it experienced a loss of 60 billion rupees in the hotel industry during 2007-2009 (Ali. N.d).

One of the major targets of the Taliban was the police department of the region. This resulted in more than 800 personnel abandoning their seats or taking long leaves (Roggio, 2009). Taliban had the strategy of kidnapping and killing the people who were against them. Many government officials, Mashran (leaders) and office-bearers were targeted. A dominant figure, Pir Samiullah, was assassinated in 2008 as he was opposing the Taliban and was associated with the government; his body was later hanged in public (Malik, 2015). Through such activities, they instilled their fear among the locals. Women were ordered to stay at their homes and were banned from going to markets. The male segment of the society was commanded to grow the beards so that the looks may be Islamic. Barbers of the region were ordered to stop shaving the beard of men. Taliban announced that those without a beard would be punished as well as the barber involved.

The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were also targeted as they were accused of encouraging the western culture in the region of Swat. The Taliban presented their addressing of the rights of women as the conspiracy of the West (Malik, 2015). Since the Mingora city of Swat is famous for music and dance, the dance professionals were threatened, and later, some of these women were beheaded and their heads were publically hanged. The Taliban in the region of

Malakand attacked one of the famous Pashtu singers, Sardar Yusufzei, and his group in 2008; resultantly, the severely injured harmonium player died in the hospital. In addition to this, the Taliban entered the house of a local dancer of Swat, Shabana, who violated the rules made by them when she danced at a marriage ceremony near Maidam violated the law and order she was badly beaten with guns amongst the shouts that she ought to die. Despite the constant appeals of pardon, with the condition that she would not dance again, from her mother, the dancer was murdered; so this may be made clear that music is not acceptable in the Taliban rule (Ibid). After prohibiting all the sources of entertainment, the Taliban introduced the CDS in markets, which consisted of their speeches containing their motives and literature on jihad. They also used Naats to attract the people to join them or wage jihad.

At this time, Taliban introduced their own production house named “AL-Fateh” studio had CDS comprise of Jihad motivational speeches as well the recording of those people who were killed for the cause of their interpreted religion. One of the initial plans of the Taliban after in power, was to destroy the education system in the locality particularly the girl's education system .Girls were warned not to attend the schools and the school’s administration were also were threatened to close their schools otherwise get ready for the consequences. The Taliban in Swat (Roggio, 2009) destroyed more than 200 schools. The Taliban, (followers of Mullah Fazlullah) also wished to destroy the earliest heritage site of Swat, statues of Buddha being there for centuries and the historical stone carvings on the basis that these are against the teachings of Islam. This act of Taliban showed that they are following Afghanistan’s Taliban who destroyed the two old large Buddha statues in Bamiyan in 2001. The extremist also destroyed the Swat museum to deprive the locals forever from their heritage, but luckily, the provincial government took timely action to move the important assets to a safer place (Malik, 2015).

The following three sections present the three main themes, which were, identify thought the data analysis of the collected data. These themes enable us to understand the context and the role (direct and indirect) played by the women in the violent conflict of Swat.

3.2 Understanding the Emergence and Introduction of the Taliban Movement in Swat: Gender Perspective

This theme discusses how the Taliban emerged in the region of Swat and how its emergence was perceived by the local population. Largely the movement was viewed as moral and virtuous one since the Taliban presented them as a force that would transform their region into a religious one. Mullah Radio had portrayed the Taliban leaders as the sympathizers of natives. It communicated that the foremost reason for them coming to the region was to serve the local community. The people of Swat did not have prior experience related to these sorts of propaganda or the violent conflict that can arise because of it. The locals of Swat were completely new to this ideology and unluckily they were the ones who suffered the most in various aspects of life – for adopting this ideology. Several respondents from different villages of Swat revealed, that they had no idea that the Taliban would end up doing what they did; destroying the peace of the region and devastating its beauty. The interviewees have clearly stated that during the early months of Taliban emergence, they were completely unaware of the “grand project” of movement as one of the respondents told, “We were unfamiliar with what they were doing behind the scene at that time. The people of Swat considered them as their well-wishers who would bring positive changes in the region according to the Quran and Sunna and would eventually bring comfort to the lives of locals. One of the respondents from Imam Deri shared her personal experience regarding the Taliban emergence, “We thought that they are working for Islam and promoting Islamic teaching in our society, so we assisted them in the best way we could” (“Sara”, personal interview, Imam Dheri, November 25, 2019).

Understanding the experiences of the community members of Imam Deri is pivotal because of Mullah Fazlullah's headquarter (Markaz) was established there. This served as the reason for them being the eye-witnessed of the conflict right from the start. The primary tool used to manipulate the minds of locals for achieving their goals was a religion (Islam). Most of the respondents told that it was the Islamic ideology that primarily mobilized the people of Swat and encouraged them to join the movement. The Taliban presented themselves as the flag bearers of Islam who are working to impose Islamic system (Sharia) in the region, and it is the religious and moral duty of every Muslim to support them in that virtuous cause. It was a relatively much easier way to use words like Islam, Quran and Sunna to influence the minds of residents. One of the interviewees indicated, "We were convinced by the verses of Quran, and so we were left with the only option of supporting them." ("Samina", personal interview, Matta, November 25, 2019). Mullah Fazalullah initially needed financial support to establish and construct his markaz and Madrasa in Imam Deri, which was his home village. For this purpose, he used different ways to attract the locals towards his movement. During the fieldwork, one of the respondents disclosed," According to the Mullah (Fazlullah), supporting the construction of markaz and madrassa is the easiest way to secure Jannah (Heaven)." Many respondents accepted that the ideological narrative produced by the Taliban where multiple family members started to support the Taliban in several capacities moved them. One of the respondents revealed, "During the Taliban regime, we used to give Zakat to Taliban initially for the construction of markaz and madrassa and later on for other different activities they had at that time."("Razia", personal interview, Matta, November 27, 2019).

The Taliban in Swat appeared with the slogan to enact Sharia in the region. They used the name of Islam to appeal to the natives and get success in achieving their goals. Primarily because of this, locals got attracted towards them and started supporting them. This helped them construct their

own Markaz in Imam Deri (a village that remained center of Taliban throughout their activities in Swat. Furthermore, Mullah Fazlullah personally belonged to this place. This place also used to attract many people for the Jumma prayer because of being well known among the natives. The Taliban exploited this opportunity and gave some positions of authority to the locals. Thus, every village had its own masher (leader). The Taliban also used various other means to mobilize the communities in their favor; one of them, in Imam Deri, was to give food to the locals who come to pray Jumma. Over time the message of the Taliban starts spreading to Kanju, Kabal, Mata and Kuza Bandi and later they became well-known in Swat valley.

They posted their persons as Taliban commanders in different villages and had given some positions to the locals and started giving training to them. Different training camps were arranged at Futare, which is a place near Matta. At this site, they trained the locals particularly the teenagers to get them prepared for suicide bombings. Some trainers were specially called from Afghanistan for the purpose. This was followed by the girls' schools being destroyed by the Taliban and threatening the school authorities for their closure. Consequently, this stopped the girls from going to school out of fear. Another target of the Taliban was the police department; they kidnapped and/or killed many police personnel in order to discourage people from serving in police. They used to make videos of the blasts they carry out, for instance, blasting the government buildings, etc., and then made the videos public in the market in the form of CDs named Swat 1, Swat 2 and so on. The statements of the suicide bombers were also recorded before they carried out the blasts and included in the content of the CDs, in which they used to invite others to sacrifice themselves for the cause of Islam so they may go to Heaven. The shopkeepers were threatened to sell these CDs and those of Naat etc. instead of other entertainment content like music and movies. Many people joined the Taliban because of fear. This was the time when the Pakistan army started its

operation against the Taliban in Swat who had murdered many innocent people (locals and security personnel alike). Whenever the Taliban saw any stranger near their camps, they would kill instantaneously kill him as if the person was spying on them.

The way different mullahs, propagating the same ideology as that of Mullah Fazalullah, were preaching made the locals believe that their support to the ideas of Fazlullah is in fact, serving the religion Islam and promoting Islamic values in the Swat valley. They had challenged the writ of government by portraying it as un-Islamic and unethical. Mullah's way of communication with locals was inspirational; their consistent referring to the Quran and Sunna appealed the locals and stirred them to act. The natives of the region not only used to listen to their messages themselves but also encouraged other members of the society to listen and follow them. One of the respondents from Kuza Bandi expounded, "Our minds were primed through listening to them constantly, that the government is not sincere with us and the representatives are largely involved in corruption and in the end, we would be the sufferers" ("Sara", personal interview, Imam Dheri, November 25, 2019). Taliban had skillfully encouraged the natives in their support employing various ways; one of them was by questioning the very idea of Pakistan. They inaugurated their own radio channel (FM 96) and publically announced that they would handle all court cases according to sharia and that no Kufaar (infidels) have the right to rule here as this country (Pakistan) got independence in the name of Islam. In this way, they started to solve the inhabitants' court cases, petitioners of which were they tired because of their long durations. They were successful in solving some impending cases concerning land. The Taliban also focused their energies on solving the social issues in Swat.

Most of the respondents of the research revealed that they primarily had an admirable image of the mullah and Taliban due to their actions and promises they had made with the local residents. One

of the respondents from Kuza Bandi, which is among the most affected regions from the conflict, stated, “We considered them as a ray of hope that would eradicate the problems of our society” (“Zarshala”, personal interview, Kuza Bandi, November 25, 2019). The social issues highlighted by the Taliban were usually related to those ills in the society, which every member of a community seeks to eliminate in order to make the particular community prosperous. A respondent from Matta stated, “We thought we would get rid of all the problems we are facing through Taliban, therefore we started assisting them” (“Samina”, personal interview, Matta, November 25, 2019).

The Taliban used to publically punish the “sinners” for their deeds, like that of robbery, in a large ground beside the markaz in Imam Deri. The preferred day, mostly for punishing the wrongdoers was Friday. The reason behind this choice of the day was the Friday prayer gatherings, which facilitated relatively more people to witness the execution. The public execution was also meant to instill fear among the locals for committing such crimes and to impart a lesson in them. They also restricted women from coming out of their homes without being accompanied by a Mehram. They pasted posters in public places like markets to ensure the propagation of their orders. Presenting this as according to the teachings of Islam made the local community not only abide by the orders but also believe that the Mullahs were propagating the true spirit of Islam. This built trust among the public on the Mullahs and their activities; as a result of which they were able to gather many more supporters.

Moreover, the Taliban portrayed that their movement aimed to bring equality in society and stand by the poor for their rights. This particular issue was never raised or seriously worked upon in the past. Those who were against the Masharan system of the Pashtun society of Swat also supported the movement for being the flag bearers of equality. The researcher came across many such respondents from the lower socio-economic status whom the Taliban had promised of giving them

their rights. This facilitated in developing a positive image of the movement in society. This research, however, also came across some individuals who did not agree with the Taliban's ideology. They were of the view that they were living in a peaceful region, but the emergence of the Taliban had badly disrupted their lives and promoted fear, hatred and terrorism rather than spreading Islam or imposing sharia in the region. This is evident from the views of one of the respondents, "Taliban have played with the future of our kids; many children of our society, especially girls, have left education due to their fear."

3.3 Mode and Impact of Communication

This theme presents the means used by the Taliban to communicate with the local population and the impact they had with particular emphasis on women. The Taliban, in addition to relying on interpersonal communication, effectively used the mass communication platforms to spread their message throughout the population. Media plays an important role in the construction and destruction of a society. Evidence of this is the role of radio in the Second World War when the Nazis for circulating their message used it. Media in the form of radio was also used by the US against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the war between communalism and capitalism. The radio is easy to use and access for many people in Pakistan too (khan, Pembecioølu, 2015). In Pakistan, particularly KPK, Radio remained the key means of propagating the message, which was inherently destructive for the society. The Taliban also employed this mode of communication to reach out to the public in swat; the FM radio, FM 96 in particular, had played a pivotal role in circulating their message.

As the Taliban gained control over the region, FM Radio was left as the only source of getting information. The main reason for this was that the Taliban were against television and ordered the locals to bring their televisions to a designated place where they could be burned. Because of this,

the number of radio listeners in Swat was its peak during the Taliban regime. The timings for the broadcast for these radio stations were fixed. It was largely observed that the women stopped consuming television content and the programs on the state-run radio stations. One of the respondents told, “During that time, when we used to wake up in the morning, we had no devotion towards families and homes, but we kept waiting desperately for radio broadcasting.” It was the only source of information then which was also easily accessible to each resident. (“Zarsanga”, personal interview, Imam Dheri, November 26, 2019)

One of the respondents explained,

The major focus of the government media content remained on dances, music etc. And if we look back into the history of Swat, our region has always preferred the Islamic rules and principles and promoted Gazi courts. With the passage of time, when those courts were not recognized (by the authority) and were regarded as null and void, people resisted that decision. In a similar way, the locals of Swat also supported the Taliban due to their claims of spreading Islam and Sunna. (“Aliya”, personal interview, Kuza Bandi, November 26, 2019)

In the Swat valley, Mullah’s language of communication was Pashtu, which is also the native language of the targeted region. This made the message easily understandable for everyone. The way the Mullahs highlighted the social issues of locals and kept focusing on fundamental rights, especially of women, indicated them as a religious and truthful person. Another thing highlighted by locals regarding FM radio was that they presented their argument with logic and psychology, which influenced the minds of particularly females quickly. Over time, due to the increasing number of supporters, it became difficult for authorities even to arrest Mullah Fazalullah as the

supporters also played the role of guards who would protect him from any harm. This has also been explained in the report (CRSS) published by the United Nations Development Program.

The researcher, during the fieldwork, discovered that the mullahs, apart from preaching their interpretation of Islam, also used to talk extensively about the rights of women and promised that they would help the women get their status in society according to Islam. Majority of the women interviewed for this study unfolded the fact that they were initially inclined towards the Taliban, but later, they were scared of them. The reasons they gave for the inclination towards the Taliban were the frequent mention of the Quran and the Sunna and the apparent aim of eradicating the social issues from the society. The most effective thing, which appeals the women, however, was the main thing they stepped forward for women was to raise voice for the rights of women granted them by Islam. The message propagated through the FM radio was impactful to the extent that a segment of the local population was willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause.

The ideology of the Taliban or the means they used to exploit the locals for their motives were that they would eradicate the social issues from the region. The reason the Taliban movement gained many supporters was that the social matters they focused on were presented in the cover of the religion. They emphasized on imposing the practice of veil (purdah) for women as the means to introduce Islamic values and discourage the society from adopting the western way of life. Secondly, they were also against drugs and drug traffickers; they wanted to establish a drug-free society.

Another social problem they focused to work on was to bring equality in the society, getting poor their rights and to put rich and poor segments of the community in the same class. It is a problem of our society which never being worked upon practically so the locals were very motivated to support them in their intentions. They challenged the writ of the government, by portraying it

corrupt and un-Islamic. Mullah on FM radio was constantly encouraging the local women that they would listen to them and would solve their problems; they use to face in society.

Once the Taliban got the authority and control over the region, they started using the FM channels for harmful ends. Since, until then, they had their roots strongly embedded in the region, it became increasingly difficult for the state institutions to control them. Most of the respondents unfolded, that when they came to know about the interests and motives of the Taliban they stepped backward but then it does not prove meaningful as their inclination towards the Taliban initially.

Contrary to that notion, the Taliban had used various strategies to instill fear among the public, which ultimately led them in assisting the Taliban movement. Some of the respondents revealed that the names of those locals that were or could be a hindrance to their mission were announced publically through the FM Channel. Following these announcements, these particular persons were either kidnapped or slaughtered. This helped them to establish their hold in the region. Even when a decade has passed following the end of the violent conflict of Swat, the residents of the locality are still unable to escape the fear that prevailed in those days; as was observed by the researcher while collecting data for this study.

3.4 Female Contribution towards Taliban Movement:

In the case of the Taliban movement in Swat, the female segment of the community had a major contribution in the form of economic and human resources. As the women are more emotional in nature and easy to get manipulated so in this way Taliban have majorly focused on women for contribution.

Over the course of time, the teachings of the Taliban largely inspired the local population in general, and the women in particular, to support the Taliban ideology and the movement through different means. The financial contributions made were mostly in the form of cash

and gold jewelry. This monetary assistance was primarily aimed for the construction of Markaz and madrassa, which laid the foundation for the movement. In the words of one respondent, “at that time, I only had a pair of gold earrings, which I got in my brother’s marriage, I gave it to them.” (“Shazia”, personal interview, Kuza Bandi, November 26, 2019).

The families, who were not able to support them financially, cooked food for them according to their capacity. One of the respondents told, “One of my uncles used to send cooked food for them in the form of *daig*, but later when he left their circle, he was killed” (ibid).

Several respondents of this research admitted that they were motivated to the extent that they were willing to sacrifice their beloved children for the cause; then it may be suicide bombing or any other activity the Taliban ordered or wish them to perform. The female community of Swat provided conferring the information received through conducting interviews from the females of Swat, the basic and major financial support given to the Taliban. This willingness for the sacrifice of children by the women of the Swat community was not only confined to that of the sons but was also extended to the sacrifice of daughters. One of the interviewees stated, “I don’t have sons, but I was ready to send my daughters for this cause” (“Kalsoom”, personal interview, Kuza Bandi, November 30, 2019).

One can imagine the motivation of a woman from this if she is even ready to sacrifice her children for the sake of Taliban movement. In the case of Swat when someone supported them, his name was properly announced through FM radio to motivate others for help. The influence of Radio broadcast on women’s life is one of the main aspects, which triggered and made the militant movement effective largely. Some of the interviewees revealed that Taliban acquired the assistance of women by highlighting their issues according to their interpretation of religion Islam. In this

way, they were convinced to support the Taliban movement. As it is known that, the mother's lap is the first school of the child, in the same way if the mother is following or promoting a movement ultimately their kids would follow her. Several informants unfolded the fact, the females of Swat not only encouraged their kids to follow the Taliban movement but also insisted and endorsed their husbands and another family member to support and join them in their activities. The major role played by women in Swat incident in response of listening to them regularly was their contribution in the form of funding. Financial backing is one of the major features, which keep the movement, or cycle continues for a longer time.

The women in Swat being confined to homes, had plenty of time to listen to Mullah's radio. Majority of the women respondents have confessed themselves that they have supported them in the best way they could. In the beginning, the mullah radio ordered the locals to burn the iniquities of your homes in the form of TV, computers, dish antennas. This strategy of mullah radio was to isolate the natives particularly women from the remaining world and he was successful largely. He skillfully focused on marginalized class of society and get their support. He gave a hope of society based on Islamic values to the locals and those who were fed-up from the prejudices and corrupt departments of government became the firm followers of Mullah Radio.

Jewelry is something to consider an honor for women in Pashtun society; they do not give it to anyone even to their families unless there is no other option left. But Mullah Radio had manipulated their minds in a way by giving them dreams of heaven and securing their future hereafter that they get ready to give them their jewelry and were insisting and encouraging their daughters and other women to offer them their gold jewelry too.

With their popularity then they picked weapons and that now our system would follow here. They ordered on FM Radio, that everyone should bring weapons they had in their homes. Mullah radio announced that sharia law had been imposed, so they started asking for collecting funds for the continuation of their activities. So most of the natives helped and supported in the way they could. Mullah FM used to come regularly in Assar time initially properly announced the names, those who gave them charity to appeal to others. In another step they stated, the need for public strength and that every home would have to give a person to us. Locals from different areas even from distant regions came and joined them in their movement and this is how they became a strength in the region of Swat.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Radicalization in the case of Swat can be visualized through the lens of Wilner and Dubouloz (2010), who highlighted that the attainment of religious, social and political goals validate the practice of indiscriminate violence and encourage the individual to pursue violent behavior in his definition of radicalization. The case study of Swat corresponds to this definition, as the residents of Swat were involved in violent activities for the cause of religion and to attain the Islamic goals interpreted by Mullah Fazlullah in the region of Swat Valley.

More than one strategy providing the setting to radicalization in the case of Swat. The setting, which makes the individual vulnerable to radicalization, is formed through the interpersonal interaction or his/her reaction to media in terms of internet or television. It can be different like the way they react to different settings. Similarly, in case of Swat the setting which exposed the individual to radicalization was initially through interpersonal interaction, and for this purpose the militants constructed the Markaz in Imam Deri from where they initiated their movement and secondly the major setting used to radicalize the residents of the region was FM radio which was easily accessible to everyone everywhere.

Traditional media were used to mobilize the locals of Swat to favor the cause unlike multiple cases where the digital form of media was used for this purpose. As mentioned earlier that blogs were also used for the purpose of radicalization. Primarily print was used to achieve their goals. But in case of Swat was different local media, primarily print were used to achieve their goals as the local journalists were threatened to write in favor of the Taliban and to propagate their message.

The process of radicalization experiences three phases: sensitivity phase, group affiliation phase and action as presented by Doosje et al. (2016). In the case of Swat, the reasons observed in the

sensitivity phase were either due to poverty or due to the lack of fundamental rights in case of females or any other social issues, which is also explained by Doosje et al (2016). Therefore, these indifferences encourage an individual to involve in violent activities for quest of satisfaction. As these minds are notably young as explained by (Slootman & Tillie, 2006). A similar thing is observed in Swat where the young people were involved in Suicide bombing. Following the sensitivity phase, the group affiliation phase is also applicable in the case of Swat violent conflict where those individuals who undergo with sensitivity phase started following the militant's rules and orders and associate themselves for the interpreted religious goals by Mullah Fazlullah. This is the phase where they became the blind followers of the group. As well, they also encouraged other individuals to come and join the movement. Which finally followed by the phase where the individuals get prepared for any violent action. So in the Focused case of Swat the individual even ready for suicide bombing and were also ready to sacrifice their kids for the cause of Islam in terms of encouraging them for suicide attack. Here they became a complete terrorist.

As the women have played a role in various conflicts around the world, similarly in the case of Swat the women have played an important role in violent conflict. Since 1970s, the women have contributed to Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In case of Srilanka conflict, the women have played different role i.e. propagating their message, recruitment as well as raising funds for the militants (Darden, 2019). The women in LTTE have played an active role as a suicide bomber also known as (black tigress). The First attack conducted by a female in Srilanka was in 1987 which was the worst attack happened in 1991. A young Srilanka woman, who has exploded a series of grenades on an election rally of former prime minister of India and son of Indira Gandhi in Tamil Nadu (province of India) both were killed on the spot with 14 other (Darden, 2019 & BBC News, 1991). A similar trend has seen in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asian

republic as well in Indonesia where the women have actively participated in violent activities as explained earlier. In case of Swat the women have played passive role in the violent conflict of Swat in terms of cook, fundraiser or they were found active in propagating their message. In Srilanka the militants focused the community members settled outside the home country for funding. While in case of Swat the Taliban targeted the community, particularly women settled within the region. The women segment of Tamil community participated actively in Srilankan conflict. They received the same training sessions as the male segment of society was given, but in case of SwatSwat, the women revealed that they played a passive role in the violent conflict of Swat.

In Sri Lanka the militants focused the community members settled outside the home country for funding. While in the case of Swat the Taliban targeted the community, particularly women settled within the region. The women segment of Tamil community participated actively in Srilankan conflict. They received the same training sessions as the male segment of society was given, but in case of Swat, the women revealed that they played a passive role in the violent conflict of Swat. This corresponds to the norms and traditions followed in the region; women are not much encouraged to participate in actives that require them to step out of their homes. Thus they participated in the conflict in the limits of societal norms in terms of financial support, cook and also played an important role in message propagation. A similar trend was found in Columbia, where the FARC has also organized the female supportive organization, their involvement in the conflict were bounded to the traditional roles like providing food to the militants, taking care of their laundry(Franco & Sanin, 2007).

Conclusion

From 2007 to 2009, the region of Swat became a focus of attention due to the violent conflict between Taliban and government. Hundreds of thousands people were displaced from their homes to nearby areas. To settle the conflict several peace negotiations were held but remained ineffective. Subsequently, in 2009 military operation was launched in the locality. As the researchers have not paid much attention to the contribution of women towards the conflicts in Pakistan. This research aimed to discover the role of women in a conflict particularly in case of Swat while focusing on three research questions: (i) How the emergence of the Taliban was perceived by the locals of region, (ii) how the role of women can be understood and framed in the context of Taliban Movement in Swat?, (iii) What strategies were used by the Taliban to mobilize the women segment of society? The data was collected through semi-structured interviews from 15 respondents residing three villages, Kuza Bandi, Imam Deri, and Matta. Two concepts were used in this study, radicalization and violent extremism. The data is thematically analyzed, which leads to the categorization of data into three themes, the emergence of Taliban, mode, and impact of communication and the contribution of women towards the conflict.

In the case of militancy episode in Swat valley the radio has played an important role in the destruction of society in terms of propagating their message to every single person. Radio, a tool of media influences the minds and behaviors of individuals. Media in terms of FM Radio broadcasting had played an effective and important role due to its cheap easy and quick assessable nature in the vast area of the Malakand division of Pakistan where the communication means are limited. FM radio had changed the minds of locals towards insurgency in the locality. The tool they used to communicate with people was religion Islam in their own interpretations. The Taliban in Swat majorly focused on women for funds rising on the name of Islam. The way they had sermons

and speeches through different FM channels was so appealing, that ensnared and trapped the minds of women that manipulated their thoughts and convinced them for supporting Taliban. This research aimed to discover the content used by Taliban on FM radio to radicalize the residents particularly women. It is observed that how FM was used as a tool to propagate violent conflict.

Recommendations

- ❖ It is witnessed in the case of Swat conflict that the media has played an important role in provoking psychological warfare. To avoid such incidents in future the government of Pakistan should keep check and balance on illegal channels of radio and TV. The entire media must be subjected to PEMRA to stop illegal operations.
- ❖ Awareness should be created among women and their issues, like property rights, domestic violence and right of education should be address so these issues may not serve as tools to manipulate them. Local bodies should actively address these matters, which will subsequently strengthen their belief in their performance.
- ❖ Employment opportunities should be created for the women of Swat to empower them and make them less vulnerable to any exploitation.
- ❖ This research has observed the significant role of women in violent conflict of Swat, This further raises need that they should be taken on board in post-conflict scenarios where they should also be targeted for the post-conflict rehabilitation programs. Thus, they can also act as contributing members towards building peace in society.

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