ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

STRENGTHENING PAKISTAN'S COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM (CVE) STRATEGIES: TOWARD EFFECTIVE DERADICALIZATION AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

Ahsaan Bhatti
Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) Lahore
Email: ahsaanbhatti@hotmail.com

Abstract

This study critically examines Pakistan's ongoing Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) measures to propose actionable strategies for effectively deradicalizing and reintegrating terrorists into mainstream society. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the roots of radicalization within Pakistan, tracing the socio-political, religious, and historical factors that have fostered extremism over time. The research evaluates existing counterterrorism (CT) strategies and deradicalization programs, identifying their limitations, particularly the overreliance on coercive, military-based approaches that have yielded short-term gains but failed to produce sustainable societal transformation.

Drawing upon the Saudi Arabian PRAC (Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare) model as a comparative case study, this paper highlights critical gaps in Pakistan's current framework and demonstrates how soft-power mechanisms, such as religious re-education, psychological counseling, community engagement, and socio-economic reintegration can enhance the effectiveness of its CVE initiatives. Through a qualitative comparative analysis, the study underscores the pivotal role of religious scholars, families, civil society, and educational institutions in preventing radicalization and supporting post-rehabilitation reintegration.

The findings reveal that a multidimensional, community-driven approach is essential to achieving lasting peace and ideological transformation. Consequently the research recommends a strategic policy shift from reactive military responses to proactive, human-centric CVE interventions that promote tolerance, coexistence, and resilience against extremist ideologies. These insights aim to inform policymakers, practitioners, and scholars seeking to strengthen Pakistan's national security and social harmony through sustainable deradicalization and reintegration efforts.

Keywords: *Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), deradicalization, reintegration, terrorism, Pakistan, PRAC model, soft power, rehabilitation, extremism*

Introduction

Terrorism has emerged as one of the most pressing global threats of the modern era, eroding social cohesion, disrupting governance structures, and impeding socioeconomic development. It can be categorized as a product of radicalization and extremism. Whereas radicalization is the process of deviating from equilibrium thinking which can defined as agreed social and religious norms in a social environment. For instance, peaceful harmony amongst various religious factions with differing beliefs is a possible scenario of a society with equilibrium thinking. However, any deviation from this norm would result in development of religious hatred for each other and can be termed as radicalization. On the other hand, the transformation process to restore the deviated members towards the equilibrium thinking can be classified as de-radicalization. During the process of de-radicalization, the extremist and radical ideologies are countered and replaced with socially agreed norms of the society such as tolerance, harmony and co-existence. An effective deradicalization program requires participation of every individual of society including terrorists, their family members, religious scholars, educational institutions, civil society, NGOs, INGOs and members of academia (Iqbal & Salman, 2023).

Pakistan's struggle with violent extremism is a complex phenomenon shaped by decades of political upheaval, religious manipulation, and geopolitical entanglements. While the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) have succeeded in dismantling numerous terrorist networks through kinetic operations, the underlying fabric of society remains deeply infiltrated

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

by extremist ideologies. This persistence of radical thought highlights a fundamental truth: terrorism in Pakistan is not merely a security problem—it is a societal crisis rooted in radicalization, intolerance, and ideological polarization. Addressing it, therefore, requires not just force, but foresight—a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy that couples military strength with the power of ideas, education, and community resilience.

Over the years, Pakistan has implemented various Counterterrorism (CT) and Deradicalization and Emancipation Programs (DREP) to combat extremism (Basit, 2015). However, these initiatives remain fragmented and largely dependent on coercive methods, producing temporary security but not lasting stability. In contrast, nations such as Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Egypt have adopted holistic Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) models that integrate psychological rehabilitation, religious re-education, and socio-economic reintegration to transform extremist mindsets rather than merely suppress them. Pakistan's challenge lies in evolving from a reactive counterterrorism approach to a proactive deradicalization paradigm that prevents the reproduction of extremist ideologies across generations.

The roots of Pakistan's radicalization can be traced to the military regimes of General Ayub Khan and General Zia-ul-Haq, during which political repression and ideological engineering eroded democratic values and civic freedoms. Zia's policy of Islamization, compounded by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, turned Pakistan into the epicenter of a proxy jihad funded by global powers. The United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia invested billions to establish religious seminaries, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), promoting militant interpretations of Islam to mobilize fighters against the Soviets (Riedel, 2014). This state-sponsored radicalization, coupled with an unchecked proliferation of extremist narratives, sowed the seeds of long-term societal intolerance and sectarian violence.

Following the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan became a frontline ally in the U.S.-led War on Terror, suffering immense human and economic losses—over 80,000 lives and an estimated USD 120 billion (Abbasi, 2013). Yet, despite these sacrifices, extremism continues to thrive beneath the surface. The infiltration of radical ideologies into Pakistan's political discourse, educational systems, and community structures underscores the failure of force-based counterterrorism to win the "battle of ideas."

Pakistan's current CT strategy, though effective in neutralizing militant networks, lacks the soft-power dimension necessary to rehabilitate and reintegrate individuals who have succumbed to extremist ideologies. Deradicalization requires a deliberate focus on religious reformation, socio-economic empowerment, psychological rehabilitation, and post-reintegration support. Without these, the cycle of extremism will continue to regenerate. Learning from international models—particularly Saudi Arabia's PRAC (Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare) program—can provide valuable insights into building a more comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and sustainable framework for CVE in Pakistan.

This dissertation critically examines Pakistan's deradicalization initiatives and proposes evidence-based recommendations to enhance their effectiveness. By drawing lessons from comparative case studies and evaluating the role of religious scholars, families, civil society, and state institutions, the study aims to contribute to a long-term, inclusive strategy that transforms extremism into resilience and alienation into reintegration.

Rationale: Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts have largely relied on military operations that suppress militancy but fail to dismantle the ideological and social roots of extremism. The lack of comprehensive soft-power CVE initiatives—centered on rehabilitation, education, and reintegration—has limited the long-term success of these efforts. In contrast, countries such as Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Egypt have demonstrated that

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

sustainable deradicalization requires a holistic, community-based approach combining psychological support, religious re-education, and socio-economic empowerment.

This study seeks to reorient Pakistan's CVE strategy from a force-driven to a human-centered model, addressing radicalization at its source and promoting durable peace through effective deradicalization and social reintegration.

Aim & Objectives of the Study: To strengthen Pakistan's Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) framework by developing practical, evidence-based strategies for effective deradicalization and reintegration of extremists into mainstream society.

- Analyze key historical, political, and ideological drivers of radicalization in Pakistan.
- Assess performance and limitations of existing deradicalization and CVE initiatives.
- Compare Pakistan's CVE framework with successful international models, especially Saudi Arabia's PRAC strategy.
- Identify major policy and execution gaps in Pakistan's soft counterterrorism efforts.
- Recommend targeted, multi-stakeholder measures to enhance deradicalization and promote lasting social reintegration.

Research Question: Despite sustained military efforts, Pakistan's counterterrorism approach has not succeeded in eradicating the ideological roots of extremism. The absence of soft CT measures—such as rehabilitation, education, and reintegration programs—continues to hinder national deradicalization efforts (Jawaid, 2020). In contrast, several Muslim-majority nations have achieved measurable success through comprehensive, non-coercive CVE frameworks.

How can Pakistan improve its Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) measures to effectively deradicalize and reintegrate terrorists into mainstream society?

Literature Review

Factors Contributing to Radicalization in Pakistan

Radicalization in Pakistan stems from a complex blend of socioeconomic, political, and ideological factors. Jawaid (2020) identified poverty, unemployment, political marginalization, sectarian divides, illiteracy, and misrepresentation of religion as major contributors to extremist tendencies. Complementing this, Azam and Fatima (2017) emphasized psychosocial determinants such as childhood trauma, family neglect, lack of emotional support, and revenge-seeking behavior, which were commonly observed among interviewed terrorists.

At a global level, Gunaratna et al. (2011) argued that perceived persecution of Muslims in regions like Kashmir, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan serves as a powerful emotional and ideological motivator. Radical preachers and extremist groups manipulate these grievances to justify violence under the guise of jihad, exploiting religious sentiment to recruit vulnerable individuals across the Muslim world.

Recruitment of Radicalized Individuals

With the proliferation of digital communication and social media, terrorist organizations have gained unprecedented access to at-risk individuals. Kruglova (2022) highlighted how extremist groups leverage online platforms, encrypted forums, and social networks to propagate radical ideologies while evading law enforcement. The internet has become a strategic recruitment and indoctrination tool, enabling terrorist organizations to cultivate virtual communities that reinforce extremist narratives and foster loyalty without physical contact.

Non-Coercive Measures of Deradicalization

Despite extensive military operations, Pakistan has been unable to eradicate extremism's deep-rooted ideological foundations. Jawaid (2020) observed that the country's counterterrorism (CT) framework remains dominated by kinetic approaches, neglecting softer, preventive interventions. Iqbal and Salman (2023) proposed that an effective CT strategy should ideally comprise 20% hard measures and 80% soft measures, emphasizing psychological rehabilitation, community engagement, and counter-narrative development.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

Soft CT approaches include youth empowerment programs, vocational training, promotion of moderate religious interpretations, and public awareness campaigns. These initiatives can counter extremist propaganda, promote tolerance, and facilitate social reintegration. However, scholarly work on Pakistan's soft CT and deradicalization programs remains scarce, highlighting the need for comparative research with successful international models, particularly Saudi Arabia's PRAC framework.

Pakistan's Deradicalization and Emancipation Programs (DREP)

Pakistan's Deradicalization and Emancipation Programs (DREPs) were first introduced in Swat in 2009, focusing on captured militants through education, vocational training, and psychological counseling (Azam & Fatima, 2017). Additional centers were later established in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), but these remained geographically limited and lacked national expansion (Jawaid, 2020).

Basit (2015) critically compared Pakistan's programs with those of Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia, identifying structural challenges such as political polarization, sectarianism, limited stakeholder consensus, and resource constraints. These issues have restricted the scalability and long-term sustainability of DREP initiatives, preventing them from addressing community-level radicalization and ideological indoctrination.

Case Study: Saudi Arabia's PRAC Model

Saudi Arabia offers a valuable comparative model due to its similar ideological and religious landscape. Riedel (2014) noted that Saudi Arabia's initial promotion of Wahhabi ideology during the Soviet-Afghan war inadvertently contributed to regional radicalization. Recognizing this threat, the Kingdom later implemented an extensive deradicalization program under the Ministry of Interior in 2004, integrating religious, psychological, and social rehabilitation efforts (Boucek, 2008).

Combes (2013) outlined Saudi Arabia's PRAC framework Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare, as a comprehensive model addressing three dimensions:

1. Preventing radicalization through education and public awareness,
2. Rehabilitating extremists via counseling and religious re-education, and
3. Ensuring aftercare through economic and social reintegration initiatives.

Capstack (2015) described Saudi Arabia's initiative as the "longest continuously running deradicalization program" globally, though he noted its limited success with hardcore militants. Nonetheless, its integration of psychological counseling, family engagement, and post-release monitoring has been widely recognized as an international best practice.

Saudi Arabia's focus on youth engagement, community-based activities, and national reintegration programs stands in sharp contrast to Pakistan's primarily coercive strategy. The absence of comparable aftercare and youth-focused programs in Pakistan is often attributed to economic constraints and lack of political will.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Social Reintegration Theory and the Theory of Change (Concentric-Centric Model), which together explain the transformation of radicalized individuals into peaceful, law-abiding citizens. The framework underscores that deradicalization is not merely about ideological reform but about social acceptance, psychological healing, and economic empowerment.

According to Kolstø (2019), Social Reintegration Theory emphasizes the collective role of the community, family, state institutions, and civil society in facilitating the smooth reintegration of former extremists. The theory highlights three essential dimensions:

1. *Community Acceptance:* Rebuilding social trust through active interaction with family and community members, despite stigma or fear associated with the individual's past.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

2. *Economic Empowerment*: Providing education, vocational training, and employment opportunities to ensure financial stability and prevent re-engagement in extremist networks.
3. *Psychological Rehabilitation*: Delivering continuous counseling and mental health support to help individuals overcome trauma, guilt, and extremist conditioning.

The Theory of Change (Concentric-Centric Model) complements this by mapping the progressive transformation process from ideological disengagement to social reintegration, through targeted interventions at individual, community, and institutional levels.

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens to analyze Saudi Arabia's PRAC model, which integrates social support, economic reintegration, and psychological care. This framework is particularly relevant for Pakistan, where existing deradicalization programs lack sustained community participation and aftercare mechanisms. Applying these theories can thus guide the development of holistic, sustainable, and context-sensitive CVE strategies that promote long-term peace and social cohesion.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to critically examine Pakistan's Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) strategies in comparison with Saudi Arabia's deradicalization model. The Saudi program serves as the primary case study due to the shared socioreligious context, majority-Muslim populations, and similar historical trajectories of radicalization in both countries.

The case study method enables an in-depth exploration of the structure, implementation, and outcomes of Saudi Arabia's PRAC strategy to identify transferable lessons for Pakistan. As Yin (2009) notes, case study research is particularly effective for analyzing complex, context-specific social phenomena, such as deradicalization and reintegration within real-world settings.

Data collection is based on secondary qualitative sources, including peer-reviewed research articles, books, policy reports, government documents, and credible open-source materials. Official publications from the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) were also consulted to ensure reliability and contextual depth.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1: Examines the extent, causes, and evolution of radicalization and extremism in Pakistan, along with a critical review of its existing deradicalization and CVE initiatives.
Chapter 2: Analyzes Saudi Arabia's PRAC program, evaluating its strengths, weaknesses, and applicability to Pakistan's context, with emphasis on soft-power approaches.
Chapter 3: Presents a comparative analysis of both countries' CVE frameworks and proposes evidence-based recommendations to strengthen Pakistan's deradicalization and reintegration strategies.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

Result

Chapter No. 1

Current Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) Measures and Deradicalization Programs of Pakistan

Historical Context of Radicalization in Pakistan: Pakistan's creation in 1947 on religious grounds made Islam central to its sociopolitical identity. However, decades of political instability, military interventions, authoritarianism, and regional conflicts notably the Afghan-Soviet war—fostered an environment conducive to extremism (Basit, 2015). General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization policies and U.S.-backed jihad against the Soviets catalyzed the rise of radical networks, heavily financed by external actors, such as Saudi Arabia. Religious seminaries proliferated, spreading militant ideologies that gradually embedded extremism in Pakistan's social fabric (Iqbal et al., 2019).

Underlying Drivers of Radicalization: Post-1989, Pakistan's society became deeply polarized due to sectarianism, weak governance, corruption, illiteracy, and poor economic conditions (Basit, 2015). Military operations, U.S. drone strikes, and global jihadist narratives further fueled resentment. Religious seminaries and social media continue to serve as breeding grounds for extremist indoctrination (Kruglova, 2022; Zahid, 2017).

Extent of Radicalization: Radicalization in Pakistan manifests through religious intolerance, mob violence, and sectarian hostility. High-profile incidents, such as the assassination of Governor Salman Taseer (Basit, 2015) and repeated mob lynchings of minorities (Cai & Wright, 2023) underscore the normalization of extremism. The intensity and nature of radicalization vary regionally, driven by ideological, economic, and political grievances.

CVE Measures and Deradicalization Programs: Pakistan's counter-extremism approach has long been militarized, with limited success in changing extremist mindsets. Following major operations in Swat and FATA, Deradicalization and Emancipation Programs (DREPs) were launched in 2009 through civil-military collaboration (Noor, 2013). Programs such as *Saboon* and *Rastoon* in Swat offered religious counseling, psychological support, formal education, and vocational training, emphasizing rehabilitation and reintegration (Basit, 2015; Azam & Fatima, 2017).

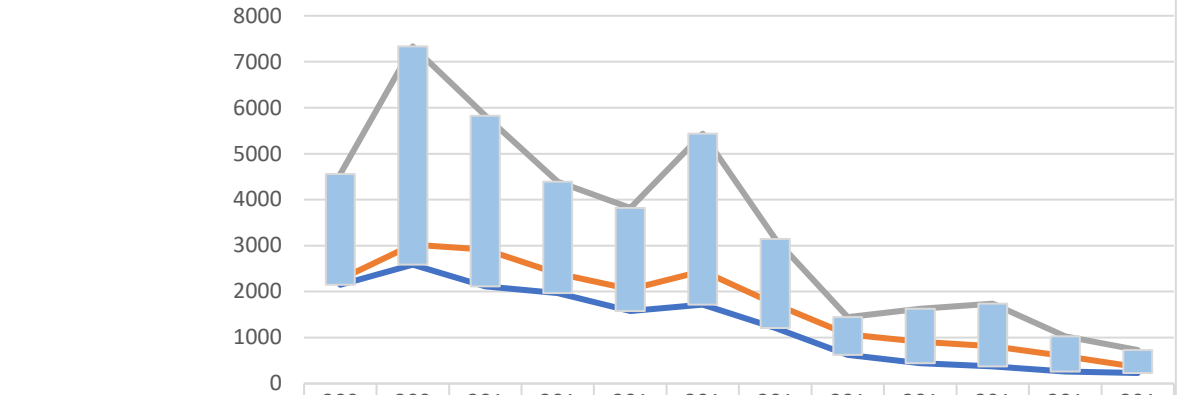
In Punjab, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) initiated a PRAC-inspired program in 2011, integrating prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare, though it was later discontinued (Zahid, 2017). Similar efforts in Balochistan, including *Darpesh* and *Umeed-e-Nau*, aimed at reintegrating insurgents into society through counseling and vocational training (Basit, 2015).

Formulation of Counter-Narratives: Pakistan has struggled to develop a unified counter-narrative to extremist ideology. Initiatives, such as the *Paigham-e-Pakistan* (PEP) fatwa, endorsed by over 1,800 religious scholars, represented significant progress by declaring terrorism un-Islamic (NACTA, 2014). However, weak dissemination and limited public engagement hindered its impact (Iqbal et al., 2019).

National Action Plan (NAP): Following the 2014 Army Public School attack, Pakistan adopted the National Action Plan (NAP) a comprehensive CVE policy integrating security, governance, and ideological measures. NAP targeted terror financing, hate speech, madrassa regulation, and institutional strengthening through NACTA and provincial CTDs (NACTA, 2014). It contributed to a measurable decline in terrorist incidents and fostered greater policy coherence (Basit, 2020; Ali, 2023).

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

Chart 1: Incidents of Terrorism in Pakistan from 2014-2019



	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of Terrorist Attacks	2148	2586	2113	1966	1577	1717	1206	625	441	370	262	229
Killings	2267	3021	2913	2391	2050	2451	1723	1069	908	815	595	357
Injuries	4558	7334	5824	4389	3822	5438	3143	1443	1627	1736	1030	729

Note: *Source: Data obtained from Pak Institute for Peace Studies' Pakistan Security Reports (2008-2019) (PIPS, 2014-2019)*

The analysis of data obtained from the *Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS, 2014–2019)* reveals a substantial decline in terrorism-related incidents, killings, and injuries across Pakistan between 2008 and 2019. The year 2009 marked the peak of terrorist violence, recording 2,586 attacks, 3,021 fatalities, and 7,334 injuries, reflecting the intensity of insurgent and extremist activities during this period (Zahid, 2017). However, a consistent downward trend is evident thereafter, particularly following the introduction of Pakistan's National Action Plan (NAP) in 2014 and the launch of major counterterrorism operations, including Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad (Basit, 2020; NACTA, 2014).

These military and policy measures effectively dismantled militant networks and disrupted their operational capacities, reducing terrorist incidents from 1,206 in 2015 to only 229 by 2019 representing a more than 90% decline within a decade. This downward trajectory demonstrates the success of Pakistan's kinetic counterterrorism measures, which significantly improved internal security conditions (Jawaid, 2020).

However, while these operations yielded notable short-term security gains, the persistence of latent radical ideologies and sporadic extremist violence underscores the need for complementary non-kinetic approaches, including deradicalization, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs to consolidate peace and prevent relapse into extremism (Iqbal & Salman, 2023; Kolstø, 2019). Thus, the data highlights the importance of transitioning from a predominantly militarized response toward a comprehensive Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) framework that integrates community engagement, education, and soft power initiatives for sustainable peace and societal resilience.

National Internal Security Policy (NISP) and Critical Review of DREPs

In 2014, the Government of Pakistan under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif introduced the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) the country's first comprehensive framework for countering violent extremism and ensuring internal stability. NISP emphasized three strategic pillars: dialogue, deterrence, and capacity building (Ali, 2023). It sought peaceful negotiations

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

with militant groups, strengthened the operational capacity of security institutions, and launched decisive military actions to dismantle terrorist networks.

Although initial peace talks with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) failed due to continued violence, Operation Zarb-e-Azb effectively neutralized militant strongholds in the former FATA region. Importantly, NISP introduced the soft power dimension to Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy, focusing on preventive and rehabilitative measures previously absent in national policy.

Critique of Deradicalization and Emancipation Programs (DREPs)

Despite promising beginnings, Pakistan's Deradicalization and Emancipation Programs (DREPs) have remained ad hoc, reactive, and unsustainable (Azam & Fatima, 2017). Lacking institutional continuity and nationwide expansion, these initiatives were largely post-conflict responses rather than long-term CVE strategies. Key shortcomings include:

1. **Absence of Preventive Measures:** Unlike Saudi Arabia's **PRAC model**, Pakistan's DREPs neglected public awareness campaigns, educational reforms, and cultural initiatives that foster community resilience against radicalization.
2. **Lack of Aftercare Support:** Without structured post-rehabilitation mechanisms, such as financial aid, psychosocial support, and community reintegration many participants risk recidivism.
3. **Weak Family Involvement:** The exclusion of families and community networks undermined the sustainability of reintegration outcomes.

The Paigham-e-Pakistan (PEP) initiative, endorsed by over 1,800 religious scholars, remains the most comprehensive national counter-narrative. However, its poor dissemination with limited integration into school curricula or media—has constrained its potential impact (Basit, 2015, 2020).

Institutional Gaps and Policy Inconsistency

Programs such as the Punjab DREP, launched by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in collaboration with TEVTA and Punjab Police, were among the most holistic—featuring prevention, psychological counseling, and vocational training (Basit, 2015). Yet, their discontinuation after limited implementation reflects Pakistan's reactive policy culture, where major reforms follow crises like the 2014 Army Public School (APS) attack but lack sustained execution.

To achieve meaningful deradicalization and social reintegration, Pakistan must institutionalize continuity in its CVE frameworks, ensuring that NISP, NAP, and DREP initiatives are consistently refined, adequately funded, and nationally integrated rather than reactive and episodic (Basit, 2020).

Chapter No. 2

Saudi Arabia's Deradicalization Program: The PRAC Strategy

Radicalization in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) emerged primarily after its involvement in the Afghan Jihad (1979–1989), when thousands of Saudi youth joined the fight against Soviet forces. Initially endorsed by the Saudi state and society, these fighters later turned against the government when Riyadh allied with the United States during the Gulf War, sparking internal ideological conflict and anti-state extremism (Casptack, 2015; Kolsto, 2019). This trajectory mirrors Pakistan's experience, where state-sponsored jihad later mutated into domestic terrorism.

A key driver of extremism in KSA was the rigid interpretation of Islam known as Wahhabism, which promoted takfiri (excommunication) ideology against Shiite and Sufi Muslims, legitimizing violence under distorted theological justifications (Casptack, 2015).

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

Evolution of Saudi Arabia's Deradicalization Efforts

Following the 2003 Riyadh bombings, the Saudi government recognized the limitations of purely coercive counterterrorism measures and shifted toward a soft power approach**.** Under the leadership of Prince Muhammad bin Nayef**,** the Advisory Committee for Counselling and Care was established in 2004 to rehabilitate extremist offenders through religious re-education and psychosocial support (Boucek, 2008). These efforts later evolved into the Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare (PRAC) Strategy, now considered a global model for deradicalization (A. F., 2008).

The PRAC Framework

1. Prevention: Countering Early Radicalization

The Prevention phase targets vulnerable individuals—especially youth—through education, civic engagement, and community programs. The Ministry of Education leads nationwide initiatives such as anti-extremism debates, curriculum reforms, and awareness campaigns highlighting the incompatibility of terrorism with Islam (Casptack, 2015). Public outreach through slogans like *"Islam Rejects Terrorism"* and online campaigns such as Tranquility counter extremist propaganda and recruitments on social media (Boucek, 2008). Family welfare support is also provided to prevent secondary radicalization among relatives of detainees.

2. Rehabilitation: Re-Education and Reintegration

The Rehabilitation phase operates primarily through the Mohammad bin Nayef Centre for Counselling and Advice**,** where detainees undergo intensive programs blending religious counselling, psychological therapy, vocational training, and recreational activities (CBS Mornings, 2014).

The program is managed by four subcommittees:

- **Religious Subcommittee**: Corrects theological misconceptions through dialogue.
- **Psychological and Social Subcommittee:** Addresses trauma, behavior, and family welfare.
- **Security Subcommittee**: Assesses risk and monitors post-release behavior.
- **Media Subcommittee**: Promotes counter-narratives and public education (Almiman, 2022).

3. Aftercare: Sustained Reintegration

Upon successful completion, participants receive financial assistance, employment support, housing, and even marriage aid to ensure stability and deter recidivism (Casptack, 2015). Released individuals remain under surveillance and receive continuous mentorship from counsellors and community leaders.

Critical Assessment of PRAC

While the PRAC strategy is widely regarded as the most comprehensive deradicalization model in the Muslim world, it faces criticism for being cost-intensive and limited mainly to low-risk offenders (Williams & Lindsey, 2014). Some critics argue that the program achieves behavioral disengagement rather than complete ideological transformation. Nonetheless, PRAC's holistic approach—combining religious, psychological, and socioeconomic interventions—has significantly reduced recidivism and inspired similar programs in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Egypt (Boucek, 2008).

The Tranquility Campaign further distinguishes PRAC by targeting digital radicalization—an increasingly vital front in modern counterextremism (Casptack, 2015). Despite its limitations, PRAC demonstrates how soft counterterrorism tools, when integrated with state authority and religious legitimacy, can yield sustainable deradicalization and reintegration outcomes.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

Chapter No. 3

Comparative Analysis: PRAC Strategy of Saudi Arabia and DREP of Pakistan

Both Saudi Arabia's PRAC strategy and Pakistan's DREP aim to counter terrorism and extremism; however, their scope and depth differ significantly. The PRAC model adopts a comprehensive and holistic framework**,** addressing prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare. It targets not only detainees but also at-risk individuals through religious re-education, psychological counselling, and social reintegration with family support (Boucek, 2008). In contrast, Pakistan's DREP is limited to convicted militants and emphasizes vocational training over ideological reform. The absence of preventive and aftercare components narrows its long-term impact (Zahid, 2017).

- **Participation and Implementation:** In Saudi Arabia, participation is largely mandatory for detainees except for hardcore extremists, while in Pakistan, state authorities select participants without assessing their willingness or readiness for change. This lack of voluntary commitment weakens rehabilitation outcomes (Noor, 2013).
- **Success and Impact:** Saudi Arabia's PRAC program has achieved measurable success, with recidivism rates as low as 2–3% among 3,200 participants (Casptack, 2015). Its effectiveness is strongest among minor offenders, while hardcore militants remain resistant. Pakistan's DREP, though initially effective in Swat—rehabilitating around 2,500 individuals, failed to expand due to financial and administrative limitations. The program's short-term, localized impact and absence of monitoring mechanisms hinder sustainability.
- **Reactive vs. Proactive Approach:** PRAC represents a proactive, long-term strategy**,** integrating prevention, education, and social reintegration. Conversely, DREP is reactive**,** launched primarily after conflict or crisis, without institutional continuity or preventive design (Basit, 2015).
- **Cultural and Religious Context:** Saudi Arabia's homogeneous society allows for a unified religious approach to deradicalization. Pakistan's sectarian and cultural diversity demands tailored strategies addressing varied extremist ideologies across regions, which DREP currently lacks (Zahid, 2017).
- **Prevention and Community Engagement:** PRAC invests heavily in youth engagement, education reforms, sports, and media campaigns to deter radicalization. Pakistan lacks such proactive initiatives due to limited funding and institutional neglect, leaving youth vulnerable to extremist narratives (Boucek, 2008).
- **Aftercare and Reintegration:** The aftercare component is a defining feature of PRAC, providing financial, social, and emotional support to facilitate reintegration and prevent recidivism. Pakistan's DREP lacks any structured aftercare system due to resource constraints and scale of radicalization (Casptack, 2015).
- **Target Population and Customization:** PRAC targets a broad audience from convicted militants to potential recruits and religious influencers. DREP, by contrast, remains confined to post-conflict detainees, ignoring broader radical tendencies within society (Azam & Fatima, 2017). Moreover, Pakistan's one-size-fits-all approach fails to address individual drivers of radicalization, unlike the individualized frameworks seen in KSA and Europe (Jawaid, 2020).

Lessons and Recommendations for Pakistan

1. Adopt PRAC-style community outreach and education programs to protect vulnerable youth from extremist recruitment.
2. Launch a digital CVE campaign similar to Saudi Arabia's *Tranquility* initiative to counter extremist propaganda online.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

3. Strengthen partnerships with NGOs, religious scholars, and media to build community resilience and promote moderate religious values (Basit, 2015).
4. Integrate family counselling and support mechanisms within DREP to enhance reintegration outcomes (Noor, 2013).
5. Improve overcrowded prisons and expedite judicial processes to prevent further radicalization of inmates (Basit, 2015).
6. Proscribe extremist organizations like TLP and ensure consistent enforcement of anti-extremism laws (Basit, 2020).
7. Establish a unified national stance on jihad and extremism to support deradicalization and CVE implementation (Iqbal & Salman, 2023).
8. Institutionalize and disseminate *Paigham-e-Pakistan* across educational curricula and media platforms to promote tolerance and harmony (Winter, 2015).

Saudi Arabia's PRAC model offers a structured, preventive, and comprehensive framework integrating soft-power measures for sustainable deradicalization. Pakistan's DREP, though promising in concept, remains fragmented, reactive, and resource-limited**.** Adapting PRAC's multidimensional approach—emphasizing prevention, psychological rehabilitation, aftercare, and societal reintegration—can significantly enhance Pakistan's CVE capacity and national resilience against extremism.

This study's comparative analysis confirms a recurrent theme in the literature: deradicalization succeeds when states pair coercive measures with sustained, multi-dimensional soft interventions (Boucek, 2008; Iqbal & Salman, 2023). Saudi Arabia's PRAC model demonstrates that an integrated package — prevention, rehabilitation and aftercare — reduces recidivism among low- to medium-risk offenders and protects vulnerable populations through proactive outreach (Casptack, 2015; Boucek, 2008). Pakistan's DREPs, by contrast, have largely been reactive, geographically limited, and short-lived, producing localized gains but failing to produce durable societal change (Azam & Fatima, 2017; Noor, 2013; Zahid, 2017).

Interpretation of Key Findings

First, the scope of PRAC — addressing at-risk youth, families, clerics, prisoners, and online audiences — contrasts sharply with Pakistan's narrower focus on detained militants. This difference matters: prevention and aftercare close the "leakage" through which new recruits and recidivists emerge (Combes, 2013; Boucek, 2008). Second, PRAC's multidisciplinary design (religious scholars + psychologists + social workers + security oversight) mirrors best-practice recommendations in CVE scholarship and contributes to lower recidivism rates (Williams & Lindsey, 2014). Pakistan's programs often lack that interdisciplinary integration and continuous monitoring (Basit, 2015; Jawaid, 2020).

Third, the political and social context conditions program transferability. Saudi Arabia's religious authority and centralized resources facilitate nationwide curricula reform, clerical engagement, and family support packages — capacities Pakistan struggles to match due to political fragmentation, sectarian diversity, and resource constraints (Kolstø, 2019; Basit, 2015). As Kruglova (2022) and others have shown, the internet further complicates recruitment dynamics; Pakistan's weaker digital counter-messaging leaves youth exposed to transnational narratives (Kruglova, 2022).

Alignment with Existing Research

The findings corroborate prior analyses arguing that hard power alone is insufficient and can be counterproductive without complementary soft measures (Jawaid, 2020; Iqbal & Salman, 2023). They also validate Boucek's (2008) conclusion that effective deradicalization must be context-sensitive but comprehensive**,** combining theological correction, psychosocial care, vocational opportunity, family engagement, and post-release monitoring. Pakistan's NAP

and NISP represent important policy advances (NACTA, 2014; Ali, 2023), but their inconsistent implementation supports Basit's (2020) observation that policy discontinuity undermines long-term CVE outcomes.

Policy Implications: Following are the possible implications based on this research:

1. Pakistan should scale school-based curricula reforms, youth engagement activities, and community outreach to protect the most vulnerable (Combes, 2013).
2. Establish counseling centers with religious scholars, psychologists, and social workers—paired with standardized risk assessment and aftercare planning (Boucek, 2008; Williams & Lindsey, 2014).
3. Family support and economic assistance reduce recidivism and are low-cost multipliers of program success (Noor, 2013; Azam & Fatima, 2017).
4. Institutionalize and widely disseminate Paigham-e-Pakistan through curricula and media campaigns (NACTA, 2014; Iqbal et al., 2019).
5. Launch an online counter-radicalization campaign modeled on Saudi "Tranquility" to reclaim cyberspace (Casptack, 2015; Kruglova, 2022).

Limitations: This analysis relies mainly on secondary and open-source material and comparative case interpretation; empirical validation (e.g., longitudinal recidivism tracking or participant interviews) is limited. Also, Saudi PRAC's resource intensity presents realistic constraints for Pakistan's replication without phased adaptation and international support (Casptack, 2015).

Future Research: Empirical evaluation of pilot PRAC-inspired initiatives in Pakistan (e.g., a provincial aftercare pilot, a school curriculum intervention, or a digital counter-messaging campaign) would provide evidence on scalability and cultural fit. Longitudinal studies tracking recidivism and social outcomes of rehabilitated individuals would strengthen policy design.

References

Ali, D. S. (2023). *Prospects and challenges for the implementation of the revised National Action Plan (2021): A contextual perspective. Pakistan Social Sciences Review, 7*(4), 686–697.

Azam, M., & Fatima, S. (2017). *De-radicalization and rehabilitation in Pakistan: Lessons from Swat Valley programs. Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies, 24*(2), 55–68.

Basit, A. (2015). *Countering violent extremism: Evaluating Pakistan's de-radicalization programs.* Islamabad: Pak Institute for Peace Studies.

Basit, A. (2020). *National Action Plan and Pakistan's counterterrorism success. Terrorism Monitor, 18*(10), 1–5.

Boucek, C. (2008). *Saudi Arabia's "soft" counterterrorism strategy: Prevention, rehabilitation, and aftercare.* Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Casptack, M. (2015). *The Saudi deradicalization model: A soft approach to extremism. Middle East Policy Review, 22*(3), 89–104.

Combes, D. (2013). *The PRAC model: Saudi Arabia's holistic approach to deradicalization. International Journal of Counterterrorism Studies, 5*(4), 23–39.

Iqbal, T., & Salman, M. (2023). *Soft power approaches in countering violent extremism: Lessons for Pakistan. Journal of Peace and Security Studies, 15*(1), 77–92.

Iqbal, K., Zafar, S. K., & Mehmood, Z. (2019). *Critical evaluation of Pakistan's counter-narrative efforts. Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, 14*(2), 147–163.

Jawaid, S. (2020). *Countering violent extremism in Pakistan: Challenges and policy options.* Islamabad: Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies.

Kolstø, P. (2019). *Social reintegration and transformation of former extremists: A theoretical*

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.04 (2025)

approach. Journal of Peace and Conflict Transformation, 14(2), 35–52.

Kruglova, O. (2022). *Digital radicalization and online recruitment: The new frontier of terrorism. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 45*(7), 561–580.

NACTA. (2014). *Paigham-e-Pakistan: National narrative for peace and unity.* Government of Pakistan. https://nacta.gov.pk/laws-policies/nap-2014/

Noor, S. (2013). *Deradicalization programs in Pakistan: A case study of Swat. Conflict and Peace Studies, 6*(1), 41–58.

Williams, P., & Lindsey, D. (2014). *Assessing deradicalization programs: A global comparison.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Zahid, F. (2017). *Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy: A critical appraisal.* Washington, DC: Middle East Institute.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.