



## Reintegration of Militants

### Summary

- This brief summarizes the findings of the second working group on Counter-Violent Extremism (CVE), which deliberated upon the mechanism for reintegrating militants willing to shun violence and/or denounce the practice of *takfeer* (declaring fellow Muslims out of creed of Islam).
- Skepticism was also expressed of the results of reintegrating militants into society, given that militant ideologies may yet continue to nurture. However, the group agreed that, to tackle militancy in the long run, attempts should be made of adopting soft approaches, exploring the possibility of reintegrating militants or rehabilitating them back in the society.
- The group called for a Pakistan-specific rehabilitation and reintegration model, which takes into account Pakistan's specific need, especially its democratic ethos.
- The group deliberated upon the tools for banning groups and whether or not they can be unbanned. The standards of banning a group may include their propensity to indulge in violence, their embrace of the idea of declaring other Muslims as non-Muslims (*takfeer*), besides others.
- The group called upon the parliament to constitute a high-powered national-level truth and reconciliation commission, to review the policies that produced militancy and to mainstream those willing to renounce violence and violent ideologies.
- Additionally, a separate experts committee or commission, endorsed by the parliament, be constituted, which reviews the criteria for banned outfits.
- The group suggested that de-radicalization process should be institutionalized too, under the authority of civilian law-enforcement agencies.
- The group unanimously agreed that any reintegration, rehabilitation and mainstreaming of militants shall be within the frameworks of the constitution.

### Group members (arranged alphabetically by last name)

#### **Gen. (R) Masood Aslam**

Former Corps Commander,  
Peshawar

#### **Khalid Aziz**

Former Chief Secretary, Khyber  
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#### **Brig. (R) Muhammad Fayyaz**

Expert, University of Management  
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#### **Afrasiab Khattak**

Former Senator

#### **Tariq Khosa**

Former Inspector General of Police

#### **Dr. Khalid Masud**

Former Chairperson, Council of  
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#### **Syed Arfeen Mehdi**

Journalist, *Geo News*

#### **Khurshid Nadeem**

Chairman, Organization for  
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#### **Tariq Parvez**

Founding Head, National Counter-  
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#### **Muhammad Amir Rana**

Director, Pak Institute for Peace  
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#### **Lt. Gen (R) Amjad Shoaib**

Defense analyst

#### **Muhammad Ziauddin**

Senior journalist

**Two** representatives of banned  
organizations

## Background

On 27 March 2017, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) convened a meeting of a second working group on Counter-Violent Extremism (CVE), deliberating about the possibility and mechanism of reintegrating and rehabilitating militants or banned groups.

This was the second of a series of planned meetings that was convened by PIPS on CVE; the first working group, which met on March 20, 2017, deliberated about the mechanism for shaping a counter-narrative to those of extremists.

The themes of these meetings are largely driven from the CVE model PIPS proposed in 2016. A group of scholars, experts, and practitioners had, in a series of meetings, brainstormed over different components of a Pakistan-specific CVE model, one of them about reintegrating and rehabilitating militants.

That 2016 CVE group mostly narrated the way in which militants in Pakistan have been reintegrated or rehabilitated in the past, besides highlighting the gaps therein. It was suggested that some sort of mechanisms should be evolved for militants willing to abandon violence and reintegrate into society.

The second working group, which met on March 27, 2017, explored those mechanisms, discussing how to properly reintegrate militants, and under what criteria.

## Key considerations

*The group, while appreciating the consultation session, contested **the utility of holding the session**; following points were raised:*

- Several contested if reintegration should even be readily offered, especially for those who have inflicted violence on Pakistanis or spewed hate speech, demanding some conditions be set.
- Others questioned reintegration may turn out to be unproductive, as those disagreeing with laying down arms may splinter off, repeating the same cycle of violence.
- Reviewing the rationale of the sitting, the working group agreed that, to tackle militancy in the long run, attempts should be made of adopting soft or “non-kinetic” approaches too, one of them revolving around reintegrating the erstwhile militants.
- The group was told that there were more chances of reintegrating conventional militant groups –who are aiming primarily for liberating Kashmir from India and

secondarily for Islamizing the country. These groups have strong organizational structures – or on the ground physical assets. There is no visible reason why they would want to lose their structures, thus enhancing prospects of integrating. Alternatively, if the groups are left as they are, their chances of turning against the state cannot be denied. Nor will this help in stopping their members from joining violent, anti-Pakistani groups. The case of Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami is striking: It was the first conventional Pakistani group to attack inside the country, mainly between 2002 and 2006. It took nine years for the group to completely disintegrate.

*The group called for a **Pakistan-specific rehabilitation and reintegration model**, which takes into account Pakistan's specific need.*

- An observer shared findings of the rehabilitation models of six countries (Bangladesh, Malaysia, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia), calling upon the members to extract lessons from their experiences: engage scholars, professors, and psychiatrists; interact with imprisoned radicals and/or their families.

Members also understood the importance of ending the war of fatwas – or issuing religious decrees – which they underlined provided ideological impetus to the extremists' war of narratives and violent actions. But one member thought establishing a state-sanctioned fatwa department, as established in some countries, would be counter-productive, fearing that the state can manipulate it to pursue its own ends.

- What can be termed as Pakistani model pertains to the rehabilitation centers established in the wake of a counter-insurgency operation in Swat. Similar to Saudi's, the goal of the centers was to defuse the detained radicals from anti-state activities.

Any new model should start off with filling the gaps of the Swat model: Those who went through the centers were not readily accepted by the society; the centers also failed to shape any proper ideological response, which could de-radicalize the militants; resultantly, the broader worldview of the militant did not much change, even if he had shunned violence.

A member suggested of thinking beyond models conceptualized by authoritarian countries. Any model for Pakistan should represent the democratic ethos of the

country. Another called for exploring the experiences of neighbouring Afghanistan, where most of the erstwhile *mujahideen* forces have been reintegrating, by allying with Afghan government.

*The group deliberated upon the **mechanisms for banning groups and whether or not they can be unbanned.***

- Around 237 religious groups operate in Pakistan, it was shared. These include 24 religious parties, 82 sectarian groups, 104 jihadi groups, and 12 who denounce Pakistan's constitution. Most of those banned are jihadi and sectarian groups. But, one member said, a banned group may not necessarily be claiming militancy inside the country.
- The working group also partially wondered if those Islamist groups who attack inside the country and those who do not, could be bracketed together. The point is of importance when exploring the prospects of reintegrating the latter in Pakistan's society; for, as per one member, these groups may not necessarily be seen by many Pakistanis, as being hostile to the country.
- The group was also told that because sectarianism permeates all these groups, the two cannot be separated neatly. They are like "flesh and blood."

Taking this point forward, the group insinuated that militancy is linked to the process of excommunicating each other. If militants denounce this process (known as *takfeer*), should there be room for acceptance? However, it was questioned as to what will be the rationale of sectarian parties without the power of excommunicating each other.

## Case studies

*Members of two banned groups also shared their views, which the group contested back and forth. Below are the exact viewpoints of the banned groups:*

- **Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ)**

*Present status: "Proscribed by Ministry of Interior" under notification dated February 5, 2012*

When asked if the outfit can shed the notion of declaring Shias non-Muslims, the ASWJ representative responded that while no such slogan has been raised from their platform since 2003, the issue of *takfeer* rests with *muftis* empowered to issue

*fatwas*. It was asked as to what will be the justification for such a party if it abandons those slogans.

Justifying his group's action, ASWJ representative argued it has been trying to bring fringe elements in the national mainstream, through the platform of Difa-e-Pakistan Council (DPC). Yet, the group is being pushed to the fringes. He argued if Baloch separatists can be offered incentives to join the mainstream, why are they (ASWJ) not accepted?

- **Jamaatud Da'wa (JuD)**

*Present status: "Under watch by Ministry of Interior" under notification dated January 27, 2017*

Jamaatud Da'wa's representative linked militancy to *takfeer*, saying they are against excommunicating each other and they have been publishing about this trend. Moreover, the outfit is hardly been involved in crime inside the country. Instead, it accepts the constitution of the country.

He questioned the rationale of banning the group, saying the courts, which go by evidence, have also concluded that Jamaatud Da'wa has nothing to do with Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, which was proscribed in 2002.

JuD's representative presented his group as a social welfare body. It is in that context, he argued, they have been protesting in support of those affected by what it sees as India's deliberate water release. In reply to a question, the representative shared while relief services are provided by one of JuD's department, the JuD is "more than relief organization."

Instead, the JuD, he said, believes in "ideological and reformative politics", which he linked to defending to the ideology of Pakistan.

He also delved upon the idea of JuD emerging as political party. While expressing reservations over how election often results into questioning religious credibility of the religious parties, the representative desired of registering as political party.

JuD representative called for judicial commission to determine the basis of the proscribed outfits, to review the literature of the proscribed outfits, their action, etc. It should determine on case to case basis whether the organization should be proscribed or not.

**Baloch separatist groups**

Most of the discussion was about Islamist militants, but the issue of Baloch separatists also came in the discussion.

Some members called for looking at Baloch separatist groups from altogether different angle. Their problem, one said, is purely economic and political. And they should not be clubbed with the Islamist militants.

Another pointed that the 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment has even resolved their concerns about being subjugated by a strong center; now the issue is more about stopping enforced disappearances. The issue of demographic changes could also continue to agitate them, which should be resolved politically especially by strengthening civilian government.

**Possible interventions/ solutions identified**

No	Solution	Probability
1.	General or Conditional Amnesty for reintegration of conventional militant groups	NO A widespread amnesty for all, without trial, was contested.
2.	Judicial commission to review militants’ character and behavior.	NO A parliamentary commission to review pro-jihadist polices was proposed
3.	Monitoring mechanism for proscribed organizations	YES Parliamentary oversight and NACTA role endorsed
4.	De-radicalization of militant detainees	YES A police-led intervention suggested. Engagement of moderate religious scholars in such programs recommended.

## Key recommendations

- Parliament shall constitute a high-powered national-level **truth and reconciliation commission**, to review the policies that produced militancy and to mainstream those willing to shun violence.
  - This commission may deliberate whether or not to identify the wrongs committed in the past.
- A platform, such as commission, shall be constituted to **review the criteria of banned outfits**.
  - The purpose of this commission should be to review the basic ingredients of banned outfits. The terms of references of such a platform, such as commission, may be evolved by a parliamentary group; the parliament should also give statutory cover to such a platform.
  - Members of this platform/commission may include parliamentarians, social scientists, and other experts.
  - NACTA can serve as secretariat of this platform.
- Outfits once banned should be monitored under a framework by a body within NACTA.
- The existing anti-terror laws should be reviewed after every three years.
- De-radicalization process/exercise should be institutionalized and wide-spread.
  - The key authority to look after the centers should be with civilian law-enforcement agencies, preferably police.
  - Professionals should be engaged in the rehabilitation centers.
  - Moderate scholars must be engaged in rehabilitation programs.
  - The process of de-radicalization should start by profiling different layers of radicals: Those imprisoned should be specifically targeted; it is in the prison cells that many get more radicalized.
- No reintegration, rehabilitation and mainstreaming beyond the frameworks of the Constitution will be accepted.

## Observers

1. Muhammad Asghar, National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA)
2. Kalbe Ali, reporter, *Dawn*
3. Sajjad Azhar, Associate Editor, *Tajziat*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS)
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6. Khurram Shahzad, Pakistan Peace Collective
7. Mehwish Rani, Senior Research Analyst, Institute for Policy Reforms, Lahore
8. Aoun Sahi, Bureau Chief, Channel 24
9. Sabookh Syed, senior journalist, Bol TV
10. Azaz Syed, senior reporter, Geo News

## Rapporteurs

1. Atif Hashmi, Contributor/columnist, *Tajziat*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS)
2. Muhammad Ismail Khan, Associate Editor, *Conflict & Peace Studies*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS)