

## **Conflict and Violence in Swat: Impacts an Pakistani's National Identity among Swat Pukhtuns**

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### **Abstract**

This study proposes that the recent decade long conflict and violence in Swat, a Pakhtun populated region, has complex and multi-dimensional implications for two connected processes: Pakhtun sense of belonging to Pakistan (Pakistaniyat of Pakhtuns) and the process of National integration in Pakistan. It asks two questions, what are the consequences of the ongoing conflict for Pakhtun's sense of belonging to Pakistani nation? And What are the repercussions of the conflict for Pakistani State and its national integration process? The 'perceived' role of Pakistani state in the conflict, the religious dimension of this conflict (Islam), and involvement of Pakistani state military are three areas discussed by this article as affecting Pakhtun's imagination of Pakistan, Pakistani state and the subsequent process of national integration in Pakistan. The study is qualitative ethnographic in nature, based on an extensive ethnographic field work in Swat from December 2016 to March 2017, which was conducted for PHD research. It comprises of open ended interviews and discussions with almost 80 people from diverse socio-economic and political status along with observation in some cases.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Violence, Pakistani Identity, Pukhtuns, National Integration

### **Introduction**

The region populated by Pukhtuns, in Pakistan, has been witnessing a violent conflict since last one and a half decade (2004 to this date). Pakistani state and its military have been involved in military operations against the militants (see (Abbas, 2008; Bajoria, 2008; Jan, Anwar, & Imran, 2011; Khurram, 2010; Rana, 2009). These military operations have been conducted in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. In KP, Malakand division and Swat district<sup>1</sup> were major areas that saw violence in its extreme forms, where three military operations were conducted by Pakistani state military against the militants. This conflict and violence affect different aspects of Pukhtun's life including Pukhtun's imagination of Pakistani identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Swat, a district in KP province of Pakistan, was one of the few princely states that Pakistan inherited from the British. The region is populated by majority Pukhtuns, mostly from the Yusufzai tribe, along with others. It has a population of 2,309,570 (PBS, 2017), where almost 90% of the people are ethnic Pukhtuns (based on Pukhtu as a mother language).

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### **Review of Literature**

Literature suggests that in Pakistan the discourse of a single Pakistani nation and national identity have been challenged by different ethnic groups, including Pukhtuns (Jan, 2010, p. 09). Jan argues that although Pukhtuns have a growing sense of belonging to Pakistan, yet ethnic identity remains priority for them (Jan, 2010). Moreover, Pukhtun identification with the state of Pakistan is one of the most difficult and complex aspects of identification process. Pukhtuns maneuver multiple identities by coalescing Pukhtunness and Pakistaniyat (see (Jan, 2010)). Likewise, Pakistaniyat is a continuous process resulting in a multilayered' and 'multifaceted' Pakistani national identity (see (Shafqat, 2007); (Jan, 2010)).

This Pakistani national identity has been impacted by the recent conflict in Pukhtun region. Conflict and violence in Swat impact the imagination of Pakistani national identity in a complex and multi-dimensional manner. The conflict in Swat affects Pukhtun's imagination of Pakistani identity in multiple ways. Pakistan's identity, its components and features viz a viz Pukhtun ethnic identity have been problematized due to the conflict in Swat.

### **Theoretical Position of the study**

Theoretically, the study proposes that conflict and violence, like other factors, impact national identity. However, it does not 'soften' or 'harden' national identity. In other words, national identity is not lost or is not reaffirmed to an extent that ethnic identity is lost. On the contrary, national identity is impacted, transformed and reshaped in complex and multiple forms. Different components of national identity are transformed and impacted in multiple ways. To explore this theoretical approach, the case of Pukhtuns in Swat has been utilized in this study.

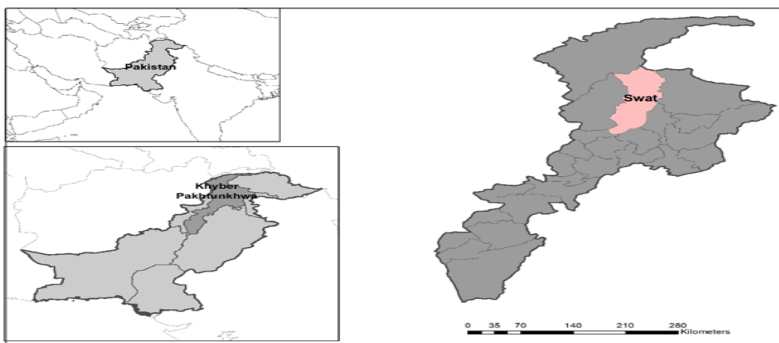
Thus, Pakistani national identity as impacted by the conflict in Swat has been divided into different components. From these components, Islam is the most significant one because of its use by the militants, Pukhtuns are Muslims by majority and Pakistani state has been historically using Islam for her national identity and strategic and political interests. Following Islam, the discussion of sacrifice, ethnic pride and complains against the state of Pakistan forms the next part of the tool kit of national identity in this context. Pukhtun's relation to Pakistani state is informed by the sacrifice in the form of conflict for Pakistani nation and state. Swat Pukhtuns take pride in the fact that only Pukhtuns can pay heavily in the form a sacrifice for Pakistan in respect to other ethnic groups like Punjabis. However, Swatis also complain about

the behavior of Pakistani state, military and its government of being less responsive in acknowledging and compensating their sacrifices for Pakistan. Likewise, another significant factor in this discussion is the (least) celebration of national holidays, like 23rd March and 14th August. Pukhtuns in Swat take least interest in celebrating Pakistani's national holidays by showing their discontent to the 'popular' state and media narrative, which assume that, after the military operations in Swat, Pukhtuns in Swat are more enthusiastic in celebrating these holidays. The data for these arguments have been collected through a qualitative methodology from different areas of district Swat in Pakistan.

### Data collection

The empirical data have been conducted from 45 in-depth open-ended interviews, five focus group discussions, and ethnographic observations, collected from November 2016 to May 2017. Data collection was mostly conducted in different parts of Swat including Mingora, Nawae Kalae, Charbagh, Kabal, Khwaza Khela, Saidu Shareef and Matta (see figure below, showing some areas of field work). Participants were elders, university students, professionals, men, women, political workers and others. The interviews and discussions were largely open-ended and semi-structured, and the exact duration of interviews and focus groups was not fixed, with interviews and focus group discussions lasting between 40 minutes to hours. All the interviews and discussions were conducted in the participants' native language, Pukhtu. All the interviews and discussions were recorded as field notes, as audio recordings were not appropriate for many reasons. Below is the elaboration of different arguments of this study, based on the analysis of data collected from Swat.

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



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*Figure 2* Some areas of field work<sup>2</sup>



### Conflict in Swat: Islam and Pakistan's national identity

The significance and centrality of Islam to Pakistan's nationalism and national identity have been discussed in the literature in different forms (see (Matcalf, 2004, pp. 232–233; Qureshi, 1969; Shafqat, 2007; Shaikh, 1989; Van Der Veer, 1994, pp. 195–197; Verkaaik, 2007). Likewise, none of the arguments in the literature concerning religion as unifying or divisive phenomenon completely satisfies the case of Pukhtun identification with Pakistan (Jan, 2010, p. 52). Jan argues that, among the Pukhtuns, other ethnic groups are perceived to be lesser Muslims as compared to Pukhtuns. Additionally, Pukhtuns find it difficult to accommodate to a Pakistani identity that is exclusively constituted of Islamic identity and rather propounded an identity that allows ethnic expression and Muslimness (Jan, 2010, p. 152).

Islam, as a Pakistani national identity marker, in Pukhtun's imagination, has witnessed multiple and significant impacts due to the recent conflict and violence in Swat. The recent conflict in Swat, involving Pakistani state (with Islam as a central marker of its national identity) and militants (who use Islam for their violence) has repercussions for Islam as a central aspect of Pakistan's identity. In this context, Pukhtuns try to distance their form of Islam (linking symbolic and practical aspects of it) from that of Pakistani state and militants. Moreover, Pukhtun's form of Islam is considered closer to that of the state with a sharp distance from that of the militants. Along with that, Islam promoted by militants is considered as one lacking a complete essence and relying only on justice system and is thus sharply disowned. Likewise, this Islam of

<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://www.mapsguidesandmore.com/Pakistan-Khyber\\_Pukhtunkhwa](http://www.mapsguidesandmore.com/Pakistan-Khyber_Pukhtunkhwa)

the militants is also out rightly rejected because of its perceived violent nature. On the other hand, Islam promoted by Pakistani state is blamed of being an Islam just by name (symbolic), with no or minimum practice. Pukhtun's Islam, imagined to be practiced by majority in Swat, is one that is practical, complete and peaceful and thus better than both of militants and Pakistani state.

Islam was used by militants to lay claim to their violent activities. There is a compelling perception among Pukhtuns in Swat that militants used Islam only for their interests and they were least bothered about 'true Islam'. Initially, militants were claiming to bring Islamic Shariah and a quick Justice system which was attractive for people in the region. Some research participants, including Salman Habib, a private school teacher from Charbagh termed militant's practice of Islam as a setup of justice and not Islam at all. This perception was elaborated further by arguing that Swatis were attracted to militants in initial days because of their quick justice system and not Islamic practice. Salman Habib told that in Charbagh, "Militant's setup was actually based on justice system, not Islam at all. Swatis accepted militants because of this aspect, as their decisions were quick and swift." (Habib, 2017). This argument was more substantiated by the fact that militants used force and violence. This use of force and violence created a perception in Swat that militants are not following Islam but are instead following their own vested interests. Fazal Yusafzai, a local business holder in Kabal told me,

"Initially militants claimed to bring Islamic Shariah in Swat and Pakistan. That was attractive, and people thought it was good and right to have Shariah. But later, in practice it was different, and militants followed their own interests. They were imposing things by force which were disliked by people in Swat" (F. Yusafzai, 2017).

As militants used Islam and its symbols for their movement, they justified violence in the name of Islam. A sharp opposition to militants and their version of Islam grew due to this use of violence. Militants' form of Islam, based on violence and force, is thus rejected by an overwhelming number of this research participants in Swat. Sadaqat Azim, a university student in Kabal, told that, "Militants used force and violence, which is not acceptable" (Azim, 2016). Among many others, Shahid Ahmed, a driver in an NGO, told me in Mingora, "Militants used to impose their version of Islam by force and violence, which is not good" (Ahmed, 2017). Iqbal Lala, a social activist from Kabal was of the opinion that, "Militants have a different narrative which is rejected by majority Pukhtuns in Swat because we do not accept violence or force in the name of Islam (I. Lala, 2016). Likewise, Khalida Yusuf Khor, a female participant was critical of Islam projected by militants too. She told in Mingora, that, "In Islam,

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violence is not acceptable and thus we reject Islam of the militants. I believe that these militants are not Muslims even and what they practice is not Islam” (K. Y. Khor, 2017). Misbah Ullah, a political worker from Mingora also argued, conclusively, that “Majority in Swat are not extremists and they don’t like the Islam promoted by militants” (Misbah ullah, 2017).

Thus, Pukhtuns in Swat reject Islam imposed by militants and try to keep a distance from the form of Islam claimed by militants in Swat. On the other hand, as Pakistani state is an actor in the conflict of Swat, there is an interesting and informative debate regarding Islam promoted by Pakistani state for its national identity. Pukhtuns in Swat, try to distance from the form of Islam promoted by Pakistani state too. Moreover, Pakistani state (especially its establishment) is blamed, in Swat, of using Islam as a tool. Pakistani state is blamed of using Islam for its interests along with giving space to others using it. A university lecturer, Mudasir Swati, commented that “Government and state shall also take control of Mosques as mullahs use them. Ironically, itself state has been using religion in Pakistan” (Swati, 2017). Moreover, state is also blamed of not taking up its responsibilities in this regard, besides using Islam for its interests. This dubious role of the Pakistani state is criticized of giving space to the promotion of any version of Islam by anyone, including militants. Asad Lala, a politician from Swat told in Mingora, “State has not taken up its responsibility in this regard. Its Islam is just symbolic. As state has created space, people adopt everyone’s Islam, like Sufi Muhammad etc.” (Asad Lala, 2017).

Such a perception, creates a feeling of hostility towards the symbolic Islam promoted by Pakistani nation state. Moreover, this Islam, promoted by the nation state of Pakistan, is termed as Islam ‘by name only’ and symbolic ally, by many of this research participants in Swat. The comment of Shabir Khan, a local Khan from Charbagh, was that, “Pakistan was formed in the name of Islam, however now a days, Islam is just by name in Pakistan” (Shabir Khan Charbagh). Likewise, Laiq Dada, an elder from Kabal was of the same opinion, “State Islam is just by name/verbal, with no practice” (L. Dada, 2017). Elites of Pakistan are blamed of not practicing Islam. Fazal Yusafzai, a local business holder in Kabal also emphasized that “Leaders of Pakistan don’t practice Islam themselves”(F. Yusafzai, 2017).

Another criticism on the role of Pakistani nation state in this context is that Islam promoted by the state is not implemented in its essence and is mostly, thus, unpracticed. Sadaqat Azim, a university student in Kabal, was of the opinion that “Problem with Islam of Pakistan is that it is not implemented and is without a

practice” (Azim, 2016). Moreover, as the state is perceived as weak, its practice of Islam is also considered as weak. Shahid Ahmed, a driver in an NGO, told in Mingora, “State Islam is weak like the state” (Ahmed, 2017). Besides this, the influence of West is also considered as a problem with the form of Islam promoted by the Pakistani state. Among such opinions was that of Shams Dada, an elder from Kabal. He told “Islam promoted and adopted by the State of Pakistan is wrong. As state is influenced by the West, its laws are state laws and not Islamic. Thus, Islam of the state is not practical and only to appear to be Islam” (S. Dada, 2017). Such an Islam promoted by the state of Pakistan is not liked by an overwhelming majority of Pukhtuns in Swat. Salman Habib, a private school teacher, from Charbagh said that, “State Islam is not liked in Swat” (Habib, 2017).

Thus, Pukhtuns in Swat try to distance from and criticize the form and version of Islam promoted by the nation state of Pakistan. In this context, while trying to distance from the form of Islam imposed by militants and promoted by Pakistani state, Pukhtuns in Swat consider their version of Islam as better due to many reasons. Islam, in general, and that of Swatis in particular is viewed as a religion of practice and peace, while that of the state and militants lack these properties respectively. The comment of Shabir Khan, a local Khan from Charbagh, was that, “Islam of common Pukhtuns in Swat is better. Others are just by name” (Shabir Khan). Pukhtun’s form of Islam is considered as ‘real’ in comparison to others. Said Alam Lala, a VDC member, told in Kabal, that “Real Islam is only among Pukhtuns. Pukhtuns are better Muslims in comparison to state Islam and militant’s Islam”(Alam, 2017). This Islam of common Pukhtuns (an attempt to distance from militants) which is perceived as ‘real’ in Swat is having many components that attempt to differentiate it from state version of Islam and that of the militants. It is simple and practical, as Ashraf Lala, a government official from Kabal, informed that, “People of Swat follow a simple Islam” (Ashraf Lala, 2016), which is rooted in performance of basic Islamic prayers. According to Qudrat Lala of Kabal, “People in Swat are following Islam too much. Pukhtuns offer prayers and fast much, while in other areas of Pakistan this is not much practiced. Thus, our Islam is better” (Q. Lala, 2016).

Along with the practice of prayers, Islam of Pukhtuns is considered as peaceful. Saira Naz Khor commented that, “Islam of Pukhtuns in Swat is peaceful and that is why I like this version of Islam” (S. N. Khor, 2017). Moreover, the perception prevails that Pukhtun culture also makes Pukhtun’s better Muslims in comparison to others. A university lecturer, Mudasir Swati, elaborated, “Islam is a religion of peace and

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brotherhood. Pukhtuns in Swat also believe that Pukhtunwali is more strict than Islam which makes their Islam better” (M. Swati, 2017).

Thus, Islam of common (majority) Pukhtuns in Swat is considered as the best one among the three forms identified in this section. Moreover, significantly, due to violent nature of Islam imposed by militants, Pukhtuns consider their version of Islam closer to that of the state, in comparison to that of the militants. Shahid Saleem, a university student in Kabal, was of the opinion, that, “State Islam and Islam of Swatis have many similarities. Islam of Pukhtuns and that of militants have many differences” (Saleem, 2016).

Conclusively, Pukhtuns in Swat try to distance from both militants and state Islam, in the context of present conflict in Swat. Islam imposed by militants is considered as one which is not complete and is violent. Islam of Pakistani state, on the other hand, is marred with the perception that it is used by the state for its vested interests. Pukhtuns in Swat argue that their form of Islam is better than both as it is practical and non-violent. Moreover, in this debate, Pukhtuns’ version of Islam is considered closer to that of the state, with a greater distance from militants. Such processes have impacts for the imagination of Pakistani national identity rooted in Islam. Impacts for other markers of national identity are also significant.

### **Conflict, Pride, Sacrifice and Complains: Swat Pukhtuns in Pakistan**

Beside Islam, in the context of conflict, the debate of pride, sacrifice and complains form another marker and aspect of Pakistani national identity, among the Pukhtuns in Swat. Pukhtuns in Swat take pride in a sacrifice for Pakistan in the form of this conflict. Moreover, it is a perception that other ethnic groups in Pakistan would not have been able to do so. Swat Pukhtuns are perceived to have saved Pakistan from a greater ‘disaster’ by giving their lives in sacrifice, in the form of this conflict. On the contrary, there is a significant opinion among Pukhtuns in Swat, that Swat Pukhtuns complain against the state of Pakistan and its institutions for not properly acknowledging, accepting and compensating this sacrifice. This adds to the problematic complex Pakistani identity.

Taking pride in the fact that only Swat Pukhtuns are able to pay the price heavily in the form a sacrifice for Pakistan in respect to others, Swat Pukhtuns try to own the state of Pakistan and generate an attachment to Pakistani national identity. Fazal Yusafzai, a local businessman from Kabal was of the opinion that, “Pukhtuns are talented in this regard and can sacrifice for the country. Other ethnic groups cannot do



so. Pukhtuns love this land and that is why, they have sacrificed for it” (F. Yusafzai, 2017). Pukhtuns are considered as more capable of sacrifice than other ethnic factions because of their ‘natural’ love for the land. This sacrifice is rooted in historical list of sacrifices, which Pukhtuns have made for Pakistan in different wars like Kashmir war and 1965 war. Fazal Khan, a local politician from Mingora, informed about this by saying that, “Pukhtuns have sacrificed a lot for Pakistan. Kashmir war and the 1965 war etc. are proofs of it”(F. Khan, 2017). This sacrifice has always been for Pakistan. Mustafa Lala was of the opinion that this was done to save and defend Pakistan. He said, “This all seemed part of the great game and was played to defend Pakistan” (Mustafa Lala, 2017). Moreover, the pride is emphasized by considering Pukhtuns as more fit for sacrifices. Misbah Ullah, a local political worker from Mingora, commented that, “Pukhtuns and then Swatis were probably selected for this ‘Job’ because Pukhtuns are powerful. They can sacrifice. Pakistani state was compelled for the defense of Pakistan, to do all this. However, ‘outsiders’ benefited more than local people of Swat” (Ullah, 2017).

In Swat, such a discussion is never completed without a reference to complains against the state. As it is evident in the comment of Misbah Ullah, Swatis did not benefit this sacrifice while non-Swatis benefited. Complains against the state and its elites form a significant part of this whole discussion. This has been reported in the recent literature (Jan,2010), however the recent conflict and violence in Swat have enormously added to this aspect. The literature informs that Pukhtuns imagine Pakistani state as an institution to which they belong, but at the same time an entity which does not recognize their sacrifices and is heavily controlled by other ethnic groups, mostly Punjabis (Jan,2010:165). Such a perception is very compelling in Swat, amidst this conflict and violence. There are complains in Swat that Pakistani state does not acknowledge and compensate their sacrifices ‘properly’.

In this context, many Pukhtuns, in Swat, believe that the recent conflict and violence were imposed upon Pukhtuns in general and Swatis in particular. In fact, Swat Pukhtuns were made to sacrifice for Pakistan. Many will question and complain the sufferings they have faced during this conflict in Swat. Muhtaram Lala, an elder from Kabal, elaborated this aspect by saying that,

“We did sacrifice, became IDPs, stood in lines for food, still accepted the state of Pakistan. There are many more miseries to mention. Then why are we treated like this? Why all this happened in Swat? The whole conflict seems a game played. There was funding from outside Swat and may be from government’s side”(M. Lala, 2017).

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Though Pukhtuns (in Swat) did a sacrifice for Pakistan, the state is blamed of not acknowledging it. Moreover, the perception that conflict was a planned game, played against Pukhtuns in Swat is narrated with helplessness and deep complains. Pakistani state is blamed of being less responsive for compensating Pukhtun's sacrifices to Pakistan. Moreover, in such a context, when the state is blamed by many for the cause of conflict in Swat, it is also blamed of not fulfilling its job in the post conflict situation. Asad Lala, a politician from Swat, commented that,

“The conflict has confiscated many human rights of people in Swat through check-posts, curfews and military operations. This has finished our trust on the state of Pakistan. State is like mother for its citizens, but Pakistani state is not fulfilling its role. Its job is to protect us not to do what it has done in Swat. A perception has developed in Swat that state was having hands in all this” (Asad Lala, 2017).

Such bold words and opinions express the deepness of sacrifices and complain against the state. Pakistani state is blamed of having hands in this conflict and of not acknowledging sacrifices. Moreover, Pakistan is blamed of not performing its job, which in this case is protecting its citizens in Swat. This process also adds to the diminishing of trust in Pakistani state. Compensation for the conflict goes in hands of Pakistani state but not to Swat. Salman Khan told in Dherai,

“This peaceful place (Swat) was burnt. Investment, tourism and economy were all impacted. The main aim seems to form a cantonment in Swat. So, I blame Pakistani state, its government and agencies. Fundings from the US and West were eaten by few people of Pakistan and nothing was given to Swatis (S. Khan, 2017)”.

Such processes and phenomena impact the imagination of Pakistani national identity among the Pukhtuns in Swat. This discussion can be supplemented by the debate of national symbols promoted by Pakistani state.

### **Conflict and Violence in Swat: Celebrating National Holidays**

Literature has discussed the significance of national and ethnic symbols (see (Brubaker, 1998; Cerulo, 1995; Fox, 2004; Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008; Smith, 1989). These studies form a base for brief reflections on some symbols associated with Pakistan. The state of Pakistan has been using ‘national’ symbols as part of its nationalism project. This includes national holidays. Two very important national

holidays in this regard are 23rd March and 14th August, along with many others<sup>3</sup>. These national holidays can provide with contexts, where Pukhtuns engagement with the nation state and its national identity can be observed. Moreover, it can also inform the citizens are discontented with the state and its national imagination.

Pukhtuns in Swat through the least participation in national holidays show disagreement to Pakistani state projection of its national identity. Most of the Swatis are least bothered about the celebration of national holidays. The enthusiasm and willingness to participate have decreased more due to the conflict, in contrast the state and media claim increase in it. The number of people participating in such events and the number of such events show the discontent of Pukhtuns in Swat to such assumed national celebrations. Moreover, in Swat, such events are mostly controlled and arranged by the military and not by the civilian administration.

In pre-conflict Swat, these national holidays, especially 14th August, was celebrated with a great joy. Mostly in schools and colleges programmes used to be held. Young students used to start arrangements a week before and the event was celebrated with zeal. There was comparatively more enthusiasm among Pukhtuns in Swat in this regard. An overwhelming majority of this research participants are having this opinion. Saira Naz Khor, a female participant from Mingora, commented that, “Earlier we celebrated such holidays with ‘patriotism’. We enjoyed it with happiness” (Khor, 2017). There was a sense of patriotism and happiness in this case. This was also the case with elders even, not only female or young men. Laiq Dada, an elder and a local political worker told, “Before the conflict we used to celebrate such holiday with enthusiasm”(L. Dada, 2017). Similar was the opinion of young men like Shahid Ahmed, an NGO driver that, “In Pre-conflict times we used to celebrate such event with enthusiasm” (Ahmed, 2017). Moreover, the educated young class was also having similar opinion. Among many, Muhammad Ashfaq, an NGO employee from Swat told that, “Before the conflict we celebrated these days with enthusiasms and used to arrange flags” (Ashfaq, 2017). Likewise, Fazal Yusafzai, a local businessman from Kabal, informed that, “Before the conflict, 14th August was celebrated with a great zeal. We were free and participated like Eid” (F. Yusafzai, 2017). In comparison

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<sup>3</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1940 the famous Lahore resolution was passed, which is called Pakistan resolution in Pakistan. This resolution was passed in the annual gathering of All India Muslim League and demanded for a separate state/states for Muslims of British India. Likewise, 14<sup>th</sup> of August is the most celebrated national holiday in Pakistan. On 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1947, Pakistan was formed as an independent state in British India. The date of birth and death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (mostly called the Quaid e Azam) and Muhammad Iqbal (the national poet) are some other important days commemorated in Pakistan.

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to Eid, the Muslims celebration, makes the opinion much stronger. Moreover, that time and celebration was equated with the freedom people were having. Ibrar Shah Lala, a local politician from Mingora, was of the opinion that, "We used to freely celebrate it before the conflict (I. S. Lala, 2017). People used to make arrangements for weeks in order to celebrate these days, especially 14th August with a great zeal. Muhammad Rehman Dada, an elder from Charbagh, told that, "We used to spend at least two weeks i.e. from 1st to 14th August to celebrate 14th August. There was enthusiasm and zeal to celebrate" (Rehman Dada, 2017).

In the present context of conflict in the region, a female participant, Saira Naz Khor, told in Mingora, that "Now program on these days are arranged by military in Swat, not by Swatis themselves. Celebrations on such days are mostly imposed upon us. So, such days are celebrated when ordered by the military. We don't enjoy these but most people are compelled" (S. N. Khor, 2017). Such a perception, that the celebration of these days is imposed by the military, adds to the lowering of participation and interests in these. Moreover, these are attended by people who are compelled by the military, both directly and indirectly. Taimur Yusufzai, a university lecturer from Charbagh, informed that, "Some people celebrate these, those who are compelled" (T. Yusufzai, 2017). Moreover, Ibrar Shah Lala, a local politician from Mingora, told me that, "Now it is only imposed upon us. No body celebrate it by heart" (Lala, 2017). Fazal Khan from Mingora told, "We do not celebrate it by choice. It is imposed upon us. Such imposition cannot work" (F. Khan, 2017). Shereen Lala, a local journalist from Mingora also stated that, "In conflict it was nothing like that and these days it is imposed" (Lala, 2017).

It is also observed that 23rd March 2017 was also similar to such a perception. Significantly all the three programs were arranged by the military and none was by civilian administration. A military man in Matta tehsil told that the civilian administration is unable to arrange such programs. "This program was initially of the civilian government, but they could not arrange it", he informed. This might have been in reference to security measures, because in such programs security is more than usual. Shahid Saleem, a university student told about this aspect in Kabal,

"National holidays and national events are celebrated by very few in Swat now. It is usually an indirect compulsion by the military, to attend such events. Once on 14th August I was in hostel in university. I was the only one in hostel room and whole hostel was outside to celebrate it, while I was not" (Saleem, 2016).

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Such a discontent is not situational, and event pertains to another context, like the case of Shahid Saleem. Such a discontent is overwhelming in Swat and is directed towards the state of Pakistan. Muhammad Ashfaq, an employee from Swat told that,

“There is no enthusiasm in celebrating such national holidays now. Now we even do not like the name of Pakistan, set aside celebrating such national holidays. This is due to Pakistani military and state’s attitude towards Swatis” (Ashfaq, 2017).

On the other side as argued by some participants above, some people in Swat have to attend it out of compulsion and fear and not by heart. Shahid Ahmed, a driver in NGO was of the opinion that, “Very few people celebrate such national holidays. People fear and do not celebrate by heart. There is least interest in celebrating even 14th August” (Ahmed, 2017). This aspect is dominant in Swat and the reference to force and compulsion is mostly made. Yusuf Khan, a traditional Khan from Dherai, told, “There is no enthusiasm in celebrating these days in Swat. By force it was brought here to Swat, to make us Pakistanis” (Yusuf, 2017). Moreover, Said Alam Lala, a VDC member from Kabal told, “Such days are celebrated only because of fear of military” (Alam, 2017).

On the contrary, some people attempt to celebrate such holidays as well, but not with the state and its military. These people try to arrange private programs on such occasions but face different issues. Shams Swati, a senior college student and activist told,

“These national days are not celebrated much now a days. Once we tried to arrange a program on 14th Augusts but all halls were already booked by the military, so we had no hall to arrange and celebrate 14th August. We also did not want to celebrate it in a program already arranged by the military. Military arranged a forceful hue and cry in the city. Another problem in many areas is that there is a curfew for security. We celebrated it on 15th then” (S. Swati, 2017).

Such a happening has been common in Swat since the conflict in Swat. There can be many reasons, as mentioned above about the booking of all main halls, including the fact that mostly on 14th August there can be curfew or other security reasons. On 14th August 2017, in many areas of Swat it was reported on some of the indigenous media outlets as well. In some of the schools in Swat, administration as well as students had arranged for the program of 14th Augusts. Such schools had been decorated for the event. However, on the night between 13th and 14th August, administration (civilian and military) announced that there will be no program in this specific area due to security threats. Thus, all such schools and organizations celebrated the Independence

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day on 15th August with a bad experience. Such an experience in part of the debate in Swat. However, some Pukhtuns in Swat are of the opinion that old setup is trying to restore. Salman Habib, a private school teacher from Charbagh, commented that, "In crisis the celebrations were low as security problems were there. However now things are fine and old situations restored" (Habib, 2017).

Conclusively, it is argued that majority of the people in Swat do not celebrate or bother to celebrate national events and holidays. Moreover, a strong opinion questions the celebrations of these along with the bad experience in celebrating these. This shows discontent towards state promoted official narrative that Swat Pukhtuns are more pro-Pakistan now. The imagination and adoption of Pakistani national identity has been impacted due to the conflict and violence in Swat.

### **Conclusion**

It is argued that the conflict and violence in Swat have impacted the imagination of Pakistani identity among the Pukhtuns in complex and multiple forms. National identity does not reinforce much nor fades away in this context, but it is rather impacted in a problematic way. Theoretically, the case of Swat Pukhtuns reflects that conflict and violence do not 'soften' or 'harden' national identity but rather transform and impacts it in multiple forms. In the case of Pukhtuns in Swat, it is argued that three main components of national identity form the core of discussions. These include Islam, the debate of ethnic pride, sacrifice and complains and the least celebration of Pakistani national holidays. Conclusively, these impacts and repercussions inform about the multiple impacts for Pakistani national identity as considered among Swat Pukhtuns.

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