


Pashtun Cultural Transition between the Militants and Military: A Study of Instrumentalization of *Badal* in Swat Valley, Pakistan

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Abstract

This article aims at discussing the violent conflict and its inter-relationship with militants and military in Swat, Pakistan. It argues that the term *Badal* may be recognized as having multiple forms and meanings. This paper demonstrates that in the initial phase of the conflict people used militant's 'tag' while in post-military-operations period took the benefit of their ties with the military to take revenge from their opponents. This study underscores that this phenomenon has impacted the socio-cultural symbols and practices of *badal* negatively and has further defamed socio-cultural norms and values of the society. The study for being empirical in its methodology is based on 45 open-ended in-depth interviews, 05 focus group discussions and ethnographic observation, in Swat, Pakistan.

Key words: Swat, Violence, *Badal*, Culture, Pashtuns, Militants.

Introduction

Swat Valley for its beautiful landscapes is regarded to be the Switzerland of Pakistan and, thus, has been a place of great attraction for the tourists. Owing to its history and cultural development, it has attracted the attentions of intellectuals, historians, archeologists, and anthropologists, as well. In the recent past, it however has become a highly conflict-ridden area, as the Islamic extremists and militants have

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taken over the dominant position through violent and militant means, and this conflict has harmed the cultural values of the society greatly.

This study reflects upon the relationship between violent conflict and cultural features of the Pashtun society by discussing the case study of District Swat. It underscores *badal* as an ethno-cultural component and identity marker of Pashtun society. It aims at exploring the repercussions of violent conflict on this. Moreover, the violent conflict in Pukhtun populated Swat,^{1 2} is taken as a case study for exploring the research question: what is the relationship between violent conflict and cultural feature of *badal*?

The research question and the case of Swat and *badal* is a deliberate choice with multiple reasons. The study is attempting to explore the relationship between conflict and cultural feature of *badal*. It appears that there is a dearth of literature on the causes of violent conflict between militancy and military in Pukhtun region, particularly in Swat,³ as well as on its impacts on the ethnic and cultural features of this very society. The case is immensely significant, since the Pashtuns recognize the ethnic identity as a primary and salient social attribute in relation to their religious and national ambience,⁴ the militants pursue their religious agenda by using this contextualization. Furthermore, the present case study is significant for some other reasons: first, it gives an evaluation to the district Swat that once was a princely state;¹ second it discusses the presence of the military that is perceived to be dominated by the Punjabis; thirdly, the issue acquires the context of so-called 'war on terror' in post 11 September 2001 era.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical and conceptual argument of this article is based on an extension of the theory of constructivism. This article aims to understand the impact of violent conflict between militants and Pakistani state military in relationship with *badal*, a cultural aspect of Pashtun society. This whole stock of theoretical literature mostly ignores the discussion of changes or substantial impacts exerted by conflict and violence in/on ethnic identity. Kalyvas argues that the empirical discussions of conflict and its relationship with ethnic identity is least discussed.⁵

In this line, among many perspectives, theoretically as well as empirically, constructivism is credited to the production of some

literature within its framework related to the changes and impacts by the conflict on ethnic identity⁶. This theoretical position proposes that there is a positive link between conflict and ethnic identity. Further studies under this perspective explore and argue that ethnic identities are impacted due to violent conflicts. Literature produced under this perspective proposes that Ethnic identity either 'harden' or 'soften' during violent conflicts.⁷

Theoretically, the disposition offered by the present study is different from the available discussion in ethnic and conflict studies. A part of this available discussion argues that as ethnic identity cannot be changed, conflict and violence have no significant impact in this regard, while another part of this literature propose that conflict and violence harden or softens ethnic identity. This work argues that conflict and violence impact ethnic identity and their markers, but identity is neither lost nor it hardens or softens. Rather this work contends that conflict and violence impact and transform ethnic identity in multiple and dynamic ways by adding to the complexity and contextuality of its markers. This theoretical framework does not aim to explore the relationship of violence with culture and cultural features, particularly the impacts of violence on culture.

In the case of conflict in Pukhtun region, the literature is less sensitive to the impacts of conflict and violence on cultural features such as revenge/*badal*. The available literature has succinctly debated the violent representation of Pukhtuns as a colonial legacy⁸ but not the relationship and the impacts of the recent violent conflict on this. The idealized romantic view of the heroic and courageous warrior Pashtuns who are wild, yet simple was popularized by colonial writers like Kipling, Kaye etc.⁹ This legacy continues in Pakistan today and Pukhtuns are represented as violent.¹⁰ The recent conflict and violence have added to this perception and the media has played a role in propagating Pukhtuns as violent and fanatic.¹¹

The theoretical as well as the empirical literature is scar on this aspect and its relationship to the violence in the relation. Further the literature falls short of any theoretical and empirical approach to understand the impacts of this violence and conflict in the Pukhtun region on cultural features of the Pukhtuns, particularly ones like *badal* already stereotyped as violent. This work analyzes the multiplicity of *badal* as a cultural feature among the Pukhtuns and the

repercussions of conflict for *badal* as a cultural marker of the Pukhtuns.

Research Methodology

This research is primarily qualitative in nature and seeks to describe the meanings of central themes and the main task of interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. To interpret the meaning of the context of an interview or a piece of literature, this research also uses hermeneutics, which is a tool of interpretation. The collected data analyzed thematically with the help of hermeneutics, are used for the theoretical and analytical discussion of this article. The data collection site is Swat in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.

Since 2001, with the rise of militant organizations and the 'War on Terror', the Pukhtun region in Pakistan, such as Swat, has become even more inaccessible to the scholars and researchers having non-Pashtun identities. However, one of the authors who was mainly responsible to collect data of the present research has been able to overcome most of these problems of inaccessibility due to the advantages of being from the Pukhtun region (though not Swat) while speaking the same language and sharing the same ethnic identity. Even then, accessing research participants for discussions has been difficult amidst the conflict and violence, military presence, the sensitivity of the research topic and the overall security situation in Swat. Gatekeepers like students, friends and colleagues are a central part of this data collection who have provided access to the field. Further none of the discussion could be recorded due to the reasons stated above.

This study relies on individual discussions, unstructured interviews, focus group discussions and observation while traveling to and staying in Swat. Due to security concerns and safety of the participants and people who provided stay, the stays in Swat were limited to few days, mostly 4-5 days after a break of one or two weeks. The collected data was analyzed thematically. The sample was recruited in an attempt to cut across classes, clans, educational qualification, status, occupation, gender and tribal affiliation. Purposeful sampling replaced with random one in this study to some extent. The selection of the participants was based on their consent and the limited number of participants was two key features of the

fieldwork, since random sampling could not satisfy the criterion of appropriate sampling. In total 45 in-depth interviews termed discussions and five focus group discussions were conducted for this study along with ethnographic observations, between November 2016 and May 2017 in Swat for PhD research and later in 2021. This number reflects the lengthy discussions, some spending many hours and those discussions wherein written notes were taken. Lastly, the authors of the current research conducted five discussions and interviews with participants from Swat in November 2021.

Data collection was conducted in different parts of Swat, some of which like Green Square in Mingora, Saidu Shareef, Matta Tehsil and Kabal Tehsil are briefly explored here. Mingora, which is the financial hub of Swat and famous for militants' violence, with its Green Square named "Khooni Chowk" (Violent or Bloody Square) after the militants' used to hang their opponents, is one field site.² Another significant field site is the historic town of Saidu Shareef, formerly known as Baligram, which is the capital of Swat located a few kilometers from Mingora. It hosts most of the government offices, a medical college (Saidu Medical College), a post-graduate college (Government Jahanzeb College Swat: Jahanzeb was the Wali of Swat from 1949 to 1969) and has been the residence of Abdul Ghaffar Shah aka Akhund of Swat, also called Saidu Baba, in the 19th century and the residence of the Wali of Swat in the 20th.

Another major field site is Matta Tehsil, which is around 20 km from Mingora and has a financial center, but within a major rural hilly area. Kabal Tehsil, situated around 35 Kilometers from Mingora, is yet another field site where we have stayed for many days. Kabal has been the headquarter of militants; it is the hometown of Maulana Fazlullah, head of the militant group in Swat and has witnessed one of the worst forms of militants' violence. It homes large military, frontier constabulary (paramilitary force in Pakistan) and police compounds. No interviews were conducted in locations of Upper Swat, such as Bahrain, Kalam, and Kohistan, which have Pukhtuns, but also a substantial number and majority in some cases of Kohistanis, Torwali and others (the Dardic People).

Participants were elders, university students, professionals, political workers, and others, both men and women. The exact duration for a discussion was not fixed, with discussions lasting

anywhere between 40 minutes to a few hours. All of these were conducted in the participants' native language, Pukhtu (Pashto) and recorded as field notes. Audio recordings were not appropriate for many reasons, especially as the topic is sensitive and may lead to ugly security situations in the region. Moreover, the study uses pseudonyms for the participants, with a specific naming structure. Names ending with the word '*chor*' (sister in Pukhtu language) is a female participant, otherwise, it is a male participant. Likewise, a name ending with '*dada*' is a male participant aged above 50, considered as an elder. A name ending with '*lala*' is a male participant aged between 40 and 50 and the rest are younger than 40. These terms and concepts have cultural meanings among the Pukhtuns as elders are highly respected. The word *dada* is usually used in the society for someone who is elder and/or white bearded and is given due respect in the society. The word *lala* is used in the society for anyone having more age than addresser out of respect.

Socio-ethnic and Administrative Organization of the Swat Valley: A profile

With a total area of 5,337 square kilometers (2,061 sq. mi) and accommodating a population of 2,309,570, Swat is the second most populated district of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Province in the Northwest of Pakistan,¹² Swat borders on the Western side to the districts of Dir and Chitral, both ex-princely states, on the northern side to Gilgit Baltistan, a region with special constitutional in Pakistan and on the eastern and south-eastern sides to the districts of Kohistan, Buner and Shangla. The most inhabitants are ethnic Pukhtuns based on their language, tribal affiliation, and patrilineal descent. There are some non-Pukhtuns in Swat as well including particularly Gujjar and Kohistani communities. Thus, along with Pukhtu (Pashto), Dardic languages such as Torwali and Kalami are also spoken, mainly in Upper Swat.¹³



Figure 1 Map showing Pakistani State in a global context and KP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) province in Pakistan. On the right side is Swat district in KP.

Emergence of the Conflict and Violence in Swat Valley

In the month of August 2022, Malik Liaqat Khan, a local parliamentarian from district Dir, northern Pakistan, was attacked by unknown men, in which he was safe. After a week a video surfaced on social media networks showing armed militants in Swat, taking hostage a military officer, local police officer and others who were later rescued through a *Jirga* (i.e., local council of elders) by local elders. With these events and others news started spreading that the banned outfit of militants, Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan, TTP, which was supposedly rooted out from Northern regions of Dir and Swat in 2009 have grouped again. Though the Pakistani state military media wing denied the reports of militants regrouping fear gripped the valley and its people who have seen the horrific conflict of 2007-2008.¹⁴

The conflict and violence of 2007-2009 in Swat district of Pakistan is a violent conflict between the 'Swati Taliban,'¹⁵ headed by Mullah Fazlullah, and the Pakistani state, which started in 2006-2007.¹⁶ In Swat, these militants started a violent campaign against the State of Pakistan and called to enforce their strict brand of Islamic *Shariah*. Violence was spread by them through killing, bombing, and beheading people who could oppose them or who were associated with Pakistani state or government, through a somewhat parallel authority system. The social way of life was practically halted, and society was soon dominated by terror due to violence in the region. Government, in a bid to control the situation, did a controversial peace deal with militants and passed *Nizam e Adal* regulations in Swat and Malakand. Courts (called *Dar ul Qaza*) were set up in Swat and Malakand as part of the deal between government and militants (called Taliban).¹⁷ The deal and regulations failed to achieve the aim and targets; however, it provided militants with time to spread to neighboring regions like Malakand and Buner.¹⁸

Pakistani military was called upon by the civilian administration to launch a series of military operations, at least three, which caused the internal displacement of about 2 million people, considered as one of the greatest internal displacements in the history of Pakistan.¹⁹ This conflict and violence, of militants and military, since the last decade, has affected different aspects of Pukhtun life, including Pukhtun ethnic identity and its markers like culture. The conflict and

Violence in Swat have a complex relationship with cultural features like *badal* among the Pukhtuns in Swat Pakistan.

Ethnic and Cultural Identity of the Pukhtuns of Pakistan

In Pakistan, Pukhtuns constitute the second largest ethnic group with 15.4 percent of population after Punjabis who are comprised of 44 percent. As an ethnic group, Pukhtuns retain multiple identities like ethnic, national, and religious. In comparison to national and religious identities, Pukhtuns considers their ethnic identity as the primary one.²⁰ Moreover, there exists a complex and peculiar relationship between these identities. Pukhtun ethnic identity remains a primary one for Pukhtuns in Swat, particularly at the face of Pakistani national identity. Scholars suggest that this Pukhtun ethnic identity is a complex, contested and contextual tool kit of different aspects and markers. It entails performing and ascribed aspects and markers.²¹ Performing aspects refers to Pukhtun culture that is Pukhtunwali/Pukhtu. Ascribed aspects are in birth in a Pukhtun home, patrilineal descent, tribal identity, language (Pukhtu) and land etc. The ascribed aspects and performing aspects combine to form Pukhtun ethnic identity and are contextual when it comes to preference of one over the other.²²

The performing marker of Pukhtun ethnic identity is Pukhtunwali/Pukhtun culture. Pukhtunwali is a contested and inconclusive list of different social, cultural, and behavioral codes, values, institutions, and practices, including but not limited to *Purdah, Jirga, Hujra, Melmastya, Gham-Khadi, the relationship between Kasha and Mashar, Honor and Badal*. These markers are significant situated in the social, cultural, historical, and even political context of the Pashtun society. Due to space limitation this article aims to understand *badal* a cultural feature and its interplay with the conflict in Swat valley of Pakistan.

Pukhtun Culture and the Concept of *Badal*

The *badal* is one of the significant aspects of Pukhtun culture and society, which is the focus of this study is literally translated as revenge or reciprocity. It has diverse social meanings and manifestations.²³ *Badal* is paid preferably better than the way received.²⁴ The different forms of *Badal*, depends upon the act, situation and the persons involved. For example, the concept of *badal* is conceived by the society in numerous forms: it can give a

connotation of some violence when it is in form of killing someone, or it can be a non-violent where guilty pay some sort of compensation or is forgiven by the aggrieved party. However, it is performed in response to diverse social actions and dynamics.²⁵

Badal in the society is considered as a due right and in fact obligatory, both in actions that are 'bad' and 'good'. Its extreme form, mostly misunderstood as the only one, is killing a man or any man from an opponent's family, tribe, or clan. Significantly *badal* is not time bound. Likewise, *badal* can be 'negative' as well as 'positive.'²⁶ Sultan I Rome, a scholar from Swat, contends that the positive aspects of *badal* are more significant than some of its negative ones. He also argues that because of this, *badal* has been part of Pukhtun social and ethnic system since long. It, in its broader forms, is a compulsion. Anyone not complying to *badal* in social activities, 'good' or 'bad', is looked down upon, not considered as a 'true Pukhtun', is denied the right to be called Pukhtun.²⁷ The recent conflict and violence in Swat have impacted this socio-cultural imagination and practice of *badal*. This contextualization is explored below.

Violent contextualization of Badal and the multiplicity of its meaning

Badal is a significant socio-cultural aspect of the conflict and violence in Swat. There are diverse and multiple patterns in this regard. The impacts of conflict for *badal* are multiple as are the linkages of it. This linkage is so powerful that it has become deceptive for some scholars, who argue that the conflict in Pukhtun region is based on *badal*, where Pukhtun in Pakistan are using the name of Taliban for their revenge from the state of Pakistan, for breaking its tribal and Pukhtun structure.²⁸ Honor and revenge are considered as two of the important elements of the Pakhtuns' social life that provided ground for joining the militants. However, it should be noted that honor and *Badal* in these cases are not the causes of joining the militants rather they are the effects of the counter-insurgency campaign.²⁹

Nonetheless, some scholars argue that such an understanding of *badal* in this context is 'reductionist' and represent a colonial imprint. Moreover, this article postulates that these studies do not consider the complexity of the conflict and the multiple dimensions it is having, besides being reductionist. Likewise, this understanding of *badal* 'dehumanizes' Pukhtun with an unchangeable culture of wars, tribal

vandalism, primitive, uncivilized, traditional and revenge seeking, thus incompatible with so called modern world.³⁰

This work partially agrees with the opinion of scholars like Rome, Khattak and Taj³¹ all from Pukhtun region that revenge among Pukhtun can have different forms in different contexts from different areas, accepting that violence can be one form of it not the essential one.³² Militants (as well as the state military) are not following the code of revenge as announced in Pukhtunwali, the Pukhtun code, as they are killing innocent people, children and even women, which never has been part of revenge. Moreover, the violence of Taliban is incompatible with any of these standards of cultural revenge. These are only criminal acts, Farhat Taj argues. Farhat Taj argues.³³

The multiplicity of the meaning of badal has been explored by other studies as well. In an interesting study of elite Pakhtun women, Amineh Ahmed found out that Gham-Khadi (sorrow and joy) celebrations are becoming important part of Pakhtunwali and manifest the concept of badal in its meaning of 'reciprocity' in social relationship.³⁴ The significance of usage as reciprocity is no less than the use as revenge as translation in the contested arena of social relations in the context. Metaphoric translations of badal include reciprocity, exchange, and debt. Exchange is referred to the exchange of gifts, taunts, harm, woman, support and even emotions.³⁵ Thus, badal can have diverse meanings apart from violence and conflict. The recent Conflict of militants and military in Swat has multiple aspects in relation to badal as understood in Pukhtun socio-cultural system.

Empirical Implications of Badal in conflict ridden Swat Valley

Linking conflict, violence and *badal*, this article argues that *badal* is a significant factor in the conflict of Swat. Many individuals, families and even 'groups/categories' took badal from others in the garbage of this conflict. As militants were powerful in a time, people joined them to use their 'tag' and took *badal* from their opponents. In post military operations period, many people have used their relationship with Pakistani state and its military to take it from their opponents. The present study postulates that this phenomenon has impacted the socio-cultural symbol and practice of *badal* and has defamed this cultural value. Moreover, this has also added to the already stereotypic and violent projections of it. In the context of conflict in Swat, it became easy for some Swatis to take *badal* while impossible

for others. Both individual as well as collective *badal* is left for many, which people intend to take in the future. Moreover, Pukhtuns in Swat also connect this to their honor.

Many individual, families and even 'groups/categories' took *badal* from others in the garbage of this conflict in Swat, both through the militants and military, which has repercussions for *badal* as a cultural code. This has been due to many reasons. For example, for many people in Swat, who were unable to take *badal* from their influential and powerful opponents, it was a chance. In the words of Qudrat Lala, from Kabal Swat, "There are many cases of taking *badal* in the crisis (conflict). For many people in Swat, it was a chance to take *badal*." ³⁶ This is a perception, which is common in Swat. However, this perception is coupled with the argument that the conflict was not solely based on *badal*. College and University Students during a FGD agreed to this in Saidu Shareef. One participant in this group, Saleem Shah, told that,

Badal has been working in this conflict in Swat. However, the conflict solely is not based on *badal*, though, many people have used both militants and military to take it from their opponents.

This phenomenon has occurred in too many cases.³⁷

This has impacted the broader imagination of *badal* as a socio-cultural practice in the region. When *badal* is used on such a scale, the process impacts it on the same scale. Sadaqat Azim, a participant from Kabal commented that, "Badal worked in the conflict of Swat and was impacted too during it." ³⁸ This use of *badal* and the impacts for it are both in militants as well as military's time of influence in Swat.

As militants were powerful in the initial time of conflict, people joined them or showed them sympathy, to use their 'name' and take it from their opponents. Mudasir Swati, a university lecturer in Swat, said that,

People used to point out their opponents to militants by dubbing these as 'people who side the military'. Thus, militants would then target such people. In the garb of militancy, many people thus took *badal*.³⁹

Anyone dubbed as a government security employee of military or police, or their spy was at a high risk from militant's side. When, someone allied with the militants testifies about such a person, the risk increases. Thus, for such people taking *badal* became easy. Some even joined the group of militants for this purpose. Mudasir Swati

narrated the story of one of his friends, in this regard, “One of my friends was having some land disputes. When Taliban took control and command of Swat, he joined Taliban for some time and took *badal* from his opponents.”⁴⁰

As militants were having authority in the region, people joined them or showed them sympathies and then dubbed their opponents as ‘people of the government and military’ or ‘people against militants.’ Thus, these people took it from their opponents through militants. Significantly, many participants termed this act as wrong and bad. Moreover, many estimated that such cases will come up in future once the situation gets somehow normal. Naveed Khan Lala, told in Matta Swat,

Cases of *badal* will come up to the surface once the military leave Swat. Many people have done wrong by pointing their opponents to militants and later to military. People have given names of their opponents or those they don’t like, which is not good for the society of Swat.⁴¹

In future, these cases may come up and result in a sequence of actions based on *badal*. This can have repercussions for the society of Swat and the social understanding of *badal*. This action can also be specified because, other than individuals, families and classes/groups have been involved too in such actions. In initial days of the conflict, militants were trying to attract a class of Swat who was not having much wealth and land. This category of people, called *gharibanan*,⁴ was made to believe that the other category of people, called *khanan*, has taken their share of land from them, which was earlier divided equally among all in Swat. In this context, *gharibanan* were mostly attracted towards militants. People in Swat claimed that some of these militants were planning of land redistribution between *khanan* and *gharibanan* in Swat. However, most of the *khanan* were backed by the state and its military later. During the conflict of Swat, *gharibanan* took *badal* from *khanan*, perceived to be oppressive towards them. Fazli Akbar Dada, a retired government servant told me in Kabal,

Badal has been impacted much during the conflict in Swat. This is because, poor people got authority and could take *badal* from Khans. This was somewhat possible and even easy for them. They successfully used this crisis/conflict to take *badal*. There are other individual cases of *badal* too.⁴²

Majority of the people in Swat, attracted by the militants were from the category of *gharibanan*. People from this category got a chance in the form of conflict to take *badal* from the *khanan*.

On the contrary, some of the *khanan*, during my fieldwork, believed that there existed a peaceful relationship between *khanan* and *gharibanan* (mostly agricultural workers on the fields of *khanan*). This opinion was coupled by the argument that some people involved in the conflict were only trying to disturb this peaceful relationship for their own interests. Fazal Khan, a traditional *khan* and politician from Mingora, argued that,

There existed a peaceful and good relationship between us and our farmers. We used to help them, and they helped us by cultivating our fields. During this conflict in Swat people used some of them to disturb our peaceful relations.⁴³

There exists, however, a contestation among these categories in Swat and opinion from both the categories differ enormously. On a similar pattern, of *khanan* and *gharibanan*, some families have also used the conflict to take *badal* from other families in their family feuds. Iqbal Lala, a schoolteacher, and social activist from Kabal, told that,

Badal has been an active factor in the conflict of Swat. Even families used this crisis for taking *badal* from other enemy families. This was through both militants and military. This continues even today.⁴⁴

After militants, military was used too by people in Swat for taking *badal*. In post military operations period, many people have used their relationship with Pakistani state, its government and military to take *badal* from their opponents. Shahid Saleem, a university Student from Kabal, commented that, "Many people have used this crisis (conflict) to take *badal*. People used military to take it from others (opponents/enemies). Some people do so even today."⁴⁵ The same pattern was repeated in military's time of influence, especially after the military operations. Mudasir Swati, a university lecturer, also told that, "what happened during the times when the militants were dominant, the same was happened in military times too."⁴⁶

On the other hand, there are many Pukhtuns in Swat, who have been unable to take *badal* from militants and military, who have both violated Pukhtun culture and dishonored people. It is considered as a due social right in the society and is considered as a form of justice done. Moreover, the future prediction is not easy, but we propose that

this has repercussions. Likewise, in non-violent forms paying *badal* is also a cultural aspect of the society. Conflict and violence in Swat have also greatly influenced the broader concept and performance of it as a social and cultural aspect. This adds to the defaming process of *badal* as a socio-cultural aspect of the society.

Conclusion

Situated in the context of so-called war on terror and the rise of the militants in Pakistan with a focus on northwestern Pukhtun populated Swat, this study has demonstrated that the violent conflict situation between militants and Pakistani state has implications for the society living in the mountainous valley of Swat. The violent conflict has ramifications for ethnic and cultural features such as *badal/vengeance*. The colonial and post-colonial representation of this cultural feature has been violent, yet there are multiple meanings attached to it and are least discussed by the scholars. The phenomena of using *badal* for interests and taking *badal* through the conflict of militants and military is having repercussions for it as a cultural feature, and for the society of Swat. In this context, there is a need to explore such impacts as the repercussion re considered socially detrimental by people of the region. Moreover, other cultural features have been violated and people were even killed during the conflict, which can generate a wave of *badal*.

On the other side, this article argues that people in Swat have been unable to take *badal* from militants or military. Being unable to take *badal* is equated with being devoid of a cultural feature, be the *badal* violent, non-violent, positive, or negative. This adds to the defaming and stereotyping of *badal* as a socio-cultural and ethnic feature. As *badal*, in any form, has been a central marker of ethnic identity and Pukhtunwali, this process has repercussions for Pukhtun ethnic identity and Pukhtun code of honour which is debated by the indigenous population of Swat. The article contends that there is need for Pakistani state, which is considered as dominated by Punjabis, ethnic others, to be cautious when it comes to cultural and ethnic features of the people.

NOTES:

¹ It shall be noted that Pakhtuns, Pukhtuns, Pashtuns or Pathans are different names of the same ethnic group, present across Pakistan and Afghanistan and other states as diaspora. In Afghanistan, this group claims to be the majority and in Pakistan it claims to be the second largest, after the dominant and majority Punjabis. Research participants used the word Pukhtuns and that is why throughout the study we use this.

² Swat is an administrative district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. It was an independent princely state in British India and was merged into Pakistan in 1969. Its population is 2,309,570 (PBS, "Pakistan Bureau of Statistics | 6th Population and Housing Census.") Majority of the people are ethnic Pukhtuns. There are some non Pukhtuns in Swat as well including particularly Gujjar and Kohistani communities. Thus along with Pukhtu, Dardic languages like Torwali and Kalami are also spoken particularly in Upper Swat (see Barth, Fredrik. "Ecologic Relationships of Ethnic Groups in Swat, North Pakistan." *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 1079–89. doi:10.1525/aa.1956.58.6.02a00080; Nafees, Mohammad, Hizbullah Khan, and Mohamad Jan. "Circulatory Land Tenure and Its Social and Ecological Impacts." *Mountain Research and Development* 29 (April 16, 2009): 59–66. doi:10.1659/mrd.898; Torwali, Zubair, "The Ignored Dardic Culture of Swat." *Journal of Languages and Culture* 6, no. 5 (June 30, 2015): 30–38. doi:10.5897/JLC2015.0308).

³ Rome, "Crises and Reconciliation in Swat"; Rome, "Swat: A Critical Analysis"; Orakzai, "Conflict in the Swat Valley of Pakistan"; Aziz and Luras, "Swat: Main Causes of the Rise of Militancy."

⁴ Jan, "Contested and Contextual Identities: Ethnicity, Religion and Identity among the Pakhtuns of Malakand, Pakistan."

⁵ Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War."

⁶ Shymonyak, "Stronger than Yesterday: The Effect of Ethnic Conflict on Ethnic Identity."

⁷ Brass, "Introduction: Discourse of Ethnicity, Communalism and Violence"; Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War"; Shymonyak, "Stronger than Yesterday: The Effect of Ethnic Conflict on Ethnic Identity"; Warren and Troy, "Explaining Violent Intra-Ethnic Conflict: Group Fragmentation in the Shadow of State Power."

⁸ Borthakur, "The Pashtun Trajectory."

⁹ Kaye, *The Far Pavilions*; Kipling, *Kim*.

¹⁰ Yousaf, "Pakistan's 'Tribal' Pashtuns, Their 'Violent' Representation, and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement."

¹¹ Borthakur, "The Pashtun Trajectory."

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