Militants' Strategy in Pakistan: Journey from Socio-Cultural Gaps to Narrative Construction and Militancy in Swat

| Qasim Ali Shah * | Bahadar Nawab Khattak † |

Abstract   *In the mid-1990s, a wave of religious extremism started in the Swat valley of northern Pakistan that turned into a violent conflict over the next decade. Generally, the phenomenon of militancy in Swat is considered to be the outcome of a powerful religious narrative that militants floated in the wake of the American war on terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Leaving religious extremism aside, this study concentrates on the social and cultural environment that prevailed before the conflict in Swat, providing social gaps to the militants for the success of their narrative. Employing Discourse Analysis and social Constructivism, this qualitative study has used semi-structured interviews as a tool of investigation from systematically selected individuals in Swat. The study reveals that socio-cultural gaps, if left unaddressed, could be detrimental to social order and peace in the future...*

Introduction

The distinctive and revered status attached to socio-cultural settings gives solidarity as well as vulnerability to exploitation in societies (Freedman, 2006). The practical manifestation of this connotation can be seen in the religious-based conflict in Swat, Pakistan. Once a princely state, Swat is now a district of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. On the pattern of other Pashtun areas, Swat, with its specific socio-cultural identity, has been politically dominated by the Yousazai tribe of Pashtuns since the 16th century (Rome, 2009). In 2005, religiously motivated militants hijacked the Swat valley through their narrative and caused immense damage to life and property in the area. The militants' narrative was based on three basic pillars as pronounced by Maulana Fazlullah (leader of the militants) himself, including "rule of Allah over the land

of Allah, boycott from all systems except Islamic Sharia and Jihad in the path of Allah" (Khyber News, 2008). However, to attain these aims, militants unleashed a reign of terror and atrocities in Swat. The militants in Swat not only banned female education and destroyed 200 girls' schools but also committed serious human rights abuses, including the unlawful killing of many government employees along with those who violated their orders (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2008). The militants publicly whipped men for shaving their beards, destroyed shops for selling music, and forcibly prohibited women from leaving their houses. Besides, the main square of Mingora, the largest city of Swat, was locally named as Khooni Chowk, or "bloody square", as the militants used the square for public display of

---
* PhD, Scholar, Department of Development Studies, COMSATS University Islamabad, Abbottabad Campus, KP, Pakistan.

† Associate Professor, Department of Development Studies, COMSATS University Islamabad, Abbottabad Campus, KP, Pakistan. Email: bahadar@cuiatd.edu.pk

the dead bodies of the non-conformists (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2007).

Although the rise of militancy in Swat seems abrupt, it has its historical socio-cultural connections (Shah et al., 2020). Interestingly, due to its unique socio-cultural legacy, which upholds the freedom and ownership of the land of Swat, the valley has witnessed conflict more often in recent years (Anwar & Ahmad, 2017). Historically, the Swat state during the 20th century, under its rulers called Waali (s) (1917-1969), enjoyed an exemplary politico-economic and social justice system. However, after joining Pakistan in 1969, a state of social and political confusion prevailed in Swat, prompting locals to yearn for the governance of the former princely state. Social division on the basis of wealth and well-being deepened, leading to hidden hatred among the poor toward the rich, influential, and landowners. The situation was further compounded by the breakdown of the old socio-cultural system, and the common Swati felt even more frustrated. It was the time when the situation was first misused by Sofi Mohammad (1933-2019), a cleric, extremist militant, and the founder of Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM), who came to the forefront, demanding the immediate imposition of Sharia law in Malakand Division (of which Swat is a district). Later on, that legacy was picked up by his son-in-law, Mualana Fazlullah (1974–2018), in early 2005, under the influence of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan.

From 1994 onwards, the TNSM became more active in its agitation for the imposition of Sharia courts in Swat. Initially, the government responded with force, but later the provincial government reached a negotiated settlement with the TNSM and agreed to a limited enforcement of Islamic Sharia via the Nizaam-e-Shariat Regulation. A new parallel judicial system was instituted where litigants had a choice between the 'law of Pakistan' or the Sharia. Later on, after his failed adventure of taking fighters to Afghanistan in support of the then Taliban government, Sofi Muhammad was arrested, and TNSM was banned. Sofi Muhammad's son-in-law, Maulana Fazlullah, assumed leadership of the TNSM in 2004–5 and aligned the movement more closely with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which was active in the former Tribal areas of Pakistan at random. When TTP was formally launched in 2007, Fazlullah declared his movement as part of it (Akhtar, 2010). Fazlullah, popularly known as 'Radio Mullah,' started operating 30 illegal FM radio stations through which he broadcast his views (Bano, 2011). Maulana Fazlullah exploited widespread grievances related to the government's slow response to provide relief and rehabilitation in the region after the 2005 earthquake and later the Lal Masjid (red mosque) incident of 2007, where military action was taken to dislodge the extremist militants stationed in the Lal Masjid at Islamabad (Shams, 2011). During 2007-2009, the conflict in Swat reached its peak with repeated attacks on security personnel, civil society members, local leaders, and elected representatives of the district government. Meanwhile, the militants established control over 59 villages in the area and as much as 70 percent of the Swat Valley (Bano, 2011). To avoid further bloodshed, a ceasefire was announced, and an agreement was signed between the government and TNSM on February 15, 2009, known as the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation 2009 (Mir, 2009). that established religious courts under a qazi (judge) and implemented Sharia law in Swat (Hilali, 2009). The ceasefire was threatened in early April 2009 when Sofi Muhammad ended support for peace negotiations, stating that the government was stalling the implementation of Sharia courts in the Swat Valley (Shah et al, 2020). In mid-2009, the TNSM escalated its activities in the neighbouring district of Buner, triggering a military counter-offensive against them. By the summer of 2009, the TNSM, also called by then Tehrik e Taliban Swat (TTS), had been mainly driven from the Swat Valley, and the region was brought back under government control (Khan & Ayaz, 2021).

Analytically, this recent conflict in Swat, on the face of it, appeared different from the previous conflicts for two main reasons. Firstly, the timing of the conflict, which made it seemingly part of the Islamists' uprising and branded it as a war against the US and its allies. Secondly, this conflict challenged the socio-cultural legacy of Swat, unlike most of the previous conflicts, which fundamentally originated to support and maintain the uniqueness of the Swati society. Therefore, the recent conflict in Swat raised interesting questions when people of the area, through the introduction of a

narrative by militants, agreed to forego their traditional social norms and became part of the militants' struggle against the state as a whole.

As mentioned, society in Swat transformed from a tribal code to modern statehood and good governance until its merger with Pakistan in 1969. With the passage of time, social and cultural norms that once kept Swat society unique and compact began to decay (Anwar, 2011). The reasons for this decay might be due to modernization and the erosion of the tribal nature of Swati society (Shah et al., 2020). This social transformation was seen by many in Swat as "socio-cultural gaps, which in their essence are natural to any society in transition" (Chiesura & Rudolf, 2003).

Conflict in Swat is studied thoroughly by many scholars, keeping in view different dimensions. However, the main thrust of these studies seems to be on the fact that this conflict is linked with the American war on terror, or at most, it can be traced back to the former Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan (Abbas, 2015). Saira Bano (2011) considers the Swat conflict as a direct outcome of the US war on terror in Afghanistan and other parts of the world (Bano, 2011). Asim Sajjad (2010) attributes conflict in Swat to the religious sentiments of the local population, which can be easily mobilized towards violence, as Swati people value their religion above all and equate it with their liberty and freedom (Sajjad, 2010). Scholars like Lubna Abid (2010) and Justine Fleischner (2011) consider the conflict in Swat mainly "a result of bad governance" (Fleischner, 2011), as compared to the era of *Waali* e Swat (Mian Gul Jahanzeb, 1949-1969). Muhammad Feyyaz (2016) finds the militants' narrative of "anti-US, anti-Pakistan and pro-Jihad", responsible for the conflict in Swat in the absence of any credible counter-narrative (Feyyaz, 2016). Similarly, Sajjad Ali and Azhar Nisar (2013) also consider the militants' successful narrative as the main reason for the Swat conflict, which was complemented by the use of modern communication technologies, such as FM radio (Ali et al., 2013).

As mentioned, it is widely agreed that the success of militants in mass mobilization in Swat was due to their persuasive narrative that convinced people of the cause of militancy (Khan et al., 2014). Any given social narrative is dependent on the socio-cultural orientation of a social group (Tania, 2012). Thus, it is important to note that the socio-cultural environment of a society plays a key role in the construction and success of any given narrative (Freebody, 1992). The standings of Lubna Abid and Justine Fleischner equate Swat conflict with bad governance, thus becoming superficial, which ignores the socio-cultural aspects of the conflict. Again, the arguments of Muhammad Fayyaz, Sajjad Ali, and Azhar Nisar, when considering militants' narrative responsible for the conflict, overestimate the role of narrative as the narrative of the militants, how powerful it might be, cannot work in isolation, precluding the historic and socio-cultural realities of Swati society that welcomed the militants' narrative. Research related to the Swat conflict shows a gap in determining a historical connection of events that precipitated into the cultural and social identity of the Swati society and later became an important cause of the conflict and militancy. Therefore, the problem remains paramount whether the cultural and social legacy of Swat played any role in the success of the militants' narrative or not. Similarly, whether the narrative of militants in Swat was itself based on the socio-cultural gaps like social decadence, threats to the local customs, traditions, and religion, which the society provided to them? As studies in the area mostly concentrate on the circumstantial success of the militant narrative in Swat, while the study of the socio-cultural environment of Swat remains missing, creating a vacuum that needs to be filled. This study is an effort to examine the socio-cultural dimension of the Swat conflict and to understand the role of the then socio-cultural environment in the success of the militants' narrative.

Keeping in view social system theory and incorporating cultural aspects, the study explains how a society is kept intact through the interaction of state and non-state actors via formal and informal institutions. This interaction results in political, economic, religious, and cultural activities. These activities give a specific socio-cultural identity to a society as it develops its own symbols, values, specific language, and value system. Banking on these, new narratives seek to identify and exploit gaps in the historical, social, and cultural identity issues of the said society. When these gaps are successfully addressed, a new socio-cultural narrative emerges, arguing that a new or revived socio-cultural

environment is needed for the uplift and prosperity of society. To understand the phenomenon, this paper examines the gaps in Swat society and culture that provided space for the militants to construct a narrative that lured people in line with the militant mindset.

An Overview of Socio-cultural Environment in Swat Valley

Social and cultural environments are of paramount importance in the context of social actions as they not only give them shape but also reshape and improve them (James D et al, 2017). According to the narratological approach, the desired or directed change in social behavior is fundamentally the result of interaction between society, culture, and narrative (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Social behavior in a new direction is channeled through new social narratives that primarily do not introduce total novelty but instead manipulate the same social and cultural environment (Lightfoot, 2004).

From Buddhists to Alexander and then Muslims, the socio-cultural landscape of Swat presents a meeting point of many civilizations (Ali et al, 2013). Muslim ruler Mehmud of Ghazna occupied Swat in the 11th century. Later, Swat was inhabited by the Swati and Dalazak tribes at the time of Yusafzai's (one of the largest Pashtun tribes) invasion and occupation in the 16th century (Rome, 2009). At present, there are three predominant ethnic groups living in Swat, including Pashtuns, Kohistanis, and Gujjars. Among the three, the Kohistanis are the oldest inhabitants of Swat, while the Gujjars arrived in Swat some 400 years ago (Barth, 1956). The Kiohistani and Pashtuns in Swat provide a patron-client relationship to the Gujjars. Kohistanis inhabit the northern mountainous region of Swat, which largely remained outside the range of militancy during the Swat conflict.

The overall social and cultural mosaic of Swat thus revolves around the Pashtuns, especially during the decade-long conflict. The Pashtun area in Swat was the main center of conflict, and both the militant leadership and followers were mostly Pashtuns (Avis, 2016). Therefore, the conflict and its analysis in Swat revolve around Pashtun society as a whole. Pashtuns of Swat are predominantly from the Yusafzai tribe. According to Barth, "*Pashtuns of Swat live*

in a complex, multi-caste society. The landholding Pakhtun (Pashtun) caste is organized in localized, segmentary, unilineal descent groups; other castes and occupational groups are tied to them as political clients and economic serfs" (Bartt, 1956: 1079). The important thing about the Yousafzais in Swat is that after their advent, they tried to remain as independent sub-tribes, in a state of balance of power relationship with each other, not letting a single clan dominate (Rome, 2008). The social life and cultural traits that started developing under these conditions remained prevalent throughout the valley. The presence of eminent adversaries like Kohistanis and struggles of tribal life provided a sense of fighting and love for bravery in Swati Pashtuns, which is manifested in the local songs and poetry (Ilahi, 2015).

Besides the war-like behavior, the Pashtuns' life generally revolves around Pashtunwali (Pashtun code of life), local politics, religion, and economics, which is equally true for people in Swat (Anderson & Anderson, 2013). Present-day Swat is composed of an urban as well as a rural population, with almost the same cultural traits and minor variations. The population is composed of a hierarchical social setup with the landowner or "Khan" at the helm of affairs and land growers or small land owners as tenants. A typical Swati village includes a landlord, tenants, artisans, religious persons or "Mullahs", and mostly the descendants of the holy Prophet, called Syyeds (*Saidan/Myagan*). Mostly, the Pashtuns (by cast) are considered socially more dominant, followed by the *Saidan,* while the tenants and artisans are considered low in social status. The religious class is considered important as far as religious ceremonies are concerned, but is not given the same social status as enjoyed by the Pashtuns (Barth, 1956). The religious people generally are respected, but tribal Pashtuns avoid intermarriages with them unless they are Pashtuns by blood (Rome, 2009). However, at times, religious persons act as dispute resolvers (Ginsburg, 2011). Every village has a "Hujra" which serves as a Pashtun male setting place for guests as well as a community center at least at the village level. Mosque at the village level and even at the subtribe (Tappa) level is also a must feature of the Swati society. The social setup in Swat hardly allows

intermarriages between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns (Rome, 2008).

The economic power of landlords and landowners has also given them political influence in the area. Mostly, the artisan class and Gujjars are economically less privileged. The common Mullah, or religious man, is also underprivileged in normal circumstances, both economically and politically (Ahmed, 2013). Traditionally, livelihoods in Swat depend on farming and herding (Ur-rahim et al., 2002). The hotel business and tourism are also now providing livelihood to many in Swat. Similarly, a good portion of the population is now residing in foreign countries, including Europe, America, and mainly the Middle East, who send money back home (Federal Bureau of Statistics Islamabad, 2012). The cultural orientation of the Swati people is typical of the Pashtun culture, called Pashtunwali, which is the Pashtun tribal code of social conduct (Abda et al, 2015). Pashtunwali has given cultural traits like "*Malmastia* (hospitality), *Badal* (revenge), *Nanawatee* (refuge, asylum), *Ghairat* (honour, chivalry), *Tor* (shame), *Tarboorwali* (agnatic rivalry), *purdha and Namoos* (gender boundaries)" to the Swati people (Ilahi, 2015).

On the other hand, Pashtunwali has provided informal institutional structures such as Jirga and Hujra to the Swati people. The Society in Swat is maintained through a combination of formal and informal institutions, where at times the informal institutions, such as the Jirga, take priority over the formal institutions or the government (Khan, 2008). This has given the inhabitants a set of independent-thinking faculty, as they feel somewhat independent in their ways and means from the state authority (Shah et al., 2020). Due to the internal feuds of the independent clans, many times, religious figures, who were non-Pashtuns by blood, attained power in Swat. The famous ruler of Swat, commonly known as *Waali* e Swat, was the descendant of a famous religious personality, *Saidu Baba*. The traditional socio-cultural set and tribal values, combined with formal institutions, especially since the times of Waali e Swat, gave the social setup in Swat a unique flavor (Aziz & Luras, 2010). The administrative setup and judicial system of the Swat state were the most important basic grounds for State success. The traditional system of justice imposed by the Wali of Swat

from 1917 to 1969 had a unique structure. The Shariah (Islamic) law and Riwaj (Customary/ Traditional law) or "Dasturul Amal" (code of conduct) existed as sources of law. There was no concept of division of Power in the old state of Swat; there was no clear distinction of separation of powers. Judicial, executive, and fiscal powers and functions were in the hands of state officials and absolutely in the ruler's hands. In the judiciary, the Qazi courts were subordinate to the administrative officials and judicial officers. In the same way, there existed "Codes of Conduct" as an alternative to Islamic laws, which were both subordinate to the ruler. (Zohaib, 2019). After the merger, the absence of Sharia and customary law triggered resentment among the local population, which added to their social frustration, creating a social gap. To sum it up, the decadence of tribal traditions, economic deprivations, and comforting memories of the past place the society (in Swat) at a critical juncture, where a little was needed to manipulate (Obaid, 2015).

Methodology

The study area of this research work is the Swat district of Northern Pakistan. It is a valley and an administrative district of Malakand Division in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. There are seven tehsils in the Swat district, namely, Tehsil Khwazakhela, Tehsil Charbagh, Tehsil Bahrain, Tehsil Matta, Tehsil Kabal, Tehsil Barikot, and Tehsil Babuzai. As mentioned, Swat is predominantly inhabited by Pashtuns, Gujjar, and Kohistani ethnic groups. The extremist uprising of 2005 in Swat damaged the area severely, with losses to life and property besides endangering the peace of the entire region (Shah et al, 2020).

This research is qualitative in nature as it is considered more appropriate in "interpreting contextual elements and understanding a particular geographical setting" (Bryman, 2004, pp. 19-69). As this study seeks to identify the socio-cultural gaps manipulated by the militants to construct their social narrative in Swat, two approaches are used in this research: the Social Constructivist paradigm and Discourse Analysis, which help explain how these phenomena were constructed and operationalized in society. The social constructivist approach is important for understanding "the world of human

experience" (Cohen & Manion, 1994), which holds that "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens, 2007). The social constructivist approach focuses on respondents' understanding of the research problem (Creswell et al., 2003) and considers their contextual interpretations and backgrounds. The Discourse Analysis (DA) approach is also used in this study. Discourse analysis assumes that individuals convey more than simply information when they communicate (Brown et al., 1983). It is not an endeavor to understand plain meanings; rather, it is the exploration of what language attains or what people or cultures achieve through words (Grant & Iedema, 2005). This realm of investigation poses questions such as how connotation is structured and how power operates in social interactions (Glynos et al., 2009).

For this study, four villages were selected from the four tehsils of Swat, based on the impact of conflict on them. Tehsils included Babuzai, Matta, Kabal, and Barikot. They were more adversely affected during the Swat conflict; therefore, one village each from these tehsils was selected. Villages included Qambar from Tehsil Babuzai, village Peochar from Tehsil Matta, Kuza Banda from Tehsil Kabal, and village Kota from Tehsil Barikot. A total of 80 semi-structured Interviews were conducted. Sixty interviews were conducted in the four selected study villages. Fifteen respondents were selected from each village. These respondents included key persons (men and women), activists, affected men and women, members of defense committees and jirga, ex-militants (contacted in the rehabilitation center in Swat)/ sympathizers, and their families. Twenty interviews were conducted outside the study area in the Swat district, including with intellectuals, politicians, doctors, lawyers, and landlords. Civil and armed forces members and education officers (male and female) were also interviewed. As secondary data, the official publications, books, journals, periodicals, encyclopedias, dictionaries, Newspapers, and internet sources were used.

Results and Discussion

The success of militants in Swat is attributed to their narrative, which they propagated there. A deep look into the militants' narrative reveals that, beyond everything, they manipulated the socio-cultural gaps in Swat to construct their narrative. The important aspect of this data interpretation is to determine the role of the socio-cultural dimension in the process of social change, which can open new vistas into social happenings and their understanding.

Socio-Cultural Landscape in Swat

Pashtunwali in Swat

The majority of respondents opined that Pashtunwali dominates their social behavior. However, the respondents were equating Pashtunwali and Islam (the predominant religion of the people in Swat) as the same. Asking about the initial narrative of militants, the majority of respondents were of the opinion that militants blended their narrative with Pashtunwali and urged the bravery (a trait of Pashtunwali) of the people to pick up arms and become the saviors of Islam. Data reveals that militants used the Pashtun traditions of Pashtunwali as tools in their narrative to gain popularity, and they blended their agenda in the form of Islamic teachings in accordance with the acceptance level of a Pashtun mind. A local university professor from the Culture and Heritage department said, "If you want to attract a Pashtun in Swat, or elsewhere, you need to identify the deviations from the Pashtunwali. Pashtun reacts to that, and militants did it well as many things in Swat have changed and no longer are in line with tribal code." However, most of the respondents, especially the females, agreed to the notion that later acts of the militants against females and bombings of mosques and Hujras were against Pashtunwali, which turned the masses against the militants abruptly. Nazia Bibi, a nurse in a local hospital, said, "How can a Pashtun disgrace a woman? How can a Pashtun even tolerate that another man disgraces his female relative? Certainly, we were not expecting these humiliations from the militants". The majority of respondents agreed that without resorting to Pashtunwali and Pashtun traditions, the militants would have never been successful in attaining the attention of the Swati people.

The socio-cultural setup in Swat is dominated by Pashtunwali, which dictates every individual and social action in the area. Although Hussain (2013) and Ilahi (2015) mentioned that militants in Swat tried to delink the Pashtun society from Pashtunwali, and that was the reason that

alienated people from them. However, my observation and collected data ascertain that it was the Pashtunwali itself that provided space to the militant narrative in Swat. The traditional and historical nature of Pashtunwali and the modern-day society definitely create gaps that can be interpreted as deviations from Pashtunwali, which militants regard as the main reasons for the deterioration in society. The militants initially explained things in religious language, but that language was completely Pashtun in its symbolic interpretation, acceptable to Pashtun society and the individual mind. Thus, a double impact, both religious and Pashtun traditions, was created to make the narrative strong and successful. The most important aspect of the supportive Pashtun culture for the militants can be seen in the fact that mostly traditionalist rural areas supported the militants extensively. In Swat, any rhetoric can be attractive to the masses if it has two basic elements: harmony with Pashtunwali and religious sanction. At the same time, any act that is proved wrong against any of the two yardsticks loses its value in society. Pashtun society has preserved its traditional attire for centuries, and Pashtuns' love for religion also stems from their traditions. Importantly, as Mohmand (2003) also noted, Pashtunwali provides a complete set of alternative institutional structures, including Hujra, Jumat (mosque), and Jirga, which play an important role in the smooth functioning of Pashtun society. In Pashtun society, a hujra (male gathering place) serves as a setting for grooming the younger generation in accordance with the Pashtunwali code. Jumat (mosque) provides them with religious zeal, and jirga plays a decisive role in resolving disputes and, at times, is effective enough to decide strategic matters for Pashtuns. The pre-conflict Swat was in a state of social condition where these institutions were weak, and the vacuum or cultural gap was imminent. The militants tried to replace these institutions with religious dogma. People supported the militants, but when these traditional institutions were threatened rather than strengthened, along with traditional social hierarchy, the people in Swat felt suffocated and were no longer supportive of the militants. It may not be an exaggeration to say that militants used Pashtun love for their weakening traditions as a cultural gap and tried

to mislead people through their narrative.

Religion and Conflict in Swat

Most respondents believed that religion plays a vital role in people's lives in Swat. Respondents from all segments were unanimous and even emotional in their discussions of religion. Although the majority of respondents mentioned religion as a social package for an ideal life, a few respondents, including some journalists and social activists, believed that, most of the time, Swati people were deceived in the name of religion. Data reveals that in Swat, when people talk about religion, they hardly think about rituals; rather, they consider it a social system of good governance introduced by Waali e Swat. "We love religion, but you cannot brand us extremists. Swati people supported Maulana Fazlullah initially because of the governance issues, which certainly reminded us of the golden period of Waali e Swat", commented Jameel Khan, a government employee from Mingora. "I don't know much about Islam, but we wanted a system of *Waali*-e-Swat, where everything was good, and justice was there for rich and poor both", said Gulzar Khan, advocate of Barikot. This view clearly points to a different relationship spectrum that prevailed historically in Swat. The majority of the respondents agreed that militants took advantage of the confusion that the common people in Swat have about the government of Wali e Swat as the government of Islamic Sharia. The majority of respondents agreed that religion historically played a role as a peacekeeper in Swat. They mentioned the role of Saidu Baba and Sartor Faqeer as examples. However, journalists and some landlords were of the opinion that religious figures always manipulated and exploited the political turmoil in Swat to gain political dominance. At the same time, most of the respondents, including women, still think that only Islamic sharia is a better option for governance. For almost all the respondents, Islam and militancy were two different things, and no respondent, including the ex-militant supporters, favored violence for the imposition of Islamic sharia.

The second most important aspect of the socio-cultural spectrum in religion in Swat. Mostly, people seem emotional about religion in Swat and show reverence, respect, and love for

religion in all kinds of private or public interactions. But on the face of it, religion hardly takes priority in their private lives when they carry out daily activities. That is probably the reason that the prevailing socio-cultural system in Swat reflects many contradictions related to its incorporation of religion in practical lives. Thus, the success of militants, if considered as a success of a religious movement, may not be the right assessment of the situation. Mostly, the religious mindset plays its role in Swat only for political purposes, and the people in Swat mostly supported the militants for political reasons rather than religious reasons. Historically, as Sultan-e-Rome ([2009](#)) rightly points out, when the political and social confusion reached a point of desperation in Swat, people turned towards the religious figure for deliverance. The memories of the recent past, when *Waali* e Swat established a system of good governance, were and are still cherished as an ideal system. Although the government of *Waali* was not a pure Islamic government and in 1949, Sirajudin Khan, a political figure in Swat, started a movement during the rule of *Waali* for the imposition of Shariya. However, the people in Swat are still considering and confusing good governance with Islamic government. This confusion in the minds of the Swati people, which has historically led them ultimately towards a religious solution of the political problems, once again created a socio-cultural gap. As Chamberlain ([1984](#)) said, the extent and nature of any given range of narratives available for adoption are always historically and culturally specific; the particular plots that give meanings to those narratives cannot be detached from history, which represents itself in the form of the present socio-cultural environment (Gary, 1984). Almost exactly, the historic and cultural traits of the Swati people provided a gap for the militants to steer their narrative easily.

Thus, it is safe to conclude that the success of Maulana Fazlullah was more a manipulation of the socio-cultural gap that became eminent due to deterioration in social conditions rather than the religiosity of the society. Maulana Fazlullah, being a member of the same society, knew this socio-cultural gap and vacuum in Swati society, and he rightly exploited it by floating such a narrative that was not only based on the cultural traits of Swat but also incorporated the social problems of the present-day Swat. He blended it with religion in such a way that the local population could not doubt his selflessness and purity of purpose. Even to this date, people are confused about how a religious man could do such atrocities, and their confusion leads them to many conspiracy theories.

Socio-Cultural Perspectives in Swat:
Common Social Perceptions in Swat

Data revealed that mostly Swati people consider themselves different and socially more active, as a community, compared with the rest of the Pashtun community, living in other parts of Pakistan. Most of the respondents agreed that people of Swat feel confident about giving a chance to any kind of social change, which corresponds to their cultural history, their geographical location, and their unique cultural identity. The majority of the respondents agreed that mostly Swati people think in terms of Swat Swat-centric mindset, which gives them uniqueness from the rest of the country. "Maybe the people of Swat did not experience the British rule as such as the rest of the sub-continent, and yet again our identity as a princely state gave us a different thinking than the rest of our countrymen", said Professor Shaheen, a resident of Mingora. The majority of the respondents agreed that due to this cultural uniqueness, the Swati people accept or reject social issues and movements collectively. The women respondents considered themselves more independent and more educated than the rest of the Pashtun community. At the same time, almost all respondents considered religion as an integral part of their lives. The landlords perceived the militancy as a kind of conspiracy, mostly to undermine the social values in Swat. Data collected from all segments reveal that mostly people in Swat think very highly of themselves in the context of the fight against social injustice or taking a stand against the oppressor. However, the scholars and educationists considered that many a time in history, opportunists have misused the Swatis' overconfident approach, causing catastrophe in the shape of violent conflict. Respondents from the Swat district unanimously agreed that local people perceive justice as social justice encompasses all walks

of life, ranging from administration to good governance and court justice. Islamic sharia and Pashtun traditions (Riwaj) meant social justice and equality to them.

The uniqueness of the Swati people gives them a cultural identity that guides them to act differently, even from the rest of the Pashtun community, living in their neighborhood. The Swat region is unique in the sense that it is the abode of a single Pashtun tribe, i.e. Yousafzai, which dominates it in all walks of life. Similarly, Swat never remained under a ruler for a longer duration of time since the Yousazfazai tribe occupied it. The clans remained in a state of balance of power with each other, without accepting the suzerainty of a single sub-tribe or individual. Interestingly, the Yousafzais in their later history agreed on religious figures to become their king in Swat, but not on someone from their own bloodline. This shows that religion in Swat gained a role as a modifier or unity during the crisis times. Swat, at the same time, never remained completely under British rule and therefore gave a sense of pride to the people of Swat. The Swati people, being more educated, more independent, and more assertive than the rest of the Pashtun community, developed a kind of social and cultural system, where they unanimously raised their voice against the injustices many times in their history.

In the context of the change that the Swat area experienced historically, it may not be that simple a phenomenon, but a result of complex internal and external social interactions in Swati society. The independent tribes in Swat historically did not accept a ruler and remained a battleground for the power scramble among different sub-tribes. It was but natural that the people in Swat many a time resorted to some kind of collective change as a reaction to the continuous internal warfare and instability. This mindset gave three distinct traits to the Swati people, which include the love for freedom and equality, social cohesiveness, and a stubborn nature. Probably, these three characteristics cumulatively helped the militants to achieve their goal once they explored the Swati mindset. After the last *Waali* e Swat, Mian Gul Jahanzeb, individualism struck the society, and the lack of strong political leadership developed a social gap that was easily identified and manipulated

by the militants. Although the people in Swat entertain the idea of equality or freedom but practically, they have always been hostage to the internal politics of powerful *Khans* and later to the religious personalities. In the post-merger Swat, the local landlords continued with the same practice of the pre-*Waali* Swat era, where internal power struggles resulted in the humiliation and exploitation of the common man. The same was proved with the success of the militants' narrative in Swat. It seems as if once again history repeated itself in Swat, where a religious leader gave a sense of unity to the common people by appealing to their cultural bravery and sense of freedom. As Jacobs (2002) considers, a sense of collective identity helps the narrative mentors in its success at large (Kahane & Roland, 2002).

Social Justice in Swat

Data reveals that most of the people in Swat saw the militants as an effective tool to provide them "justice on the spot". Respondents were of the opinion that militants resolved the civil cases in no time, which were pending in courts for decades. "They were so effective that a simple phone call from a local militant commander would resolve any issue between the parties, and nobody would object. This definitely attracted us towards the militants", commented Khuday Nur, a shopkeeper in Mingora city. Data shows that the urge for speedy justice among people of Swat stems from the *Waali* era, and people till this date idealize that system. Interestingly, all respondents from Swat, when interviewed, were referring to the Waali e Swat system of governance when talking about their justice system. For them, justice meant justice in all spheres of governance rather than only the judicial system. Most of the respondents considered the *Waali* era judicial system as an Islamic system, and according to them, the militants promised them the same Islamic system of justice, which popularized them among the masses. Respondents from the administration were of the opinion that the system followed by militants was never Islamic but a whimsical and brutal punishment regime that scared the people rather than giving justice to them.

It is obvious that although the system during *Waali* times was not a pure Islamic judicial

system, the way it was dispensed and the personal interest that *Waali* took in judicial matters made it a success in Swat, so much so that the people in Swat still cherish it. The Waali system of governance was autocratic and had two different streams, including Sharia and Riwaj (traditions), where people had the option to choose any of the two. However, it is interesting to note that during Waali's time, there was no division of powers between the judiciary and executive; therefore, governance matters were also part of the judicial system. This system also gave great weightage to the local culture and traditions and brought them on par with the religious law. Resultantly, religion and Riwaj both attained a great importance in the eyes of the common Swati as their combination ensured a smooth and prosperous era under *Waali* e Swat.

After the merger, the division of powers and the lengthy procedures of courts made people weary of the judicial system. This provided a gap to the militants, and Sofi Muhammad from the start of TNSM was trying to rally people around him by objecting to the judicial system in Swat. Fazlullah, in the first phase of his struggle, urged people to realize the importance of justice through Islamic injunctions, and as people were culturally and historically aware of the *Waali* era judicial system, they readily accepted his stance. Later, the militants, in some cases, resolved the prolonged disputes through the power of guns, which made them popular initially and gave an impression to the people that they were following an Islamic system of justice as was followed by *Waali*. To make people more dependent upon them, militants bombed the police stations in the area and threatened police personnel to quit their jobs, which left people with no other option but to resort to the adjudication of the militants. But it must be kept in mind that for common Swati, neither *Riwaj* nor Sharia alone is acceptable. Similarly, the government endeavors during that times to give Islamic attire to the judicial system was acceptable to them. The results were obvious; people did not buy the reforms implemented by the government and sided with militants. This was the social gap that was easy to manipulate by the militants. It is also a fact that the sole implementation of Sharia law by the militants was also alien to the Swatis. Locals were subjectively relating the militants'

narrative for justice with the Waal e Swat era, which was, in the end, totally different from each other and gave a shock to the Swatis. It is important to note that the judicial system the militants started implementing was more rigid in spheres that are more traditional and culture-oriented, for example, women's rights. The militants proved very ruthless towards women and jirga elders, which ultimately cost them the popular support.

Socio-Cultural Reasons of Conflict in Swat

Gaps in Social Networking in Swat

The majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the old system of social networking has gone weak in Swat due to new social conditions. Data reveal that due to the weakening of state institutions, the set pattern of social networking changed, and people could not adjust to the confusing state of the new failed system after the merger, which ultimately left them vulnerable to any rhetoric of change. The respondents were of the opinion that people in Swat have almost changed the nature of their tribal, well-knit social life due to the materialistic tendencies in society. "Starting from family to schools and *hujra* to mosque, relationship between peasants and landlords and values of **Pashtun** society have undergone a change in Swat", remarked Gul Nabi, a social worker from Mingora city. The majority of respondents from all segments agreed that the social fabric, which used to keep the Swati people entrenched in the Pashtun code of life, became so weak that it could not stop the rise of militants and their narrative. Data reveal that the militants' narrative was appealing to the Swati people fundamentally because it was seemingly a reflection of the past, away from the present-day social problems, and a window towards a brighter future. Except for the landlord respondents, the majority of respondents agreed that due to the weakening of social institutions, both formal and informal, the landlords and powerful families in Swat created a desperate situation for the less privileged, unlike the *Waali* times, thereby alienating the poor from the rich. Data reveals that in the very outset, militants attacked powerful figures, who used to be the traditional pillars of Swati society, which not

only resulted in a power vacuum but also attracted the deprived class more and more to the militants. However, the landlords did not agree to this plea and attributed the militancy to a conspiracy against them. Journalists from Swat were of the opinion that due to *Waali's* enlightened policies and later tourist activities, the old ways of life in Swat drastically changed. This is somehow felt by traditionalists as a curse and imposed modernity, which, according to them, is responsible for the evils prevalent in Swati society.

Exposure to new social conditions, along with an inherent tendency towards the glorious past, left the Swati society in a vulnerable state. The society in Swat shifted from a tribal setup or anarchy, where even the tribal chief was not very powerful, to a state of formal governance during the times of *Waali-e-Swat*. Social networking that was already established before the *Waali* times was regulated by *Waali*, where he tactfully created space for formal governance. With the merger of Swat into Pakistan, once again, the weak governance led the people to suffer from a state of utter confusion or bad governance, but this time with weak informal social institutions and new tendencies in social networking. The vacuum created by the evaporation of the *Waali* state policies pushed the people into a state of confusion. The old social institutions of **Pashtunwali** were already in decline after *Waali's* government was unable to cope with the new scenario of social exposure. Similarly, in Swat, the family system is mostly replaced by the individualistic lifestyle. This, in turn, left the individual Swatis more vulnerable to the forces of change and less tied to the traditional setup. Similarly, as Sultan e Rome (2015) also mentioned, the strained relationship between the landlords and the peasant class in Swat was also very obvious in the pre-conflict Swat. The gap which was created by the unhealthy and repressive relationship between the peasant class Gujjars, and the landlords was manipulated by the militants. The peasants in Swat felt deprived and saw an economic opportunity in the shape of militants in Swat. There are many stories in Swat where the Gujjars or peasant class joined the ranks of militants and committed atrocities against their former landlord. The overall role of religious figures was manifested by the militants. They did not promote it directly through their narrative but through their actions when they disregarded all the informal and formal social power centers in Swat and framed a new setup where the religious figure or *Mullah* was more powerful, and the religion as an institution surpassed the cultural institutions of *Hujra*, *Jirga*, and *Khan*. Thus, nothing was coined as new by the militants, but the gaps that the obsoleteness or the outdatedness of the social networking provided were manipulated, which made the conflict deeper socially.

Radicalization and Socio-Cultural Environment in Swat

Although Swat has a history of religious uprisings, data reveal that no segment of the society ever entertained extremist thinking in Swat. The majority of the respondents were not ready to accept any tendency of extremism in Swat before or after the conflict. They all agreed on the point that the failure of militants in later stages of the conflict was due to the disillusionment of locals regarding the extremist agenda of the militants. Data shows that neither **Sofi** Muhammad nor **Fazlullah** was suspected by the local people for any violent agenda. Most of the respondents showed their ignorance of any such idea that the movement would turn out to be such a devastating conflict. The former accomplices of **Fazlullah** mostly regretted the acts of violence they committed but accepted that they were deceived in the name of Islam. When asked about the violence associated with the militants' narrative, most of the respondents did not consider it Islamic. "We never thought the way it happened. People were thinking of it as a blessing that would bring prosperity and justice, but it was a nightmare for us", said Mushtaq Ali, a student of PhD and resident of tehsil Kabal. "We, the women, were convinced by their speeches that our only saviors both in this world and in the hereafter are these people. The way they portrayed things was true, and the solutions they gave had historical connections. How can we reject our history?" said a female respondent on the condition of anonymity. The way she was enthusiastic when narrating the emotions that she had about the militants in those days, interestingly, appeared so pure and touching that it gave me a bad feeling later when she was narrating her disillusionment with the militants. "We were told that if we want to bring back the times of

the *Khulfa e Rashideen* (first four rulers in Islamic history), we have to act as their soldiers, and I think I did not know at that time that there was anything wrong with violence. But now I think it was not what he (Maulana Fazlullah) told us", replied a former militant accomplice on the condition of anonymity, who met me in a police station in Swat. A young man of 25 years, seemingly scared while talking to me about his affiliation with the militants, I could make out from his expressions as if he was telling me a tale from the distant lands that he had visited once. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that, although the history of Swat is full of armed conflicts, since the times of *Waali-e-Swat*, the people of Swat have become more civilized and peace-loving. Most of the respondents, including the ex-militants, disagreed with the notion that Swati people could do the kind of violence against each other that the militants introduced in Swat through their radicalized narrative. The majority of respondents were of the opinion that the main reason for militants' failure at the later stage was due to the atrocities and violence that they committed against the innocent people, especially women. Respondents from the educationist segment were of the opinion that extremist teachings of militants were accepted by the locals initially, as they were desperately trying to get rid of the social injustices that prevailed in the post-merger Swat. They agreed that socially emotional and war-like behavior or the Pashtun community was targeted and exploited by the militants. Journalists were of the opinion that the desperation of the Swati people for better governance on the lines of *Waali* provided a gap for the militants to manipulate.

It is interesting to note that both Sofi Muhammad and Fazlullah indoctrinated the common people in Swat through their speeches. However, their agenda was so careful that people even now can't understand how they were deceived, and mostly people attribute it to some hidden agenda of the state or foreign powers. As Princeton (1979) mentioned, the militants' narrative tried to achieve "uncanniness" to be achieved through the interplay of religious sentiments with the prevailing social problems in Swat.

The people in Swat considered Maulana Fazlullah as a simple *"Mullah"* or a religious man who speaks like them and acts like them and is only asking them to follow the path of Islam to attain a better life. But as discussed earlier, Swat has a socio-cultural history of religion as a deciding factor in its political affairs, where Swatis turn toward religious remedies for their political problems. As mentioned by Bruner (1991), it is the cultural and social knowledge of the narrative mentor and his skills of understanding and incorporating the new narrative in the prevailing cultural environment. This cultural gap was sensed and exploited by Fazlullah and his accomplices by introducing extreme solutions. Extremism is against the post-Waali nature of the Swati people, and thus, within no time, people withdrew their support from the militants.

Conclusion

Narrative construction and its success are dependent, beyond everything else, on the space that is provided to it by the existing socio-cultural environment. With the passage of time, society in Swat attained a specific socio-cultural shape, and with the rule of *Waali,* it reached its maturity, and people not only accepted but idealized it. However, after the merger with Pakistan, the social networking started deteriorating, the traditions became weak, and society started developing gaps. Traditional traits of Pashtun society, like equality, Jirga, Hujra, respect for women, and close social interdependence of formal and informal institutions, weakened with time that creating social gaps. These gaps were visible in the socio-cultural environment of Swat for a long time, which caused social unrest and deterioration. The entry of TNSM on the scene in Swat and later the TTP under Fazlullah made good use of these socio-cultural gaps and constructed their narrative, which attracted the people, and resultantly, Swat witnessed the worst kind of violent conflict in its history with a huge loss of life and property. Keeping in mind the conflict in Swat, it becomes vital to consider the socio-cultural gaps essential for conflict prevention, management, resolution, or even the peacebuilding process. Further research is needed in the field to determine the set of compact variables in the context of the socio-cultural domain and its impact on narrative formulation to its success, in order to deter future extremist tendencies.

References

Abbas, H. (2015), Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror, New York: *Routledge*.

Ahmed, A. (2013). *Pukhtun economy and society (Routledge Revivals): Traditional structure and economic development in a tribal society*. Routledge.

Akhtar, A. S. (2010). Islam as ideology of tradition and change: The "new jihad" in Swat, northern Pakistan. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, 30*(3), 595–609.

Akhtar, A. S. (2010). Islam as ideology of tradition and change: The "new jihad" in Swat, northern Pakistan. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, 30*(3), 595–609.

Ali, S., Nisar, A. S., Shakoor, A., Wazir, A., & Saeed, M. (2013). History of Swat till to the rise of the Taliban and the role of FM radio. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 3*(8), 52–64.

Anderson, E. W., & Anderson, L. D. (2013). *An atlas of Middle Eastern affairs*. Routledge.

Anwar, S. (2011). The emergence of conflict in the Swat Valley and the post-conflict management issues. *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, (5), 20–26.

Anwar, Z., & Ahmad, W. (2017). Augmenting the conflict in Swat: Loopholes in legal governance. *Journal of Political Studies, 24*(2), 585–599.

Avis, W. (2016). *Drivers of conflict in the Swat Valley, Pakistan*. GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

Aziz, K., & Luras, H. (2010). *Swat: Main causes of the rise of militancy* (Policy Brief 6). NUPI.

Bano, S. O. (2011). Conflict in the Swat Valley of Pakistan: Pakhtun culture and peacebuilding theory-practice application. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development, 6*(1), 35–48.

Barth, F. (1956). Ecological relationships of ethnic groups in Swat, North Pakistan. *American Anthropologist, 58*(6), 1079–1089.

Bertaux, D., & Kohli, M. (1984). The life story approach: A continental view. *Annual Review of Sociology, 10*(1), 215–237.

Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge University Press.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Encyclopedia of social science research methods*. Sage.

Bryman, A. (2004). Qualitative research on leadership: A critical but appreciative review. *The Leadership Quarterly, 15*(6), 729–769.

Chamberlain, G. (1984). Panel data. In Z. Griliches & M. D. Intriligator (Eds.), *Handbook of econometrics* (Vol. 2, pp. 1247–1318). Elsevier.

Chiesura, A., & De Groot, R. (2003). Critical natural capital: A socio-cultural perspective. *Ecological Economics, 44*(2–3), 219–231.

Clark, T., & Eckhardt, G. (2003). [Review of the book *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.), by G. Hofstede]. *Journal of Marketing, 67*(2), 151–153.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (1994). *Educational research methodology*. Metaixmio.

Coleman, J. S. (1994). *Foundations of social theory*. Harvard University Press.

Creswell, J. W., Plano Clark, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. (2003). An expanded typology for classifying mixed methods research into designs. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 209–240). Sage.

Elahi, N. (2015). Militancy conflicts and displacement in the Swat Valley of Pakistan: Analysis of the transformation of social and cultural networks. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 5*(3).

Feyyaz, M. (2016). Religion, ethnicity, social organizations, and terrorists' behavior: A case of the Taliban movement in Pakistan. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression, 8*(2), 111–134.

Fleischner, J. (2011). *Governance and militancy in Pakistan's Swat Valley*. Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Freebody, P. (1992). A socio-cultural approach: Resourcing four roles as a literacy learner. In A. Watson & A. Badenhop (Eds.), *Prevention of reading failure* (pp. 48–60). Scholastic.

Freedman, L. (2006). Networks, culture, and narratives. *Adelphi Papers, 45*(379), 11–26.

Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (1988). Narrative and the self as a relationship. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 21, pp. 17–56). Academic Press.

Ginsburg, T. (2011). An economic interpretation of the Pashtunwali. *University of Chicago Legal Forum, 2011*, 89.

Glynos, J., Howarth, D., Norval, A., & Speed, E. (2009). *Discourse analysis: Varieties and methods*. ESRC National Centre for Research Methods.

Government of Pakistan Statistics Division. (2012). *Pakistan social and living standards measurement survey (2010-11)*. Federal Bureau of Statistics.

Grant, D., & Iedema, R. (2005). Discourse analysis and the study of organizations. *Text-Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse, 25*(1), 37–66.

Hilali, A. (2009, May 16). Swat's worst humanitarian crisis. *The Frontier Post*.

Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture and organizations. *International Studies of Management & Organization, 10*(4), 15–41.

Howard, G. S. (1991). Culture tales: A narrative approach to thinking, cross-cultural psychology, and psychotherapy. *American Psychologist, 46*(3), 187–197.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. (2007). *State of human rights in Pakistan: Annual reports 1992-2007*.

Kahane, B., & Reitter, R. (2002). Narrative identity: Navigating between "reality" and "fiction." In B. Moingeon & G. B. Soenen (Eds.), *Corporate and organizational identities* (pp. 135–150). Routledge.

Khalid, A., Nyborg, I., & Khattak, B. N. (2015). Whose property, whose authority? Gendering the legal and customary practices in ownership and access to land: A case of Swat, Pakistan. *Journal of Rural Studies, 41*, 47–58.

Khan, M. A., Yousofi, M., & Khan, M. (2014). Military operation as a response to terrorism: A case study of Malakand Division, Pakistan. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5*(20), 2000.

Khan, M. F., & Khan, A. M. (2021). Causes and impacts of terrorism in the Swat Valley (2007-2017). *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs, 4*(1).

Khan, S. (2008, November 27). Behind the crisis in Swat. *The News*.

Khyber News. (2008, March 3). *Interview with Mullah Fazlullah* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjHpTio-srk

Lee, M.-Y., & Greene, G. J. (1999). A social constructivist framework for integrating cross-cultural issues in teaching clinical social work. *Journal of Social Work Education, 35*(1), 21–37.

Lightfoot, C. G. (2004). *Narrative analysis: Studying the development of individuals in society*. Sage.

MacIntyre, A. (1984). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (2nd ed., pp. 367–382). University of Notre Dame Press.

McAdams, D. P. (1996). Personality, modernity, and the storied self: A contemporary framework for studying persons. *Psychological Inquiry, 7*(4), 295–321.

Mertens, D. M. (2007). Transformative paradigm: Mixed methods and social justice. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(3), 212–225.

Mir, A. (2009, February 18). Peace deal to legitimise TNSM. *The News International*.

Rome, S.-I. (2008). *Swat state (1915-1969) from genesis to merger: An analysis of political, administrative, socio-political, and economic developments*. Oxford University Press.

Rome, S.-I. (2009). *Swat: A critical analysis*. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies.

Shah, Q. A., Nawab, B., & Mehmood, T. (2020). The role of stakeholders in post-conflict peacebuilding in Swat, Pakistan. *Lex*

Localis-Journal of Local Self-Government, 18(1), 77–96.

Shah, Q. A., Nawab, B., Nyborg, I., & Elahi, N. (2020). The narrative of militancy: A case study of Swat, Pakistan. *Journal of Human Security, 16*(2), 55–65.

Shams, S. (2011). *The clash of narratives Swat military operation against the Taliban.* Deutsche Welle.

Smircich, L. (1983). Concepts of culture and organizational analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 28*(3), 339–358.

Tainter, J. A., & MacGregor, D. G. (2011). *Pashtun social structure: Cultural perceptions and segmentary lineage organization.* SSRN. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1934940

Thompson, J. D. (2017). *Organizations in action: Social science bases of administrative theory.* Routledge.

Thompson, J. D., Zald, M. N., & Scott, W. R. (2017). *Organizations in action: Social science bases of administrative theory.* Routledge.

Ur-Rahim, I., & Viaro, A. M. (2002). *Swat: An Afghan society in Pakistan: Urbanisation and change in a tribal environment.* University Institute for Development Studies.

Wallas, G. (1920). *Human nature in politics.* Transaction Publishers.

Zia, O. (2015). *The enigmatic consequences of security and development aid: Evidence from Pakistan* [Doctoral dissertation, The Florida State University].

Zittoun, T. (2012). Life-course: A socio-cultural perspective. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology* (pp. 513–535). Oxford University Press.