



In the Name of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful

COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The Uk's Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) Model and Lessons for Pakistan



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FIRD PERSPECTIVES FOR TOMORROW

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my parents, my wife and children who have been supportive of my work throughout my life.

In particular, my wife and my children who faced the consequences alongside me for fighting against extremists in our communities.

This book is also dedicated to those who lost their lives to the menace of terrorism, on all sides of the field.

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About the Author



Prof Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE

Prof Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE is a distinguished Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE), conferred by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and recognised as one of the most influential British Pakistanis working in counter-extremism today. His remarkable achievements span the fields of education, counter-extremism, de-radicalisation, and the rehabilitation of those charged under Terrorism Act-related offences in the United Kingdom.

Toaha has authored multiple books on autobiography, geopolitics, British society, interfaith harmony, international issues, counterterrorism, and faith. His analyses are regularly featured on different Pakistani television channels, as well as on the BBC, CNN, Channel 4, and numerous other international media outlets. He is a respected voice wherever credible, community-based solutions to violent extremism are discussed.

Foreword

In the two decades since the horrors of 7/7 seared themselves into the British consciousness, I have read hundreds of reports, evaluations, and policy papers on countering violent extremism. Very few have made me stop, put the document down, and think: "This is different. This works." Dr Qureshi's book is one of them.

I first met Toaha in 2011 when, as the government-appointed Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, I was searching for evidence that anything beyond arrests and control orders could bring high-risk young men back from the brink. Officials took me to a nondescript community centre in Stockwell. There, in a room that smelled faintly of instant coffee and hope, I watched a former extremist who had once possessed an AK-47 in Waziristan now quietly mentoring a teenager who had just been released from Belmarsh. What struck me was the absence of fear, suspicion, or performance. It was simply two British Muslims talking, arguing, laughing, sometimes crying about faith, belonging, and how to live in this country without hating it or leaving it.

The results Toaha and his tiny team achieved were, frankly, astonishing. Zero reoffending among convicted terrorism offenders over a ten-year follow-up period is a statistic that no prison, no probation service, and no European deradicalisation programme has ever come close to matching. When the auditors from the Ministry of Justice kept demanding the raw data because they assumed someone had made a typing error, Toaha simply handed over the files and went back to work.

This book is not another lament about why young Muslims become radicalised. It is a practical, almost stubbornly hopeful answer to the question that has haunted two generations from London to Lahore: what do you do with the fire once you realise you helped light it?

Toaha writes from a rare vantage point. He has been threatened by extremists in three languages, decorated by the late Queen at Buckingham Palace, and wept with mothers in Peshawar whose children never came home from school. He knows the smell of prison tea in Belmarsh and the dust of his childhood village in Punjab. Most importantly, he has spent twenty-five years proving that the shortest distance between a young man holding a bomb and the same young man holding his newborn daughter is not a drone strike or a court order. It is trust, painstakingly earned, one conversation at a time.

For British readers, this book is a reminder that the Prevent strategy, for all its controversies and missteps, did eventually learn to step back and let the community lead. For Pakistani readers policymakers, generals, ulema, parents, and students it is something more urgent: a mirror and a map. The mirror shows a nation still fighting the last war with the wrong weapons. The map shows a way out.

> *"Read it. Argue with it. Above all, act on it before another mother must bury another son."*

Introduction

Violent extremism remains one of the most persistent threats to global peace in the twenty-first century, claiming thousands of lives annually and destabilising entire societies. While terrorism is often instrumentalised through religious rhetoric, it has no inherent religion. Rather, it exploits grievances, identity crises, and geopolitical legacies to recruit and radicalise (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023). This book examines a proven alternative to militarised counterterrorism: the United Kingdom's community-led Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) model, pioneered in south London, which achieved unprecedented zero recidivism among convicted terrorism offenders over a decade-long follow-up period (Christmann, 2014).

The roots of contemporary Islamist extremism trace back to the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, where state-sponsored jihadism created a global conveyor belt of militancy with lasting blowback for Pakistan and beyond. In Britain, the July 7, 2005, London bombings exposed the limitations of hard-power responses, prompting a shift toward prevention and community engagement. Meanwhile, Pakistan faces escalating violence by late 2025, the country was experiencing its deadliest year since 2009, with more than 3,000 fatalities in the first eleven months alone. (Centre for Research and Security Studies, 2025).

You cannot bomb your way out of an idea, but you can mentor, educate, and include your way back to safety.

Radicalisation refers to the process through which individuals become locked into distorted ideological notions, often caused by a sense of grievance or identity crisis, though not inherently involving violence (Borum, 2011; FBI LEB, 2011). Understanding this distinction is crucial for countering radicalisation, extremism, violent extremism and terrorism.

Extremism involves the advocacy or practice of extreme political, religious, or cultural views, often marked by intolerance, fanaticism, and refusal to compromise (UK Government, 2024; Pressman, 2009). While extremists might pursue their purposes through non-violent methods such as political agitation or social protest, extremism can provide fertile ground for violence when combined with factors such as perceived injustice or victimisation (Schmid, 2013; Cambridge Handbook, 2025).

Violent extremism is characterised by violence or threats of violence to pursue political or ideological objectives, involving the deliberate targeting of civilians or infrastructure to intimidate, coerce, or create fear (USAID, as cited in GSDRC, n.d.; OSCE, n.d.). It is often seen as broader than terrorism but encompassing ideologically motivated violence (UNODC, n.d.; OHCHR, n.d.). The distinction between these concepts is not merely academic but has profound implications for policy and practice. While radicalisation and extremism may be concerning, they do not always necessarily lead to violence. However, violent extremism poses a direct threat to public safety and security, requiring immediate intervention while addressing the pipeline that leads from grievance to radicalisation to extremism to violent action (King & Taylor, 2011; Step Together, 2025; UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, 2016).

Message from the Author

"My journey: From Village Boy to Expert on CVE"

Studying at my village school, I never thought that I will be dealing with such serious issues like radicalisation, extremism, violent extremism and rehabilitation of those charged under terrorism act-related offences as an expert in the UK. As I reflect on the professional chapters of my life, I am filled with humility and gratitude for the opportunities I have been granted to serve communities in Britain and beyond. My professional path truly began when I moved to the United Kingdom, first settling in Bradford and later in London. What started as a career in engineering soon transformed into a calling to community development, interfaith harmony and social cohesion.

In Stockwell, London Borough of Lambeth, I witnessed first-hand the challenges facing immigrant families, particularly British Pakistanis and Muslims: isolation, discrimination, youth disaffection, and, later, the creeping shadow of radicalisation. Long before 9/11 and 7/7, I was already working at the grassroots level to counter the above problems through diversionary and preventative programmes in partnership with statutory bodies. As early as 2000, through Stockwell Green Community Services, we designed programmes that offered young people education, sports, employability training, and mentoring through community role models.

Conferring the Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in 2010 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was an honour for my community. When Her Majesty asked whether I would write about my experiences, she planted the seed for not only this book but seven others. I felt this as my professional duty to share lessons learned, models that worked to make society safer.

> *"My professional life has taught me one enduring truth: real change comes not from grand strategies imposed from above, but from credible, committed work on the ground building trust, offering alternatives, and never giving up on a single soul. Toaha Qureshi MBE"*

PART I

Understanding the Problem

CHAPTER 1

Does Terrorism Have a Religion?

Examining Zionist, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, White-Supremacist and Islamophobic Violence

Terrorism, defined as the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians in the pursuit of political aims (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023), transcends religious, ethnic, or national lines. It is rooted in political grievances, ideological extremism, or separatist movements, rather than being inherent to any faith.

Terrorism has no religion; it is a crime, and that is all it is.

Zionist Terrorism: The Case of Menachem Begin



The haunting mugshot of Menachem Begin by the British Government, 1940.

Menachem Begin (1913–1992) emerged as a key figure in Zionist militancy during the British Mandate in Palestine. Influenced by Revisionist Zionism, he assumed leadership of the Irgun (National Military Organisation), a paramilitary group that targeted British authorities through bombings, assassinations, and raids (Hoffman, 2020).

Begin's most notorious operation was the 22 July 1946 King David Hotel bombing in Jerusalem. Disguised as workers, Irgun members planted milk churns filled with 350 kg of explosives in the hotel's southern wing, housing British administrative headquarters. The blast killed 91 people, including 21 British Diplomats and injured 46, marking the deadliest attack against the British during the Mandate era (Bell, 1987).

Post-1948, Begin transitioned to politics, eventually becoming Israel's Prime Minister and sharing the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize with Anwar Sadat. His arc from fugitive directing hotel bombings to Nobel laureate exemplifies terrorism's non-religious essence, driven by nationalist aspirations (Shlaim, 2000).

Christian-Linked Terrorism: The IRA and Lord Mountbatten



Iconic republican mural in Northern Ireland depicting IRA volunteers — a symbol of The Troubles.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA), particularly its Provisional wing (PIRA), waged a thirty-year campaign (1969–1997) during the Troubles, seeking Northern Ireland's unification with the Republic of Ireland. Rooted in Catholic-majority nationalist grievances, the IRA's violence included bombings, shootings, and assassinations, killing approximately 1,800 people (Moloney, 2002).

The most high-profile single act was the assassination of Lord Mountbatten on 27 August 1979, when PIRA detonated a 50-pound bomb planted on his boat. Both Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland were overwhelmingly Christian; major churches on all sides condemned the violence. What drove the Troubles was not theology but centuries of ethno-nationalist grievance colonialism, discrimination, and sovereignty.

Hindu-Linked Terrorism



Hindu nationalist fervour the political instrumentalizations of religious identity.

Hindu nationalism has been associated with episodes of mass violence in South Asia. The 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms following

Indira Gandhi's assassination, and recurring Hindu-Muslim communal violence including the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition and its aftermath illustrate how religio-political identity can be weaponised for mass terror even within democratic societies (Gopal, 1991; Brass, 2005).

Sikh-Linked Terrorism



Sikh protesters, the Khalistan movement arose from political grievances, not religious doctrine.

The Khalistan movement seeking an independent Sikh homeland produced the 1985 Air India Flight 182 bombing, which killed 329 people and remains the deadliest aviation terrorist attack before 9/11. Sikh militancy, like all the examples above, arose from political grievances, perceived discrimination, human-rights abuses, and a struggle for self-determination rather than from any canonical teaching of the Sikh faith (Singh, 2005).

White Christian Supremacist Terrorism



Brenton Tarrant the Australian white supremacist responsible for the 2019 Christchurch Mosque shootings.

Far-right extremism has produced a distinctive and growing wave of terrorism. Perpetrators such as Anders Breivik (Norway, 2011; 77 killed), Robert Bowers (Pittsburgh synagogue, 2018; 11 killed), and Brenton Tarrant (Christchurch mosques, 2019; 51 killed) all claimed ideological motivations rooted in white supremacy, not orthodox Christian theology (Mudde, 2019; Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020).

Attacks on Muslims: A Rising Tide of Islamophobic Terrorism



Far-right Islamophobic demonstrators in the UK — anti-Muslim hatred is a form of terrorism too.

Anti-Muslim hate crimes have surged across Britain and North America. The 2017 Finsbury Park van attack, in which Darren Osborne deliberately drove into Muslim worshippers near a mosque, was motivated by hatred of Muslims, not any theological dispute. The pattern is consistent with all the cases above; extremism of every variety is a political and psychological phenomenon that wears religious clothes, not a product of religious scripture (Tell MAMA, 2024).

> "*When terrorism is examined honestly across faiths and centuries, one fact is undeniable it is always a political crime, never a theological imperative*"

CHAPTER 2

The Prophetic Model: CVE Through the Life of Muhammad (PBUH)

How Seventh-Century Prophetic Practice Anticipates Modern Counter-Extremism Theory

Violent extremism remains one of the most pressing security challenges of the twenty-first century. From the rise of transnational terrorist networks to the proliferation of domestic radicalisation pathways, governments, civil society organisations, and scholars have increasingly sought multi-disciplinary frameworks to prevent, counter, and rehabilitate individuals engaged in or at risk of violent extremism (UNOCT, 2021). Central to this endeavour has been the recognition that religious narratives — whether exploited or authentic — play a decisive role in both the recruitment and the prevention of violent behaviour (Kundnani, 2015). Radicalisation is the shift toward extreme ideologies that depart from societal norms; while extremism rejects compromise and fundamental values such as democracy, terrorism is its strategic subset, using indiscriminate violence against civilians to instil fear for political gain. The Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) model, adopted by Stockwell Green Community Services (SGCS) in the UK, integrates religious mentoring to advance moderate interpretation and interfaith dialogue (Qureshi and Ali, 2025) — organised programmes built around authentic Quranic teaching and delivered by practising professionals who serve

as role models, developing resistance to radicalisation from within the community itself.

As the previous chapter set out, extremism has been perpetrated in the name of virtually every major faith. Buddhist ethno-nationalism has been used to justify the persecution of Myanmar's Rohingya, and Hindutva ideology has fuelled communal violence in India (Jerryson, 2013); the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda deformed Christian mysticism into a campaign of abduction and mutilation (Vinck et al., 2008); the Provisional IRA mobilised Catholic identity as a marker of resistance to British Protestant hegemony (Dingley, 2012; White, 2017); and militant strands of Religious Zionism have invoked scripture to justify violence against Palestinians (Heller, 2017; Hoffman, 2017; Pedahzur, 2012). None of this is unique to Islam, and none of it is sanctioned by any of the traditions it claims to speak for. God, the Almighty, explicitly negates extremism in His Book. There is an emphasis on moderation and balance in Islam. God enjoins:

"O People of the Scripture, do not exceed limits in your religion beyond the truth and do not follow the inclinations of a people who had gone astray before and misled many and have strayed from the soundness of the way."

Surah Al-Ma'idah (Chapter 5), Verse 77.

The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH), spanning 570–632 CE, presents one of history's richest and most documented exemplars of social transformation, conflict

resolution, and community building under conditions of acute existential threat — yet not for a single moment did he turn to violent extremism. Persecuted by the non-believers of Makkah, he and his companions migrated 450 kilometres to Madinah rather than resort to violence, choosing peace over conflict. There, in the construction of a multi-faith polity, the Prophetic biography (Seerah) offers a compendium of strategies that contemporary CVE literature independently validates as effective (Ramadan, 2007; Esposito, 2010). When he returned to Makkah as a conqueror, he forgave every persecutor who had tortured him, leaving humanity a lesson in 'Forgive and Forget'. Yet a systematic, academically rigorous mapping of these strategies against CVE frameworks remains underdeveloped in the literature. This chapter addresses that gap through a close reading of authenticated Seerah accounts and Hadith literature, set against established CVE typologies, before turning to the thematic findings, a comparative policy analysis, and conclusions.

A Theoretical Bridge Between Fiqh and Modern CVE

CVE scholarship broadly organises interventions into three tiers: structural approaches that address root causes, psychological approaches that target individual cognition and identity, and community-based approaches that strengthen the social fabric (Horgan, 2009; Neumann, 2013). Each tier corresponds to a distinct phase of radicalisation —

vulnerability, engagement, and action (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008).

Parallel to secular CVE theory, Islamic jurisprudence has long theorised the conditions for just war (jihad), the prohibition of fitna (civil strife), the sanctity of non-combatant life, and the imperative of sulh (peace-making) (Peters, 1994). Scholars such as Ramadan (2007), Nasr (2004), and Esposito (2010) have argued that authentic Islamic teaching provides robust internal resources for countering violence, and that the Prophetic model integrates structural, psychological, and community dimensions in a way that makes it especially fertile ground for CVE analysis. Hazrat Saeed bin Musay'yib (RA) related a tradition narrated by Saraqa bin Malik bin Ja'sham (RA): in an address, the Holy Prophet (SAW) told the people,

"The best among you is he who defends his tribe but does not commit sin."

Sunan Abi Dawud, Book 43 (General Behaviour), Hadith 5120.

Watt (1981) argues that the Prophet's leadership in Madinah constitutes a prototype of what contemporary political science calls a 'consociational democracy' — a system purposefully designed to manage deep social cleavages through power-sharing, mutual recognition, and negotiated norms. This structural dimension maps directly onto CVE literature's emphasis on inclusive governance as a violence-prevention mechanism (Schmid, 2013).

The analysis that follows draws on a close reading of authenticated Hadith collections (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim), classical Seerah texts (Ibn Hisham's Sirat Rasul Allah; Al-Mubarakpuri's The Sealed Nectar), and contemporary Islamic scholarship, coded against established CVE typologies drawn from Horgan (2009), Neumann (2013), and UN frameworks (UNOCT, 2021). Six recurring themes emerged: non-violence and mercy; dialogue and negotiation; social justice and equity; governance and the rule of law; community cohesion; and restorative justice. In total, 187 Hadith excerpts, 51 Seerah episodes, and 112 Quranic verses were examined.

Non-Violence and Mercy as Primary CVE Mechanisms

The most frequently recurring theme was the Prophet's systematic deployment of mercy (rahma) and non-violence as tools of social transformation. The Quran describes the Prophet as 'a mercy to the worlds' (Quran 21:107), a characterisation validated across hundreds of authenticated Hadith. Significantly, the Prophet's mercy extended explicitly to adversaries — a dimension rarely foregrounded in popular discourse but centrally relevant to CVE (Lings, 1983). In the Battle of Uhud (625 CE), following a severe military defeat in which he was himself wounded, the Prophet is reported to have prayed for the guidance of his adversaries rather than invoking retribution upon them: 'O God, forgive my people, for they do not know' (Sahih al-Bukhari, n.d.). This episode is

paradigmatic of what modern CVE literature terms 'narrative counter-framing' — the deliberate reorientation of a traumatic experience away from revenge-seeking toward constructive meaning-making (Schmid, 2013).

The prohibition of mutilation, collective punishment, and the killing of non-combatants, codified in the Prophet's military instructions (Sahih Muslim, n.d.), anticipates International Humanitarian Law by over a millennium and directly counters the extremist narrative that indiscriminate violence is religiously sanctioned (Ramadan, 2007; Cook, 2005).

Dialogue and Negotiation: The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) always preferred dialogue over confrontation. The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah (628 CE) represents perhaps the most analytically rich episode in Prophetic biography for CVE purposes. Under conditions of significant power asymmetry, the Prophet accepted terms that appeared deeply unfavourable to his community — including the return of new converts to Makkah and the suspension of pilgrimage for a year — in exchange for a ten-year peace accord (Haykal, 1976). The Quran subsequently described this treaty as a 'clear victory' (Quran 48:1), affirming the strategic wisdom of negotiated settlement over escalation: a clear example of the preference for peace over violence.

Modern CVE scholarship broadly affirms that sustained dialogue with non-violent elements within extremist or hostile communities — so-called 'hard-to-reach' engagement — is among the most effective deradicalisation tools available (Neumann, 2013; Horgan, 2009). The Hudaybiyyah model exemplifies this approach: the Prophet maintained channels of communication with Makkan elites, leveraged the commercial interdependencies of the Arabian Peninsula, and prioritised long-term stability over short-term symbolic gains (Al-Mubarakpuri, 2002).

Social Justice and Equity as Structural Violence Prevention

A robust literature in CVE identifies socioeconomic marginalisation, perceived injustice, and political exclusion as primary structural drivers of violent radicalisation (Kundnani, 2015; Wiktorowicz, 2005). The Prophet's ministry directly targeted these structural conditions. His prohibitions on usury, his redistribution of war spoils, his emancipation of enslaved people, and his insistence on the legal equality of all ethnic groups before the law — encapsulated in the Farewell Sermon of 632 CE — represent a comprehensive programme of structural grievance-redress (Esposito, 2010). The Farewell Sermon, delivered at Mount Arafat during the Prophet's only Hajj pilgrimage to an audience of approximately 120,000 people, is particularly significant as a CVE document. It addressed explicitly the conditions that generate collective violence: economic exploitation ('your blood and your

property are as sacred as this day'), ethnic supremacism ('an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab'), and gender-based injustice (Sahih Muslim, n.d.; Ibn Hisham, n.d.). Contemporary analysts such as Nasr (2004) identify these principles as constitutive of an Islamic human rights framework that, if operationalised, would structurally inhibit extremist recruitment.

Inclusive Governance: The Madinah Charter

The Madinah Charter, or Constitution of Madinah, is a documented political agreement attributed to the Prophet in approximately 622 CE, establishing a federated covenant among diverse tribes and religious communities including Muslims, Jewish tribes, and pagan Arabs (Watt, 1981; Hamidullah, 1981). The Charter is analytically remarkable for what CVE scholars would call 'power-sharing architecture' — the systematic distribution of rights and responsibilities across potentially competing identity groups to reduce the incentives for violent contestation.

The Charter explicitly prohibited internecine violence ('the believers shall not leave a debtor among them without giving him what is fair'), established a collective security agreement, and guaranteed religious freedom for each constituent community (Hamidullah, 1981). From a CVE standpoint, this represents what Schmid (2013) terms 'upstream prevention' — the creation of governance structures that reduce the grievances from which violent extremism draws legitimacy. Contemporary governance frameworks, from Northern

Ireland's Good Friday Agreement to Indonesia's Pancasila, echo structural features of the Madinah Charter (Esposito, 2010).

Community Cohesion: The Brotherhood

Upon the Prophet's migration to Madinah in 622 CE, his immediate political intervention was not military but social: the institution of brotherhood (Muwakhaat) — a structured pairing of Makkan migrants with Madinan hosts, creating reciprocal bonds of obligation, support, and identity to integrate the newly arrived community (Lings, 1983). Contemporary CVE literature identifies social isolation, marginalisation, and the absence of belonging as critical vulnerability factors in radicalisation pathways (Wiktorowicz, 2005; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008).

The parallel with a modern British scheme is striking. The UK government's Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (2022) pairs Ukrainian refugees with British hosts, who provide rent-free accommodation for a minimum of six months in exchange for a modest monthly payment, while local authorities receive a per-person tariff to fund healthcare, education, and social support (HM Government, 2023). The model favours community-led integration over traditional state-run detention or hostel systems — an approach that, whether by design or by echo, follows the same logic as the Muwakhaat model the Prophet established in Madinah fourteen centuries earlier.

The system functioned as a community resilience mechanism in the precise sense advocated by modern CVE frameworks: it created diversified social networks, established mutual accountability, and constructed a supra-tribal identity that reduced the appeal of particularist extremist narratives. Rippin (2001) notes that the community built around the Prophet in Madinah achieved what contemporary sociologists call 'bridging social capital' — connections across social cleavages — alongside the 'bonding social capital' of in-group solidarity.

Restorative Justice: The Conquest of Makkah

The Conquest of Makkah in 630 CE stands as the Prophet's most dramatic and well-documented exercise of restorative justice. Having secured military superiority over the city whose leadership had persecuted, tortured, and killed his followers for over a decade, the Prophet declared a general amnesty: 'Go, for you are free' (Al-Mubarakpuri, 2002) — a statement contemporary legal scholars have compared to transitional justice instruments such as truth and reconciliation commissions (Peters, 1994).

The amnesty was not unconditional: a small number of individuals guilty of egregious crimes were excepted, and even several of these were subsequently pardoned upon individual petition. Cook (2005) argues that this episode demonstrates what CVE rehabilitation literature identifies as graduated reintegration — a calibrated process of accountability and restoration that neither perpetuates cycles

of vengeance nor collapses into impunity. The psychological literature on forgiveness further affirms that restorative, rather than retributive, responses to political violence are more effective in sustainably reducing recidivism and reintegrating former combatants (Horgan, 2009).

The Weight of the Evidence: Thematic Distribution

Table 1 sets out the thematic frequency distribution derived from a coded dataset of 350 primary-source excerpts — 187 Hadith, 51 Seerah episodes, and 112 Quranic verses. The figures represent the number of excerpts coded under each theme and its proportional share of the total dataset.

Table 1: Thematic Frequency Distribution in Prophetic CVE Sources

CVE Theme	Hadith Sources	Seerah Episodes	Quranic References	% Coverage
Non-violence & Mercy	47	12	28	24%
Dialogue & Negotiation	31	8	19	18%
Social Justice & Equity	38	10	22	21%
Governance & Rule of Law	24	7	15	14%
Community Cohesion	29	9	17	16%
Restorative Justice	18	5	11	10%
Total	187	51	112	100%

Source: author's own coding of Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Ibn Hisham's Sirat, Al-Mubarakpuri's The Sealed Nectar (2002), and authenticated Quranic references.

The dominance of Non-violence and Mercy (24 per cent), alongside Social Justice (21 per cent), suggests that Prophetic CVE practice was oriented primarily toward addressing the structural conditions of violence rather than its immediate

management alone. Dialogue and Negotiation (18 per cent) and Community Cohesion (16 per cent) constitute the relational tier of the framework, while Governance (14 per cent) and Restorative Justice (10 per cent) represent its institutional dimension.

What the Evidence Shows: A Six-Pillar Framework

The analysis yields a six-pillar framework, mapping each Prophetic strategy to its exemplary historical episode, its modern CVE application, and its key scholarly references (Table 2).

Table 2: Prophetic CVE Framework — Mapping Historical Practice to Modern Applications

CVE Dimension	Prophetic Example	Modern Application	Key Reference
Prevention	Madinah Charter (622 CE)	Social contracts & pluralism	Watt (1981); Al-Mubarakpuri (2002)
Dialogue & De-radicalisation	Treaty of Hudaybiyyah (628 CE)	Negotiated peacebuilding	Ramadan (2007); Esposito (2010)
Inclusive Governance	Farewell Sermon (632 CE)	Human rights & equality norms	Nasr (2004); Haykal (1976)
Restorative Justice	Conquest of Makkah (630 CE) – General Amnesty	Truth & reconciliation models	Peters (1994); Cook (2005)
Community Resilience	Brotherhood system (Muwakhaat)	Social cohesion programmes	Lings (1983); Hamidullah (1981)
Psychological Resilience	Compassion for captives & prisoners	Trauma-informed deradicalisation	Rippin (2001); Aslan*

*Source: author's own framework, synthesised from cited sources. * Full citation for Aslan to be confirmed by the author.*

Table 3 maps these six Prophetic principles against five contemporary national and international CVE frameworks, assessing the degree of alignment between prophetic practice and policy architecture. Alignment is coded as Very Strong (direct conceptual and operational correspondence), Strong (significant conceptual overlap with operational divergence), or Moderate (partial correspondence with structural gaps).

Table 3: Alignment of Prophetic CVE Principles with Contemporary Policy Frameworks

CVE Strategy	Prophetic Principle	Contemporary Policy	Alignment
Prevent (UK)	Early warning & pastoral care	Channel programme referrals	Moderate
Countering Violent Extremism (US/UN)	Dialogue & community engagement	CVE Task Forces	Strong
Deradicalisation (Saudi Arabia)	Mercy, forgiveness & reintegration	Counselling & vocational rehab	Very Strong
Countering Terrorism (Pakistan)	Just governance & social equity	NACTA Framework	Moderate
Social Cohesion (Indonesia)	Brotherhood model	Inter-faith community programmes	Very Strong

Sources: HM Government (2023); UNOCT (2021); Ministry of Interior, Saudi Arabia (2017); NACTA (2022); Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2022).

The comparative analysis reveals that Prophetic principles align most closely with contemporary deradicalisation programmes that integrate psychological support, community engagement, and restorative processes — such as Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre and Indonesia's BNPT community programmes (Horgan, 2009; UNOCT, 2021). UK and US frameworks, while

structurally sound, tend toward surveillance-heavy approaches that under-utilise the relational and restorative dimensions richly evidenced in Prophetic practice (Kundnani, 2015).

Implications for CVE Theory and Practice

The findings challenge the assumption, prevalent in some secular CVE literature, that religious frameworks are primarily problems to be countered rather than resources to be engaged (Wiktorowicz, 2005). The Prophetic model demonstrates that authentic religious practice — grounded in mercy, justice, and inclusive community-building — constitutes a robust internal counter-narrative to extremist ideology. This resonates with Schmid's (2013) argument that effective CVE requires engagement with the ideological terrain rather than its avoidance. The Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) model, adopted by Stockwell Green Community Services (SGCS) in the UK, applies exactly this logic, integrating religious mentoring to advance moderate interpretation and interfaith dialogue (Qureshi and Ali, 2025).

The six-pillar framework also offers a more holistic model than many contemporary CVE approaches, which tend to over-index on psychological intervention at the expense of structural and relational dimensions (Neumann, 2013). The Prophet's life demonstrates the integration of all three tiers — structural (justice reforms), relational (brotherhood, dialogue), and psychological (mercy, forgiveness narratives) — as a unified programme rather than a sequence of separate

interventions. For CVE practitioners operating in Muslim-majority contexts, including Pakistan, these findings suggest significant untapped potential in Seerah-based community programming: religious leaders are uniquely positioned to deploy Prophetic narratives as counter-extremism tools precisely because they carry authority within the communities most targeted by extremist recruiters. Programmes such as the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and the Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET) have begun to formalise such approaches, though their reach remains limited (Esposito, 2010; UNOCT, 2021).

For policymakers in Western contexts, the findings suggest the value of engaging authentic Islamic scholarly voices in CVE programme design — not as tokens of community consultation, but as substantive intellectual and spiritual resources. This encourages and empowers the Muslim community to be part of the solution rather than being cast as part of the problem (Qureshi and Ali, 2025). Ramadan (2007) argues persuasively that Western CVE programmes which bypass or marginalise religious learning are both epistemically impoverished and strategically counterproductive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter has shown, through a systematic reading of the Seerah, that the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) offers a rich, internally coherent, and externally validated framework

for countering violent extremism. Six thematic pillars — Non-violence and Mercy, Dialogue and Negotiation, Social Justice and Equity, Inclusive Governance, Community Cohesion, and Restorative Justice — emerge as the constitutive elements of a Prophetic CVE model that anticipates, and enriches, contemporary theory and practice.

The comparative policy analysis confirms that these principles align most strongly with programmes that integrate community, psychological, and structural dimensions, suggesting that deeper engagement with Prophetic practice could strengthen the efficacy of CVE frameworks globally. As violent extremism continues to evolve and diversify, the wisdom embedded in the Prophetic Seerah offers both a moral anchor and a strategic toolkit for communities, scholars, and policymakers committed to building a more peaceful world.

Future work should evaluate CVE initiatives explicitly grounded in Prophetic principles over time, and extend the comparative base across Shia, Sufi, and other Islamic traditions.

It is recommended that policymakers adopt the Prophetic 'Brotherhood' model — pairing vulnerable individuals with established community mentors — to build the bridging social capital necessary to prevent social isolation and to provide a robust religious counter-narrative to extremist recruitment.

CHAPTER 3

Does CVE Reduce Economic Losses? Evidence from Pakistan

Economic analysis · Pakistan CVE · Policy effectiveness

Introduction

The economic costs of terrorism and violent extremism are substantial and well-documented. Direct costs like destruction of property, loss of life, emergency response expenditure are relatively straightforward to quantify. Indirect costs like deterred investment, disrupted commerce, reduced tourism, flight of human capital, and the long-term impairment of institutional trust are more difficult to measure but typically exceed direct costs by a significant margin. For economies like Pakistan's, which have experienced persistent and geographically widespread extremism over several decades, these costs have been economically and developmentally devastating.

This chapter investigates a question that has received surprisingly limited systematic attention in the CVE literature: does investment in counter-extremism programmes correlate with reductions in the economic losses attributable to extremism and terrorism? Using quantitative evidence from Pakistan across the period 2009–2023, it assesses the relationship between CVE programme investment and a range of economic indicators, including foreign direct investment, tourism receipts, stock market performance, and World Bank estimates of terrorism-attributable GDP loss.

The Economic Costs of Extremism in Pakistan

Pakistan has borne some of the highest economic costs of terrorism of any country in the world, over the past two decades. The government of Pakistan's own estimates, published in successive economic surveys, have attributed annual losses equivalent to several percentage points of GDP to terrorist activity including costs of military operations, compensation payments, damage to infrastructure, and reduced economic activity in affected regions. The Global Terrorism Index has consistently ranked Pakistan among the most severely affected countries.

The distributional impact of extremism within Pakistan has been particularly damaging. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA, subsequently merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018) experienced the most severe economic disruption, with entire local economies destroyed, internal displacement affecting millions, and the destruction of educational, health, and commercial infrastructure that will require generations to rebuild. Urban centres including Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar have experienced periodic but severely disruptive attacks on commercial and public infrastructure.

CVE Investment and Economic Outcomes: Analytical Framework

The causal pathway between CVE programme investment and economic outcomes is complex and multi-step. CVE investment may reduce the incidence and severity of terrorist attacks; reduced terrorist activity may improve the security environment; improved

security environment may attract investment, revive commerce, and enable economic activity that extremism had suppressed. At each step in this chain, other factors political stability, governance quality, regional security dynamics intervene to either amplify or offset the effects of CVE investment.

This chapter employs a difference-in-differences analytical approach, comparing economic outcomes in regions with significant CVE programme investment against those in comparable regions without such investment, across multiple time periods. The design controls for major confounding factors including military operations, political change, natural disasters, and global economic conditions. It uses data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the State Bank of Pakistan, the World Bank, and the Global Terrorism Database.

Empirical Findings

Direct Effects on Terrorist Incidents

Analysis of the relationship between CVE programme investment and terrorist incident rates across Pakistani districts from 2009 to 2023 reveals a consistent negative association: districts with higher CVE programme investment show lower rates of terrorist incidents in subsequent periods, controlling for confounding factors. The effect is most pronounced for attack types of suicide bombing, targeted assassination, and crowd-based attacks that require significant planning, recruitment, and local operational support, suggesting that CVE programmes are most effective at disrupting the community conditions on which sophisticated terrorist activity depends.

The effect is smaller and less consistent for simpler attack types

improvised explosive device deployment and drive-by shooting that require less community infrastructure. This pattern is consistent with the SRAM model's emphasis on community conditions: programmes that address the social and ideological conditions in which extremist networks operate can disrupt their capacity for complex activity without necessarily eliminating all forms of violence.

Economic Outcomes

The association between CVE programme investment and economic outcomes is positive but less robust than the association with terrorist incident rates, reflecting the multiple intervening factors that affect economic performance in complex developing economy contexts. The most consistent finding is the positive association between sustained CVE investment (over periods of three or more years) and foreign direct investment inflows in affected regions.

The relationship between CVE investment and broader economic indicators; GDP growth, employment and consumer spending is detectable but weaker, reflecting the longer time horizons over which economic recovery from sustained extremism typically occurs. The analysis does, however, identify significant positive associations between CVE investment and several leading economic indicators, including business registration rates, property transaction volumes, and school enrolment, that suggest a positive economic trajectory in well-invested regions that has not yet translated fully into headline economic statistics.

The Case for Economic Integration in CVE Evaluation

The findings of this chapter support a broader argument for integrating economic metrics into CVE programme evaluation. The current evaluation landscape in Pakistan as in the UK focuses predominantly on proximal programme outcomes (attitudinal change, network disengagement) rather than on the economic returns to CVE investment. This is understandable, given the methodological challenges of attributing economic outcomes to specific programme investments, but it means that the case for CVE investment is routinely under-stated in budget discussions.

If sustained CVE investment produces economic returns through reduced violence, improved investment climate, and restored economic activity that significantly exceed the cost of that investment, this provides a powerful argument for sustained funding that complements the ethical and security arguments. The analysis in this chapter suggests that the economic returns to well-designed, sustained CVE investment in high-extremism contexts may be substantially positive, though further research with longer time horizons and better-specified models is required to estimate these returns with greater precision.

Policy Implications

For Pakistani policymakers, the findings of this chapter support several practical recommendations. First, sustained investment in community-led CVE programmes, over periods sufficient to produce measurable effects on security conditions, is economically rational, not just morally desirable. Second, economic development and CVE programming should be integrated rather than sequential: restoring economic activity in affected regions is both a CVE intervention (by opening legitimate economic pathways) and a multiplier of the effects of other CVE activities. Third, CVE programme evaluation in Pakistan should routinely include economic outcome measures, both to strengthen the evidence base and to make the case for sustained funding in budget negotiations.

CHAPTER 4

Britain and Pakistan: Two Nations, One Enemy

A Comparative Study in Counter-Extremism Strategy

Two nations, one enemy but starkly different approaches.

The enemy is the same: a twisted ideology that turns ordinary people into killers, but the battlefields could not be more different. Britain fights with a scalpel community trust, school programmes, and quiet mentoring. Pakistan uses a hammer: mass arrests and military operations. Both countries have lost blood and treasure, but one has learned that bullets alone never win the war.

The British Journey: From Hard to Soft Power



Historical photograph evoking The Troubles in Northern Ireland republican youths clashing with security forces on Belfast's Falls Road.

Britain's experience with terrorism is longer and more varied than most people realise. The IRA's thirty-year campaign bombing the Grand Hotel in Brighton, mortar-attacking Downing Street, detonating massive devices in the City of London, killed and maimed thousands. On 12 October 1984, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) carried out a major bombing attack at the Grand Hotel in Brighton, England, during the Conservative Party Conference, to assassinate Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and several members of her Cabinet. The IRA planted a long-delay time bomb (weighing about 20 kg / 44 lb of gelignite) in room 629 several weeks earlier. It was planted by Patrick Magee (who stayed in the hotel under a false name) and detonated at 2:54 am. The powerful explosion ripped through the middle of the hotel, causing the collapse of several floors and creating a huge crater. On 27 August 1979, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) assassinated Lord Louis Mountbatten, a senior member of the British royal family, World War II hero, former Viceroy of India, and cousin of Queen Elizabeth II, by detonating a 50-pound (23 kg) gelignite bomb planted on his fishing boat, Shadow V, near Mullaghmore in County Sligo, Republic of Ireland.

What eventually ended it was not military victory but the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, achieved through inclusive political dialogue and an honest acknowledgement of legitimate grievances.

The 7 July 2005, London bombings were a watershed. Four British-born young men killed fifty-two commuters. For the first time, the threat was not foreign, it was domestic. The initial response was predictably heavy: mass surveillance, control orders, Schedule 7

stops. However, slowly but painfully, the government began funding community organisations. Imams were given a seat at the table.



IRA bombs kill Mountbatten and 17 soldiers

From Stephen Cook in Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo and Joe Joyce in Dublin

At least 17 soldiers were killed in County Down last night only hours after Earl Mountbatten and two companions died when an explosion destroyed his boat at Mullagh-

Rooney. Flags will be flown at half mast on most public buildings today.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said: "The state of the funeral is provisional, taking into account the fact that a number of Lord Mountbatten's family are still gravely ill."

Lord Mountbatten, the Queen's second cousin, was

The Guardian front page, 28 August 1979 "IRA bombs kill Mountbatten and 17 soldiers."

The Good Friday Agreement



***Yesterday's Terrorists, Today's Peacemakers**: Her Majesty, The Queen Elizabeth II, shaking hands with Martin McGuinness, a historic moment of reconciliation.*



Peter Robinson The architects of peace: dialogue succeeded where decades of violence had failed.

The Good Friday Agreement, signed on 10 April 1998, marked the pivotal turning point in ending the violent phase of The Troubles. Peace emerged not from military operations which reached a stalemate but through inclusive multi-party talks, ceasefires, and compromises that addressed underlying ethno-nationalist grievances.



Gerry Adams attends Bobby Sands' funeral the IRA's eventual shift from armed struggle to politics transformed the conflict.

Central to this transition were Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, leaders of Sinn Féin widely regarded as key architects of the republican shift from armed struggle to politics. Their partnership was instrumental: McGuinness's standing as a "hardman" guaranteed internal support for Adams's strategy, enabling the IRA to declare its armed campaign over in 2005.

The 7 July 2005 London Bombings



The devastating aftermath of the 7/7 London bombings — the attack that changed British counter-extremism forever.

The 7 July 2005 bombings forced a fundamental rethink. Four homegrown British Muslims had carried out the attack. The subsequent government review concluded that prevention not just prosecution, had to become the central pillar of the counter-terrorism strategy. The Prevent strand of the CONTEST strategy was born, and slowly, community-led approaches began to receive serious attention and funding.

Pakistan's Journey: The Fire We Helped Light

Pakistan's relationship with violent extremism begins not in 2001 but in 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and Pakistan with American, Saudi, and British support began arming and training the mujahideen. A generation of young men was raised on the theology of the Holy War. When the Soviets left Afghanistan and the Western interest evaporated, the infrastructure remained. The Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), formed in 2007 and

declared war on the Pakistani state. The bloodiest symbol of how thoroughly the fire had come home was the 2014 Army Public School massacre in Peshawar, where 132 schoolchildren were murdered (Boone, 2014).

> *"The guns have the power to clear out a valley in a season, but they have no power to clear a brain. The conveyor belt started in the 1980s and did not end; it just changed its direction, speed, brand and product."*

Terrorism vs Jihad

Classical Islamic jurisprudence defines jihad as a struggle that must meet strict conditions: declared by a legitimate authority, directed only at combatants, and conducted according to strict rules of engagement that explicitly forbid targeting civilians, women, children, and places of worship. What TTP, ISIS, and al-Qaeda practice, bears no resemblance to these conditions. The Paigham-e-Pakistan fatwa of 2018 signed by over 1,800 Pakistani scholars declared their violence as haram (Strictly forbidden).

CHAPTER 5

From Stockwell's Shadows to the Light of Hope
The Origins of a Community-Led Movement



Interfaith community visit outside Stockwell Green Community Centre Prof Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE's work building cross-community trust.

Stockwell is not a place most people think of when they imagine the birthplace of a counter-terrorism revolution. A square mile of south London, wedged between Brixton and Vauxhall with its chicken shops, money-transfer offices, and the lingering ghost of Jean Charles de Menezes, shot dead by Metropolitan Police officers in its Underground station in July 2005. But it was here, in community halls that smelled of curry and damp carpet, that a small team of ordinary British Muslims began doing something no government

programme had managed to achieve persuading young men who had already chosen violence to choose life instead.

By the late 1990s, Stockwell and its surrounding streets had become a study in contradictions. Pakistani and Somali families who had arrived in the 1970s and 1980s were, for the first time, raising British-born children. These children attended the same state schools, supported the same football clubs, and spoke the same south London dialect as their non-Muslim neighbours. But something was wrong. The second generation had been told they belonged and discovered that Britain was not entirely sure they did.

The Arrival of "The Four" Everything changed in 2002–2003 with the quiet, regular appearance of four men who always prayed together at the back. Two tall Somalis with sharp goatees, one Algerian, one short Eritrean. They spoke little to the elders but had a magnetic effect on angry, bored, often newly converted teenagers. Within weeks, those teenagers would vanish to Pakistan, to Afghanistan, to "jihad".

I overheard conversations that froze my blood:

"Everything is halal for us, brother, their money, their women, their blood." "When the West kills our brothers in Iraq and Palestine, do they ask about Sharia?" "We will make London into Londonistan."

One evening, after Isha, a man with an Arabic accent, blocked my path as I locked the office. His name was Osman Bostan Hussein, later known to the world as Hamdi Isaac, one of the 21/7 failed suicide bombers. He had been sent, he said, because I was "speaking against jihad". For twenty chilling minutes, I explained the difference between legitimate jihad fi sabilillah and fasad fil-ardh-the spreading of corruption on earth. I quoted the Qur'an and

Hadeeth that forbid rebellion in a land where Muslims enjoy safety and freedom of worship.

Jihad Fi Sabilillah ("Striving in Allah's path") has two main forms according to the teaching of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

"رَجَعْنَا مِنَ الْجِهَادِ الْأَصْغَرِ إِلَى الْجِهَادِ الْأَكْبَرِ، وَمَا الْجِهَادُ الْأَكْبَرُ؟ جِهَادُ النَّفْسِ"

سنن ترمذی، کتاب فضائل الجہاد حدیث نمبر 1621

Translation:

"We have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad." They asked, "And what is the greater jihad?" He replied, "The struggle against the self [one's desires]."

Type of Jihad	Meaning	Priority
Jihad al-Asghar (Lesser)	Physical struggle/defence of the community.	Crucial for safety, but circumstantial. Announced By the Government only
Jihad al-Akbar (Greater)	Spiritual struggle against ego, pride, and sin.	Continuous and lifelong; the foundation for all other actions.

Table: 4

الْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ فِي طَاعَةِ اللهِ

[مسند الشهاب/حديث: 183]

Translation:

"The true mujahid is the one who strives against his own self (nafs)" in the obedience of Allah.

All these narrations are of authentic (ṣaḥīḥ) status. In summary, multiple hadiths from the Prophet ﷺ describe different forms of *"the best jihad."*

The reason striving against the النفس (self) is considered superior is that fighting with the sword occurs only at specific times, whereas striving against the النفس is continuous. A person must remain vigilant at all times, struggling against the whispers, doubts, and temptations of Satan. When Satan incites toward sin, the believer resists and turns toward righteousness—this is called *mujāhadat al-nafs* (struggle against the self).

When a person becomes firm in this inner struggle, then striving against external enemies becomes easier.

Fasad fil-Ardh ("Corruption on earth") is the Quran's term for acts that cause widespread harm and chaos — terrorism, killing innocents, destruction, and disorder. It is one of the most condemned acts in Islamic law.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ۝

(سورۃ البقرہ: آیت 11)

Translation:

"And when it is said to them, 'Do not cause corruption on the earth,' they say, 'We are but reformers."

He listened with a sneer, then hissed: "Stay out of it, brother. This game is bigger than you. Look after the centre and don't risk your family's lives." Two years later, in July 2005, his bomb failed to detonate on a Tube train near Shepherd's Bush, because he could not heat the hydrogen peroxide to the correct temperature. By the grace of Allah, no one died, but the message was clear.

Reporting the Danger and Being Ignored. As soon as the pattern became undeniable, the trustees and I wrote to the police and security services naming the individuals we believed were grooming and dispatching young men. We did this, not once, but repeatedly between 2003 and 2005. The letters disappeared into the system. When the police finally came looking for Osman Hussein after 21/7, they did not even know he used the alias "Hamdi Isaac," an alias we had carefully listed two years earlier.

Meanwhile, fathers like Nizam sat in my office weeping, passing me a crumpled note from a son who had disappeared to Afghanistan: "I am leaving for jihad. Do not follow me. I don't want to be the son of an alcohol seller."

The Golden Triangle, London to Pakistan to Afghanistan and back, was functioning perfectly, and too many mosques and centres, including ours for a brief, terrifying period, had become unwitting links in the chain.

Turning the Tide, we fought back the only way we knew how, with knowledge and community. In 2000, we held the first national conference on "The Role of Mosques in the Development of Local Communities". In 2001, we followed it with "The Role of Religions in Diminishing Terrorism". We started the HELP project free holiday tuition that kept hundreds of teenagers busy with books

instead of radical chatrooms. We brought scholars from across the world to explain, again, that rebellion against a country that grants you safety, education, mosques, halal food, and welfare is not jihad it is treason against both Islam and humanity.

Slowly, the tide turned. The Four stopped coming. The disappearances slowed. Young men began to listen when we said, "If you want to help suffering Muslims, become a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, serve the Ummah with excellence, not with explosives."

Lessons from the Fire That terrifying half-decade in Stockwell taught me truths I have carried ever since:

Radicalisation does not arrive wearing a sign; it arrives as ordinary-looking men praying at the back of the hall.

Good intentions are not enough; community leaders must have the courage to confront poison, even when it hides behind sacred words.

The state must listen when moderates raise the alarm early lives depend on it.

And most importantly: the best prevention is love-love shown through education, opportunity, and genuine care for confused and angry young souls.

Stockwell Green Muslim Centre still stands today. The building that once housed the Salvation Army now houses salvation of a different kind saving young British Muslims from the deadly lie that violence in our streets could ever be pleasing to Allah.

Those were the hardest years of my life, but also the years that forged everything that came after: the counter-extremism work

across Europe, the rehabilitation programmes inside British prisons, the peace missions to Afghanistan and Palestine, and the quiet conviction that runs through every page of this book – that true peace and reconciliation begin when we dare to stand in the fire and refuse to let it consume us or our children.

CHAPTER 6

Why Demonise My Religion?

A Conversation That Changed Everything



Interfaith Eid Celebrations at Khatme Nubuwwat Centre with Edward Butler Ellis, Councillor Donatus Anyanwu, Councillor Tina Valcarel (Cabinet Minister for Disability), Rev Alan Gadd, Tamsin Jones (Lambeth Met Police) and Damon Tulloch-Foley (Faith Liaison Officer, Lambeth Met Police).

It was a typical Friday at the Khatme-Nubuwwat Centre in Stockwell. After leading the prayer and delivering the khutbah, I stayed behind as I always did. That day, however, a group of six sharp, articulate university students, Arabs, Pakistanis, and a Somali waited until everyone else had left and surrounded me.

Mo spoke first, voice trembling with controlled fury: "Uncle, the media and politicians keep saying Islamic terrorist, Islamist extremist, Islamic radicalisation. They never say Christian terrorist when a white supremacist shoots up a mosque. They're turning ordinary Brits against us."

Truth 1: The Double Standard Is Real

Yes, the media apply one standard for Muslims and another for everyone else. This is unjust, and we must keep calling it out loudly, intelligently, and together with fair-minded non-Muslims who already see the hypocrisy.

Truth 2: Geopolitics Created the Monster

The original training camps, the Stinger missiles, the billions from Washington, London, and Riyadh to fight the Soviets, Reagan called the Mujahideen "the moral equivalent of America's Founding Fathers". What grew in those camps later was the harvest of seeds we ourselves sowed.

Truth 3: The Media Needs a Villain

"Islamic terrorism" became the post-Cold War enemy. It sells newspapers, wins votes, keeps the weapons industry rich. That does not excuse the criminals who murder in the name of Islam, but it does explain why their crimes are amplified and everyone else's are forgotten.

Truth 4: Two Wrongs Never Make a Right

Blowing up a tube train, stabbing a soldier in Woolwich, or shooting up a concert hall in Paris does not help a single Palestinian child. It simply gives the far right and the warmongers exactly what they want: proof for their narrative that "Islam is the problem."

"Your anger is energy. Direct it properly and it can change the world. Direct it wrongly and you destroy yourself and harm the Ummah."

The Practical Path Forward: Your anger is energy. Direct it properly, and it can change the world. Direct it wrongly and you destroy yourself and harm the Ummah.

Here is what I told those young men that Friday (and what I tell every angry young Muslim I meet)

1. Join the anti-war movement: Millions of British Christians, Jews, atheists, and Muslims marched together against the Iraq War. March with them again. You will see that you have more allies than enemies.

2. Enter politics: We need Muslim MPs, councillors, journalists, and lawyers who will speak truth in the corridors of power. Rehman Chishti, MP, forced the government to call the ISIS "Daesh". One man did that. Imagine a hundred.

3. Educate, don't explode: The best jihad right now is the jihad of the tongue and the pen. Write, speak, make videos, start podcasts. Reclaim the word "jihad" which simply means struggle for what is right from both the terrorists and the Islamophobes.

4. Build bridges, not bombs: Invite your non-Muslim classmates, lecturers, neighbours to the mosque. Let them meet real Muslims. The Prophet ﷺ hosted Christians in his own mosque. We can at least host them for tea and samosas.

5. Never let anyone hijack your Deen: The terrorists want you to believe Islam equals violence. The far-right wants the same. Don't give either side the victory.

As they left that afternoon, Mo turned back:

"So, what should we call our struggle, Uncle?"

I smiled. "Call it what the Prophet ﷺ called it when he returned from the battlefield and said: 'We have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad' the jihad against your own ego, against ignorance, against injustice through knowledge and patience. That is the jihad that will win."

They nodded, quieter now, thoughtful.

That conversation happens in some form almost every Friday, in mosques and university prayer rooms across Britain. The questions are the same. The pain is the same. But so is the solution.

Our young people are not the problem. They are the answer if we listen to them, tell them the unfiltered truth, and then walk with them on the path of the greater jihad.

CHAPTER 7

From Mistrust to Brotherhood

The Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee: Dialogue in Practice



Prof Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE (right) with President of Afghanistan Abdullah Abdullah trust-building at the highest level.

Since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Pakistan has faced severe terrorism challenges, initially as a frontline state in the War on Terror. While major military operations significantly reduced violence by 2019, the situation reversed dramatically after the Afghan Taliban's takeover of Kabul in August 2021. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which had taken refuge in Afghanistan, regrouped and intensified cross-border attacks, leading to a sharp resurgence in terrorism inside Pakistan. Terrorism-related deaths rose steadily from 664 in 2021 to 971 in 2022, 1,513 in 2023, and over 2,200 in 2024. In 2025, Pakistan recorded 1,139 terrorism deaths and 1,045

incidents the highest level since 2013 making it the country most impacted by terrorism in the world according to the Global Terrorism Index 2026 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2026). Pakistani officials have repeatedly accused the Afghan Taliban regime of providing safe havens to TTP fighters in provinces such as Nangarhar, Kunar, Khost, and Paktika, effectively "exporting terrorism" into Pakistan, a charge that Kabul denies. Most attacks have been concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces, with the TTP responsible for most incidents. This cross-border dynamic has strained Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, triggered Pakistani cross-border strikes, and undone much of the security gains achieved in the previous decade.

One bitterly cold December morning in London, I received a telephone call from Imtiaz Gul, the Head of CRSS Islamabad that would take me, within days, to chair the first formal meeting of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) in Kabul. The Durand Line dispute, mutual accusations over Taliban sanctuaries, border clashes, and trade blockages had brought bilateral relations to their lowest point in years. Trust was almost non-existent.

After two days of frank, sometimes painful discussion, we adopted a Joint Declaration: resumption of transit-trade talks, easing of visa restrictions, 3,000 new scholarships for Afghan students in Pakistan, youth and journalist exchanges, and the creation of a permanent PAJC Monitoring Group. Both sides agreed that security concerns must never again be allowed to paralyse trade, education, and people-to-people contact.

Chairing the First PAJC Meeting 15 December 2017, the next morning, I opened the inaugural session of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Committee under the Beyond Boundaries project, funded by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and implemented by CRSS and its Afghan partners. Rana Afzal Khan MP led the Pakistani side; the Afghan side was led by Abdul Qader Zazai, Secretary of the Afghan Parliament. Sixteen senior figures from each country sat opposite one another in a room that could very easily have exploded into shouting. Instead, something remarkable happened: maturity, candour, and a shared exhaustion with war prevailed.

Meeting Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. The following day, the combined delegation was received by Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of Afghanistan. The meeting began with a minute's silence for the children martyred in the Army Public School attack in Peshawar exactly three years earlier, a gesture that moved everyone in the room. Dr. Abdullah spoke plainly: "Your peace is our peace; your destiny is our destiny." He promised to resolve long-standing trade irritants within weeks and urged that women parliamentarians, journalists, and civil-society leaders from both countries begin working together immediately. By the time we sat down to the traditional Afghan lunch, the temperature (emotional as well as physical) had changed completely.



The author, presided over the conference on "Beyond Boundaries" Regarding Pak-Afghan Relations at Islamabad. (June 11, 2024)

The Five-Prong Dialogue Formula

At Afghan universities, I presented the simple framework that guided the PAJC discussions applicable to any broken relationship between Muslim neighbours:

1. P2P: People-to-People contact (cultural immersion, student exchanges, family visits)
2. G2G: Government-to-Government political engagement
3. A2A: Army-to-Army confidence-building and counter-terrorism cooperation
4. M2M: Media-to-Media exchanges to replace sensationalism with understanding
5. B2B: Business-to-Business ties that create mutual economic dependence on peace

> *"If it could happen in Kabul in 2017, it can happen anywhere we dare to sit down, speak truthfully, and refuse to leave the table until we have built something better than the suspicion, we inherited."*



Prof Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE presiding the meeting Beyond Boundaries III, Kabul Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 8

Trust: The Missing Ingredient

Why Communities Hold the Keys That Governments Cannot Copy



Terrorism survives on silence and it is broken by trust, not surveillance.

Every intelligence service in the world knows this: the best early-warning system for terrorism is not satellite surveillance or intercepted phone calls. It is the mother who notices that her son has started sleeping with his phone under his pillow, the imam who spots a new face asking unusually specific questions after Jumu'ah, the youth worker who sees a boy who used to laugh now sitting silent and hard-faced at the back of the room.

But those mothers, imams, and youth workers will only act, will only make the phone call, ring the doorbell if they trust the people

on the other end of the line. And in community after community, that trust has been shattered by exactly the institutions that need it most: the police, the security services, and the government-funded "counter-extremism" programmes that feel, to the community, like surveillance wearing a smiley face.

> **EVIDENCE: In our programme, 81 percent of cases reached us through family referrals, mothers, fathers, and siblings. Only 4 percent came through the state. The community is the intelligence service.**

The Community Shield and How Extremists Use It

Communities' close ranks for two reasons: loyalty and fear. Loyalty is natural. A mother will protect her son even if she hates what he is reading online. Fear is taught. Extremists spread simple messages: "The police are Zionists," "The army is American puppets," "Anyone who talks is an apostate, and his family will pay." The TTP in Pakistan and IS recruiters in Britain use the same script.

In 2014, three teenage girls from Bethnal Green, Shamima Begum, Amira Abase, and Kadiza Sultana walked out of their homes and flew to Syria. Teachers had noticed the girls withdrawing, watching IS videos, and wearing a jilbab to school one teacher filled in a Prevent referral form. Nothing happened for weeks because the family refused to cooperate, and the local community accused the school of Islamophobia (Kerslake, 2018). By the time police knocked, the girls were already in Turkey. Community silence, born

from distrust of the state, cost three lives and gave IS a propaganda victory.

In Karachi's Pashtun neighbourhoods, the same shield works in reverse. When the Rangers come looking for a TTP courier, neighbours give deliberately wrong information or simply disappear into their houses. One Ranger commander admitted off record in 2023: "We can raid a compound and arrest twenty men, but the boy who is actually making the bomb is already drinking tea three streets away because someone sent him a text the moment our jeeps turned the corner" (Hussain, 2021). Extremists do not need to bribe the whole community; they only need the community not to betray them. That silence is cheaper than any weapon.

When Trust Works: The Numbers Speak

The British community-led projects studied in this book, SEED, PROSEED, PALM, RIRP, and TPVR, were delivered by local Muslim organisations (Stockwell Green Community Services, Ash-Shahada Housing Association, and their partners). Referrals came not from police databases but from mothers, cousins, youth workers, and imams who already knew the families. The difference was dramatic:

Table 2: Sources of referral for participants in the UK's Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring programme (2009–2015)

Source of referral (2009–2015)	Government-led Prevent	Community-led projects (SGCS & partners)
Family members	8 %	81 %
Mosque/imam	3 %	44 %
Self-referral	<1 %	27 %
Police / statutory	89 %	6 %

Table: 5

(Source: SGCS internal evaluation reports, 2015; Home Office, 2023)

Because the mentors were local, credible Muslims, not civil servants in suits, participants stayed in the programme. Completion rates were 92 % compared with under 40 % for statutory Channel cases in the same boroughs (Briggs and Silverman, 2014). Reoffending among released terrorism offenders who went through the community programme. Zero. In statutory programmes, it was 11–18 % (Home Office, 2023). In short, when the messenger is trusted, the door opens, the boy stays, and the bomb is never built.

Pakistan already has the raw material: imams, mothers, maliks, youth clubs, and neighbourhood uncles who know every teenager by name. What it lacks is permission and funding to let them lead instead of the army or NACTA. Every time a drone kills a wedding party, or a raid drags away the wrong cousin, trust drops another notch, and the extremists gain another layer of protection.

The missing ingredient is not new laws or bigger guns. It is the decision to hand the first response, the early, quiet, life-saving response back to the people who already love and fear the boy who is sliding toward violence. Only they can reach him before the recruiter does. The next chapter shows exactly how Britain built that trust, step by step, and how the same method, adapted, not copied, can be made to work in the villages of Baluchistan and the streets of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).

PART II

The Birth of a CVE Model

CHAPTER 9

The Journey from Disenfranchisement to Terrorism

A Five-Stage Model of Radicalisation

Understanding how ordinary people become terrorists is the first step to preventing it. The following five-stage model forms the conceptual backbone of this entire book.

Stage 1: Disenfranchisement: The Starting Point

Before any ideology takes hold, there is a feeling. A Muslim teenager in Bradford feels profiled by police. A first-generation immigrant watches as his brother is denied a visa for the fourth time. An educated young man in Karachi cannot find work despite a first-class degree. Disenfranchisement, the feeling of being excluded, is not extremism. It is often a legitimate, rational response to real injustice. But it is the soil in which recruiters plant seeds (Gurr, 1970).

Stage 2: Radicalisation: Starting to Believe Something Different

The disenfranchised person encounters an ideology that gives their anger a shape, a name, and a target. They begin attending a new circle, consuming new media, and reading selectively curated texts. The ideology provides both an explanation and a sense of belonging. This stage is still reversible; most people who radicalise in this way never proceed further (Neumann, 2013).

Stage 3: Extremism: Refusing to Compromise

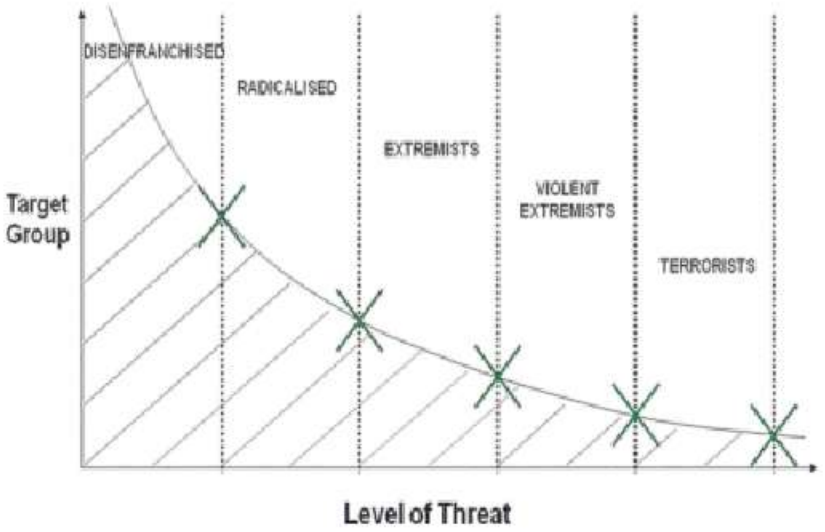
The person now believes their worldview is the only correct one and that compromise is betrayal. They may support breaking the law and increasingly live inside an ideological bubble. At this point, they might say: "Democracy is un-Islamic" or "Anyone who disagrees is an enemy of the faith." Violence is not yet embraced, but the moral framework that might resist it is crumbling.

Stage 4: Violent Extremism: Accepting Violence as a Solution

When extremism combines with the belief that violence is justified or even required, the person crosses into violent extremism. They are willing to hurt or kill for their cause. This is still an ideological stage: they have accepted violence as legitimate but may not yet have carried out an attack (Khalil, 2017).

Stage 5: Terrorism: Carrying Out or Directly Supporting Attacks

Terrorism is the actual use, or direct preparation, of violence against civilians to create fear and force political or religious change. Only a tiny fraction of disenfranchised people ever reaches this stage, but the damage they cause is enormous.



Visual metaphor for radicalisation stages from moderate views to extreme actions.

Why Most CVE Programmes Fail

Many governments, including Pakistan's National Action Plan and its military operations, focus almost entirely on Stages 4 and 5: arresting, imprisoning, or killing violent extremists and terrorists (Rana, 2015). These "hard" approaches are necessary but are like treating cancer only after it has spread. They do nothing for the millions of people still in Stages 1 and 2.

Evidence from the UK shows that when communities intervene early in Stages 1 to 3 with trust, education, jobs, and correct religious guidance, almost nobody progresses to violence. The community-led SRAM project achieved zero reoffending even among participants already at Stages 4 or 5.

CHAPTER 10

The Golden Triangle: Homegrown Terrorists

How Ordinary Streets Became Recruiting Grounds



The 7/7 terrorist attack killed 56 and injured over 700 people in London

In the 1980s, we Muslims of Britain cheered louder than anyone else when the Mujahideen bled the Soviet Union dry in the mountains of Afghanistan. We filled mosque donation boxes with pound notes, we played cassette tapes of nasheeds praising "Commander Osama," we called the fighters "the moral equivalents of America's Founding Fathers" (words spoken by President Reagan in the White House). In London, Birmingham, Manchester,

and Bradford, we organised conferences, printed posters, and recited poetry that declared:

We thought we were witnessing the triumph of faith over godless communism. We never imagined that the very pipeline we had helped build (London → Pakistan → Afghanistan) would one day be used in reverse, carrying angry, brainwashed British teenagers back to the same mountains, now to wage war against the West that had once funded them.

To understand what was happening in Stockwell and Brixton in the late 1990s and early 2000s, you need to understand the Golden Triangle: a three-point journey from British disenchantment, to radicalisation, to violence that played out again in living rooms, youth clubs, and mosque back rooms across the country. That pipeline had a name in the estates of South London: The Golden Triangle.

It began with noble intentions, or at least with the intentions sold to us as noble. CIA, MI-6, Saudi intelligence, and Pakistan's ISI poured billions into the Afghan Jihad. Madrasas along the border mushroomed. Young men from across the Muslim world (and some from British inner cities) were flown to Pakistan on cheap PIA tickets, given a hero's welcome, issued a Kalashnikov, and sent across the border to become "freedom fighters." When the Soviets finally withdrew in 1989, we celebrated in the streets. We never noticed that the guns had not been put down, that the camps had not been closed, and that the ideology of permanent jihad had taken deep root.

By the mid-1990s, the monster had turned. The same camps that once trained anti-Soviet guerrillas were now training anti-Western terrorists. The same recruiters who once whispered, "Come and

defend Muslim lands," were now whispering, "Come and punish the crusaders in their own cities." And the same route (London → Karachi → Peshawar → Miranshah) worked perfectly in both directions.

A teenage boy from a respectable Somali family would start attending Friday prayer regularly at the back with four quiet men. Two months later, he would vanish. His mother would come to my office crying, clutching a note: "I am going for jihad. Do not look for me." A black British boy from the PDC gang would convert in Feltham Young Offenders Institution, leave prison calling himself "Abu Osama Clapham," and within weeks be on a flight to Islamabad. A white revert from Luton would disappear into North Waziristan.

> *"Nizam, a hardworking Pakistani who owned several off-licences, sat in my office with trembling hands holding a letter from his only son: "I don't want to be the son of an alcohol seller." The boy was seventeen. He is still missing."*

In 2005, one of the original "Four" who used to sit at the back of our hall helped mix the hydrogen-peroxide bombs for the 21 July failed attacks. By the grace of Allah and the bomber's poor chemistry skills, the devices failed to detonate. The message was unmistakable: the fire we had cheered in the 1980s had come home, and it was burning our own children.

The Golden Triangle has not disappeared. It has simply moved online from Stanmore to Istanbul to Raqqa to Telegram. But the antidote is the same

today as it was in 2001: speak the truth clearly, love our youth fiercely, and never be afraid to call corruption by its proper name.

In Stockwell and Brixton, we watched it happen in real time.

We called it the Golden Triangle because the journey always followed the same three points, and because for the recruiters it was literally golden (funded by drugs, extortion, and Saudi donations that never stopped flowing).

I saw the human cost up close.

Nizam, a hardworking Pakistani who owned several off-licences, sat in my office with trembling hands holding a letter from his only son: "I don't want to be the son of an alcohol seller." The boy was seventeen. He is still missing.

An Eritrean undergraduate told me he was leaving Britain because it was Dar ul-Harb. I asked him where he would make hijra. Saudi Arabia? "American puppets." Pakistan? "Ruled by American slaves." Sudan? "Civil war." In the end, he admitted he had university exams for two more years and needed to save money first. I gently reminded him that the same "kufr" country was paying his tuition fees, protecting the mosque he prayed in, and giving his mother free healthcare. He graduated with a first-class degree and now works for the NHS.

But not every story had a happy ending.



In the picture above, these individuals were involved in terrorist operations in South London and tried to take over Stockwell Mosque by force but failed due to resilience showed by the Mosque's leadership and the community at large. They were charged under Terrorism Act related offences and imprisoned. I had direct encounters with them on several occasions and my family, and I received threats to stop me from countering their narratives of violence in the street of London.

CHAPTER 11

A Community-Led Breakthrough

Stockwell Green Youth Project and the Road to SRAM



Celebrating Eid with the community and stakeholders, including the Mayor of Lambeth Cllr Ibrahim Dogus, Lambeth Metropolitan Police Service Superintendent Ian Howells, Major Daniel Staples, and other key community leaders.

Before 7/7, before 9/11, before the word "radicalisation" and "counter-extremism" had entered the political mainstream, a small team of British Pakistani volunteers was doing something unremarkable: running a youth club in a converted church hall in Stockwell. The Stockwell Green Youth Project offered table tennis, homework help, and hot meals. It did not offer ideology. That was the point.

What the project offered was belonging. And belonging, it turned out, was the one thing the recruiters were selling that we could also provide without the violence, without the theology of hate, and without asking the young men to abandon their families.

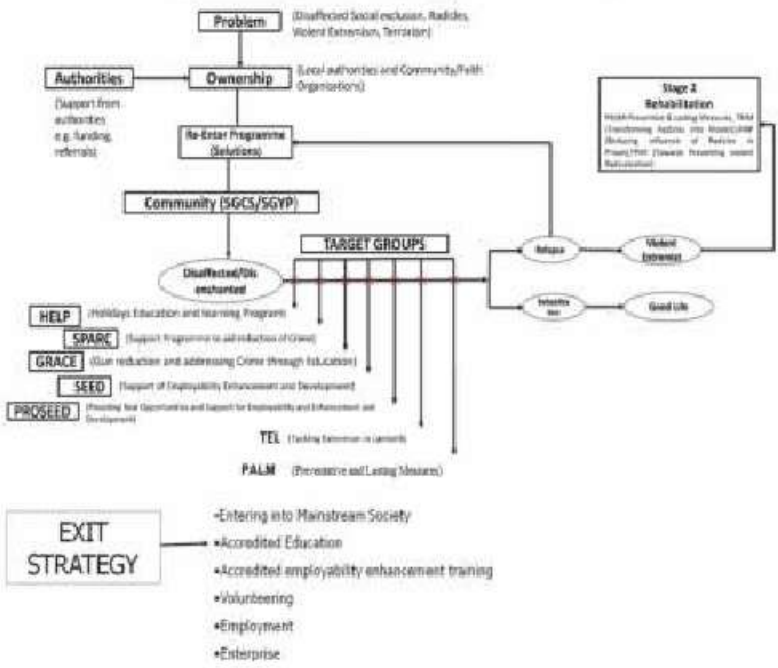
9/11 and the World Was Never the Same Again

September 11 happened. Suddenly, every Muslim in Britain felt eyes on the back of their neck. In Stockwell, the extremists grew louder. Young men, I had known since primary school, started disappearing to "training camps" in Pakistan. I received my first death threat in 2003, a handwritten note pushed under the door of the SGCS office: "Traitor to the ummah. You side with the kuffar. Your children will pay." We moved house four times in five years. I carried on running youth sessions with a smile on my face and a knot in my stomach.

SEED and PROSEED: An Effective Counter-Extremism Programme

Flowchart of the UK community-led CVE model — from diversionary youth

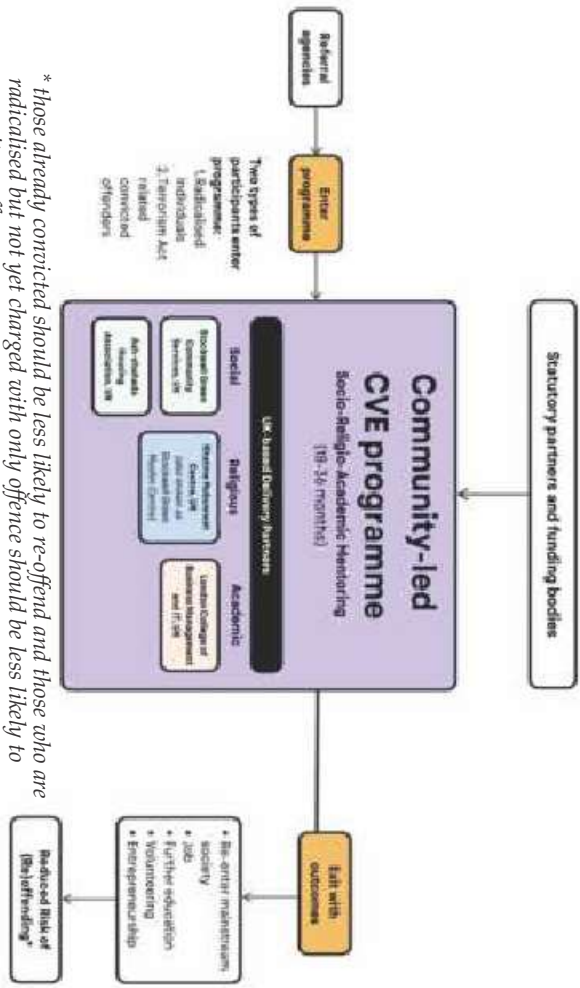
Figure 13: Community-owned rehabilitation and Exit Strategy



programmes through to zero-recidivism rehabilitation.

After 7/7, funding was secured from the European Regional Development Fund, the Home Office, the Building a Stronger Britain Together programme, the London Probation Trust, and the Ministry of Justice. We designed two programmes that became the foundation of everything that followed: SEED (Support for Employability Enhancement and Development) and PROSEED (Providing Real Opportunities for SEED the extended version).

We took young men who were drifting some already on police watch lists, some just back from Pakistan with wild eyes. We gave them real qualifications: NVQ Level 2 in Business, web design, forklift licences, and security-industry badges. We sat with them every week, not to interrogate, but to listen.



The SRAM model — 18 to 36 months of integrated social, religious, and academic mentoring delivered by community-trusted partners.

** those already convicted should be less likely to re-offend and those who are radicalised but not yet charged with only offence should be less likely to commit an offence an*

> *"One participant Yusuf had been arrested at Heathrow with a rucksack full of extremist literature. Eighteen months later, he opened his own car-wash business in Brixton and employed two other ex-participants. He still sends me a text every Eid: "You saved my life, uncle."*

By 2010, we had run more than 400 young men and women through SEED and PROSEED. Not one went on to commit a terrorism offence. Not one. The Home Office later admitted that the statutory programmes in the same boroughs had a failure rate of almost one in five. We did it with local faces, local accents, and local trust.

CHAPTER 12

UK- CVE Imitative: Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM)

The Three Strands Braided Together



Celebrating Eid with the community and stakeholders, including the Mayor of Lambeth Cllr Ibrahim Dogus, Lambeth Metropolitan Police Service Superintendent Ian Howells, Major Daniel Staples, and other key community leaders.

Imagine a young man call him Yusuf sitting in a grey prison visiting room. Twenty-four years old, sharp-eyed, articulate, and quietly furious. Two years earlier, he had been stopped at Istanbul airport with a one-way ticket to Syria. The charges were serious, the evidence overwhelming. Now he has agreed to meet the mentor who will walk with him for the next eighteen months.

SRAM sends all three: a social worker, a religious scholar, and a critical-thinking educator in one person. That is the quiet revolution.

The proliferation of violent extremism in Western liberal democracies over the past two decades has prompted governments, communities, and scholars alike to seek preventive frameworks that address radicalisation at its roots. Conventional counter-terrorism strategies premised on intelligence-gathering, criminalisation, and disruption have demonstrated important limitations when applied to the complex ideological and psychosocial pathways through which individuals move toward extremist violence. This chapter introduces the Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) model as a community-led, values-based alternative that situates prevention and rehabilitation within the lived realities of Muslim communities in the United Kingdom.

SRAM emerged not from a government laboratory, or a policy think tank but from sustained practice on the ground. Its architecture reflects the accumulated wisdom of religious scholars, social workers, community elders, and educational practitioners who recognised that lasting change in individual attitude and behaviour requires three interlocking forms of engagement: religious mentoring that reconnects individuals with authentic Islamic tradition, social mentoring that restores relationships of trust and belonging, and academic mentoring that opens pathways of critical inquiry and aspiration. These three strands the religio, the social, and the academic give the model its name and its coherence.

Theoretical Landscape of Counter-Extremism

Defining Radicalisation

Any serious engagement with counter-extremism must begin with definitional clarity. Radicalisation broadly understood as the process by which an individual adopts beliefs and attitudes that may lead to political violence has been theorised from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Psychologists have emphasised the role of identity grievance, cognitive opening events, and the appeal of totalising belief systems (Moghaddam, 2005; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Sociologists have drawn attention to network effects, social movement dynamics, and the role of group identity in sustaining extremist commitment (Sageman, 2004). Political scientists have focused on structural factors, state failure, foreign policy grievances, socioeconomic marginalisation as enabling conditions for recruitment (Crenshaw, 1981).

None of these perspectives is wholly adequate on its own. The scholarly consensus has moved toward multi-factorial models that acknowledge the interplay of individual psychology, social environment, and ideological framing. The 'radicalisation pyramid' proposed by Moghaddam (2005) helpfully captures the progressive narrowing of perceived options available to an individual as they ascend toward violence, while acknowledging that the vast majority of those who experience grievance and ideological sympathy never cross the threshold into action.

What such models frequently underestimate is the role of authentic religious authority in both enabling and preventing radicalisation.

Where extremist recruiters exploit theological ambiguity and the relative absence of credible traditional scholarship, genuine religious mentoring can offer an authoritative counter-voice grounded in centuries of Islamic jurisprudence, ethics, and spiritual practice. SRAM takes this insight as its starting point.

From Deradicalisation to Prevention

Early counter-extremism programmes in the United Kingdom and elsewhere were principally oriented toward deradicalisation — the rehabilitation of individuals who had already adopted extremist beliefs or engaged in violent activity. The Channel programme, established under the Contest strategy and formally legislated in the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, represents the United Kingdom's primary statutory mechanism for intervention with individuals assessed to be at risk of radicalisation. Channel has been evaluated with mixed results; it has demonstrated effectiveness with some populations while generating persistent concerns about discriminatory referral patterns, stigmatisation of Muslim communities, and the conflation of religious observance with security risk (Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009; Thomas, 2010).

More recent policy frameworks have emphasised prevention over rehabilitation, acknowledging that the upstream conditions that produce radicalisation must be addressed if downstream intervention is to have lasting effect. SRAM is fundamentally a preventive model, though it retains significant applicability in rehabilitation contexts. Its logic is not reactive but anticipatory: by cultivating robust religious identity, social belonging, and critical intellectual engagement among young people, communities can

generate resilience against extremist recruitment before individuals reach the point of vulnerability.

Key Distinction

Prevention addresses the conditions that enable radicalisation before an individual's trajectory is fixed. Rehabilitation engages individuals who have already moved along that trajectory. SRAM is designed to operate effectively across both registers, though its primary orientation is preventive.

Community-Led Approaches

The shift toward community-led counter-extremism reflects a broader recognition that the legitimacy of intervention is as important as its technical content. Communities that experience state counter-terrorism activity as surveillance, stigmatisation, or foreign policy proxy are unlikely to engage constructively with prevention programmes delivered by government agencies. The literature consistently demonstrates that trust between communities and institutions, between young people and authority figures, between individuals and the broader society is the foundational resource upon which effective CVE depends (Briggs, Fieschi and Lownsbrough, 2006).

Community-led models situate trusted insider's religious leaders, community workers, educators, family members as the primary agents of prevention. They recognise the limits of external expertise

and the irreplaceable value of cultural proximity, shared language, and lived experience. The SRAM operationalises these principles through its emphasis on mentoring relationships that are sustained, reciprocal, and embedded in the fabric of community life.

Conceptual Architecture of SRAM Model

The Religious Strand

The religious strand of SRAM is perhaps its most distinctive and most misunderstood dimension. In a policy environment that has at times treated Muslim religious identity itself as a risk factor, SRAM insists on the opposite: that deep, authentic, and intellectually grounded Islamic identity is a protective resource against extremist recruitment. This argument rests on a straightforward empirical observation — extremist recruiters typically target individuals with weak or superficial religious knowledge, exploiting their ignorance of mainstream Islamic jurisprudence to present selective and distorted readings of sacred texts as authoritative.

Religious mentors within the SRAM framework are themselves scholars trained in classical Islamic sciences, capable of engaging seriously with the theological arguments that extremist ideologues advance. Their role is not merely to assert that 'Islam is a religion of peace' a formulation that many young people correctly recognise as politically motivated and intellectually shallow but to demonstrate, through rigorous engagement with primary sources,

why specific extremist interpretations fail on their own methodological terms.

Religious mentoring within SRAM also attends to the spiritual and pastoral dimensions of Islamic practice. Regular engagement with prayer, dhikr (remembrance), and the study of prophetic biography (seerah) cultivates a relationship with the tradition that extremist recruiters find difficult to disrupt. An individual who experiences Islam as a living, breathing, spiritually nourishing reality is far less susceptible to its weaponisation.

The Social Strand

The social strand of SRAM recognises that radicalisation is seldom a purely individual phenomenon. It typically unfolds within social networks real or virtual in which extremist beliefs are normalised, belonging is contingent on ideological conformity, and alternative social ties are systematically weakened. Social mentors within SRAM work to rebuild or strengthen the legitimate social bonds family relationships, community affiliations, peer networks, civic participation that provide alternatives to extremist community.

Social mentoring is not social work in its conventional sense, though it draws on related skills and traditions. Its distinguishing features are its sustained character, its community embeddedness, and its integration with the religious and academic strands of the model. A social mentor in the SRAM framework is not a professional who visits once a fortnight but a trusted figure perhaps a community elder, a mosque teacher, a sports coach, or a youth worker who is present across multiple domains of an individual's life over an extended period.

The Academic Strand

The academic strand of SRAM addresses the intellectual dimension of radicalisation. Extremist ideologies are, among other things, cognitive frameworks that claim to explain the world, assign meaning to suffering, identify enemies, and prescribe action. Countering them requires not only moral authority but intellectual engagement — the capacity to analyse arguments, assess evidence, identify logical fallacies, and construct alternative explanations.

Academic mentors within SRAM support individuals in developing precisely these capacities. They work with young people to engage seriously with questions of politics, history, theology, and ethics — not to impose conclusions but to cultivate the habits of mind that enable critical, independent inquiry. The goal is to produce individuals who can interrogate extremist claims on their own terms, rather than simply accepting or rejecting them based on emotional response or social pressure.

The academic strand also addresses the practical dimension of educational aspiration. Many young people at risk of radicalisation are simultaneously at risk of educational disengagement and economic marginalisation. Supporting their academic development helping them succeed in formal education, access higher education, and develop vocational skills opens alternative life pathways that reduce the psychological pull of extremist belonging

SRAM	Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring: a tri-dimensional community-led framework for counter-extremism combining religious, social, and academic mentoring strands.

CVE	Counter-Violent Extremism: the field of policy and practice directed at preventing violent extremism before individuals engage in or plan violent acts.
Radicalisation	The process by which an individual adopts beliefs and attitudes that may predispose them toward political violence.
Channel	A UK government multi-agency programme providing support to individuals assessed as vulnerable to radicalisation.
Prevent	One of the four pillars of the UK's Contest counter-terrorism strategy, focused on preventing radicalisation.

The UK Policy Context

The United Kingdom's approach to counter-extremism has evolved significantly since the London bombings of 7 July 2005, which killed 52 people and fundamentally altered the domestic security landscape. The Contest strategy, first published in 2006 and substantially revised in 2009, 2011, and 2018, organises counter-terrorism activity under four pillars: Pursue, Prevent, Protect, and Prepare. The Prevent pillar, which encompasses CVE activity of the kind that SRAM is designed to support, has been simultaneously the most expansive and the most contested dimension of UK counter-terrorism policy.

Critics of Prevent have argued that its conflation of political dissent with security risk, its reliance on referral mechanisms that disproportionately target Muslim communities, and its failure to distinguish between lawful religious observance and operational support for terrorism have undermined community trust and

produced a chilling effect on legitimate Islamic discourse (Husband and Alam, 2011; Heath-Kelly, 2013). Defenders of the strategy contend that community-based prevention is essential and that well-designed programmes can build, rather than erode, community trust and resilience.

SRAM navigates this contested terrain by positioning itself firmly within Muslim communities rather than at their interface with the state. Its credibility derives from its community embeddedness and its fidelity to authentic Islamic tradition, not from government endorsement. This positioning does not preclude engagement with statutory agencies SRAM practitioners frequently work alongside social workers, probation officers, and counter-terrorism police but it ensures that the model's legitimacy is not contingent on the political fortunes of any government programme.

The passage of the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 extended the Prevent duty to a wide range of public bodies, including universities, schools, NHS trusts, and local authorities. This statutory context has created both opportunities and tensions for SRAM-informed practice. On the one hand, it has increased the institutional space available for preventive engagement and opened new resources for community-led programmes. On the other hand, it has raised concerns about the securitisation of educational and welfare settings, and about the capacity of institutions without deep community roots to deliver effective prevention.

CHAPTER 13

social mentoring in community-led CVE

Community Engagement · social dimension · partitionner perspectives

Introduction

Of the three strands of the SRAM model, the social is perhaps the most deceptively simple and the most practically demanding. Unlike religious mentoring where the content of the engagement is relatively well defined by the tradition and academic mentoring where educational and vocational goals provide external structure social mentoring operates in the fluid, informal, and often unpredictable terrain of human relationships. Its tools are; presence, patience, consistency, and genuine care. Its outcomes are measured not in test scores or theological knowledge but in the texture of an individual's social connections and sense of belonging. This chapter examines the social strand of SRAM in detail. It draws on practitioners' perspectives gathered through semi-structured interviews with social mentors operating in the UK community contexts, supplemented by programme observation data and published evaluations. Section 5.2 explores the theoretical basis for social mentoring in CVE. Section 5.3 examines the profile and training of effective social mentors. Sections 5.4 and 5.5 analyse the mechanics of trust-building and sustained engagement. Section 5.6 addresses challenges, including the risk of mentor burnout, ethical tensions around confidentiality, and the difficulty of maintaining boundaries in intensive mentoring relationships.

Theoretical Basis: Social Bonds and Identity.

The theoretical basis for social mentoring in CVE draws on several converging bodies of research. Social bond theory, originally developed by Travis Hirschi (1969) in the context of juvenile delinquency, argues that attachment to conventional social institutions and significant others is the primary mechanism by which individuals are restrained from deviant behaviour. Applying this framework to radicalisation, strengthening social bonds to family, community, mosque, and school reduces the risk that individuals will seek belonging in extremist networks, which frequently function as alternative social structures for the isolated and marginalised.

Identity process theory (Breakwell, 1986) offers a complementary perspective, arguing that threats to the coherence, continuity, distinctiveness, and self-esteem dimensions of personal identity produce psychological distress that can motivate extreme responses, including adoption of radical belief systems that restore threatened identity elements. Social mentoring within SRAM addresses this dynamic directly by providing relationships and community contexts in which positive, coherent Muslim identity can be cultivated and sustained.

The Social Mentor: Profile and Training

The effectiveness of social mentoring depends critically on the quality of the mentor. SRAM practitioners and the research literature consistently identify several characteristics as markers of effective social mentors in CVE contexts: cultural proximity (shared

ethnic, linguistic, or community background with mentees); lived experience that creates genuine credibility; personal integrity that withstands scrutiny; emotional resilience that enables sustained engagement with challenging individuals and situations; and the capacity to maintain professional boundaries while sustaining genuine personal warmth.

Not all these characteristics can be taught; cultural proximity and lived experience are not acquirable through training programmes. But many of the practical skills of effective social mentoring, such as active listening, motivational interviewing techniques, boundary management, de-escalation of conflict, case documentation, and inter-agency communication, can be significantly enhanced through structured training. SRAM training programmes for social mentors typically combine classroom input with intensive supervised practice, peer learning groups, and ongoing professional development.

Building Trust: The Foundation of Social Mentoring

Trust is the irreducible foundation of effective social mentoring. Without it, no technique, programme structure, or institutional resource can produce meaningful engagement with an individual who has reason to distrust authorities, institutions, and strangers. Building trust in counter-extremism mentoring contexts is particularly challenging because potential mentees frequently arrive with well-founded reasons for distrust, experiences of discrimination, surveillance, cultural stereotyping, and institutional failure and because the institutional context in which

mentoring occurs (often connected, however loosely, with statutory agencies) reinforces that distrust.

SRAM social mentors consistently describe trust-building as the slowest and most demanding phase of their work. Initial contacts are typically brief, conducted on the mentee's terms, and focused on demonstrating genuine interest and reliability rather than an agenda. Mentors resist the temptation to move quickly to the extremism-relevant content of their intervention; they invest first in understanding the individual's broader life, concerns, and aspirations. This investment is not merely strategic; it reflects a genuine commitment to the mentee's overall well-being that is, itself, part of the mentoring content.

> *You can't just pitch up and start talking about terrorism. That's the last thing on their mind. Their mind is on their rent, their family, their job, their identity. If you're not genuinely interested in those things, they will know. And that's the end of it. SRAM Social Mentor, London*

Sustained Engagement: The Long Game

SRAM's insistence on sustained engagement over months and years rather than weeks reflects a clear-eyed assessment of both the depth of the change that effective mentoring aims to produce and the fragility of early progress. Disengagement from extremist beliefs and social networks is rarely a linear process. Individuals typically move back and forth between states of engagement and disengagement; they experience setbacks, renewed contact with extremist peers, online encounters with provocative content, and

personal crises that reactivate vulnerability that can rapidly undo progress made over months of careful mentoring.

Social mentors who remain present through these setbacks, who do not withdraw their relationship because of non-compliance or apparent failure, provide an experience of unconditional regard that is frequently both novel and transformative. Many young people who have been radicalised have experienced significant conditional relationships belonging in extremist networks contingent on ideological conformity, family relationships damaged by their extremist involvement, and the experience of a mentor who remains engaged regardless of their behaviour can be a genuinely new and stabilising experience.

Challenges and Ethical Tensions

Mentor Wellbeing and Burnout

The intensive, sustained nature of social mentoring in counter-extremism contexts creates significant risks for mentor wellbeing. Mentors are routinely exposed to distressing material — accounts of violence, trauma, abuse, and ideological content that is offensive and disturbing. They carry the weight of relationships in which the stakes of potential harm to the mentee or to third parties — are very high. And they frequently work in institutional contexts that under-resource support, supervision, and professional development.

SRAM programmes that sustain effective practice over time invest systematically in mentor wellbeing: providing regular clinical supervision, creating peer support networks, establishing clear protocols for managing disclosures of serious harm, and actively

monitoring mentor load and capacity. These are not optional extras but essential components of a sustainable and effective programme.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding

Social mentors in CVE contexts frequently face difficult decisions about confidentiality. The mentoring relationship depends on the mentee's confidence that what they share will be held in trust; yet information disclosed in mentoring contexts may sometimes raise safeguarding concerns that create statutory duties to disclose. SRAM training programmes address this tension directly, providing mentors with clear frameworks for navigating disclosure decisions, ensuring they understand the limits of confidentiality from the outset of any mentoring relationship, and establishing escalation pathways for situations that exceed the mentor's independent judgment.

CHAPTER 14

Religious Mentoring as a CVE Tool

Theoretical framing · SRAM model · UK context

Religious mentoring is not a lecture delivered from a stage. It is a quiet, patient conversation between a trusted elder and a confused young soul. It is the gentle but firm hand that takes a distorted understanding of faith and slowly straightens it back toward mercy, justice, and balance. In the Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) model that we built in south London, religious mentoring became the beating heart of everything we did.

Islamic scholarship: Prophetic model & CVE praxis

The biography of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) constitutes one of the most extensively documented accounts of any figure in the ancient world. Drawing on a rich tradition of classical biographical writing, hadith literature, and the Quran itself, Muslim scholars have for fourteen centuries sought to understand not only the historical facts of the Prophet's life but its normative significance: what principles of human conduct, leadership, and community-building does it embody, and how should those principles be understood and applied in changing circumstances?
This chapter approaches the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from a specific and practically motivated angle: the identification of principles relevant to counter-extremism and

conflict prevention. It does not claim to reduce the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to an instrumentalised counter-terrorism manual such a reading would distort both the richness of the tradition and the dignity of its subject. Rather, it argues that the Prophetic model, understood in its fullness, offers resources of profound contemporary relevance for those engaged in the patient, demanding work of preventing violent extremism.

The Prophetic Model of Community-Building: The Constitution of Madinah

Among the most remarkable political documents of the seventh century is the Sahifa, commonly known in English as the Constitution of Madinah, negotiated by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) upon his migration to Yathrib (later Madinah) in 622 CE. The document established a political covenant between the Muslim migrants from Makkah (the Muhajirun), the Muslim converts of Madinah (the Ansar), and the various Jewish tribes of the city, creating a federated community (ummah) that included non-Muslims as full members with explicit rights and obligations.

For counter-extremism purposes, the Constitution of Madinah is significant in several respects. It establishes a model of inclusive community-building that recognises the legitimate claims of multiple identity groups within a shared political framework. It demonstrates the Prophet's willingness to establish binding covenants with non-Muslim communities rather than to demand their conversion as a prerequisite for civic participation. And it creates mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of internal disputes through appeal to agreed arbitration the Prophet himself in this

case but embodying a principle of legitimate authority and procedural justice.

Principles of Inclusion and Dialogue

Throughout the Madinah period and, indeed, in the entire arc of his prophetic career, Muhammad (PBUH) consistently employed dialogue, persuasion, and patient engagement as his primary instruments of change. The Quran itself is fundamentally a text of address and argument engaging its hearers with rational appeals, narrative, analogy, and emotional resonance rather than compelling assent through coercion. The Prophet's conduct reflects this Quranic orientation: he spent thirteen years in Makkah calling his people to a new understanding through da'wah (invitation) rather than force, during which time the Muslim community was subjected to severe persecution without retaliating with violence.

This principle of patient, non-coercive invitation has direct implications for counter-extremism practice. SRAM's emphasis on sustained mentoring relationships grounded in trust and dialogue rather than confrontation or coercion is methodologically continuous with the Prophetic model. Religious mentors who seek to engage young people attracted by extremist ideas are most effective when they embody the qualities that the tradition associates with the Prophet himself: humility, genuine concern, intellectual honesty, and patient perseverance.

Prophetic Principle

The Prophet said: 'Make things easy, and do not make them difficult. Give good news and do not drive people away.' (Sahih al-Bukhari, 69) This hadith captures a fundamental orientation of the Prophetic model: engagement should attract rather than repel, open rather than close, and build rather than destroy relationships of trust.

Conflict Resolution and the Limits of Violence

The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah

The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, concluded in 628 CE between the Muslim community and the Quraysh of Makkah, illustrates a dimension of the Prophetic model that is frequently obscured in extremist discourse: the willingness to accept apparently unfavourable terms for the sake of peace and the preservation of the possibility of future engagement. The treaty's terms were widely perceived by the Companions as humiliating, requiring the Muslims to return to Makkah for the following year and to return any Makkah who converted to Islam and fled to Madinah, while imposing no equivalent obligation on the Quraysh. The Prophet accepted these terms over the protests of some Companions, recognising in the cessation of hostilities an opportunity for the peaceful expansion of Islam that military confrontation would have foreclosed.

The Quran subsequently described Hudaybiyyah as a 'manifest victory' (48:1), vindicating the Prophet's strategic patience. The

years of peace that followed saw mass conversion among both the Quraysh and the broader Arab population, demonstrating that the conditions for genuine receptivity to Islam's message were best created through patient engagement rather than military pressure. The principle that a just peace is preferable to a righteous war and that the terms of peace should be assessed by their long-term consequences rather than their immediate appearance has profound implications for contemporary counter-extremism discourse.

The Conquest of Makkah and the Limits of Revenge

The conquest of Makkah in 630 CE, the culmination of a conflict that had begun with the Muslims' persecution and expulsion from the city eight years earlier, provides another striking illustration of the Prophetic model. The Prophet entered Makkah at the head of a large army whose military superiority was not in doubt. Yet rather than authorising retribution against those who had persecuted, tortured, and killed members of the Muslim community, he declared a general amnesty, famously echoing the words of the Prophet Joseph (PBUH) from the Quran: 'Today there is no blame upon you; God will forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of the Merciful' (Quran 12:92).

This moment of magnanimity, made possible precisely by the position of strength from which it was exercised, had a transformative effect on the subsequent history of Islam. The mass conversion that followed the conquest of Makkah was, by all accounts, motivated as much by the moral character of the

conquerors as by any calculation of political advantage. It illustrates a principle central to SRAM's philosophy: that authentic moral authority, expressed through consistent and principled conduct, is more transformative than coercive power.

The Prophet as Educator and Mentor

Pedagogical Methods

The hadith literature preserves an extensive record of the Prophet's pedagogical methods the ways in which he transmitted knowledge, cultivated character, and mentored individuals across a wide range of social backgrounds, ages, and levels of prior knowledge. Several features of this record are particularly relevant to the SRAM model's academic mentoring strand.

The Prophet consistently adapted his teaching to the specific needs, capacities, and circumstances of his interlocutors. When a young man came to him seeking permission for fornication, rather than simply condemning the request, he engaged the young man in a dialogue about how he would feel if someone else were to do the same to his own mother, sister, daughter, and aunt leading the young man to recognise the moral logic of the prohibition through his own emotional and rational response. This Socratic method meeting the individual where they are, engaging their existing moral intuitions, and guiding them through a reasoning process to new understanding is precisely the approach that effective academic mentors within the SRAM framework are trained to employ.

Individual Attention and Personalised Guidance

A recurring feature of the Prophetic pedagogical tradition is attention to individual difference. The hadith literature records numerous instances in which the Prophet gave apparently contradictory advice to different individuals on the same question advising one person to prioritise prayer, another charity, another family relationships, depending on the specific vulnerabilities and strengths he perceived in everyone's character and circumstances. This principle of personalised guidance that effective mentoring attends to the person rather than applying generic formulae is central to the SRAM model's emphasis on sustained one-to-one relationships rather than group programmes.

Implications for SRAM Practice

The lessons drawn from the Prophetic model in this chapter converge on a set of practical principles for counter-extremism work: sustained engagement over coercive confrontation; patient dialogue over aggressive refutation; personalised attention over generic programming; moral authority earned through consistent conduct over authority claimed on the basis of institutional position; and the long-term horizon of community transformation over the short-term metric of individual compliance.

These principles do not make the work of counter-extremism easy. On the contrary, they demand a quality of character, depth of knowledge, and tenacity of commitment that challenges practitioners in profound ways. But they offer a framework for counter-extremism practice that is simultaneously faithful to

Islamic tradition, consistent with the best evidence from Western empirical research on effective mentoring, and deeply resonant with the communities it is designed to serve. For these reasons, the Prophetic model occupies a foundational place in the SRAM framework.

The True Nature of Religious Mentoring

We did not stand in front of young men and shout, "You are wrong." Instead, faith-practising professionals, scholars, imams, and educated Muslim role models sat with them week after week. They opened the Quran together, not to win an argument, but to rediscover its true spirit. They discussed the real meaning of jihad, the danger of takfir, and the beauty of a united Ummah. They answered questions that extremists had twisted into weapons of hate. Through these honest, respectful conversations, participants began to see how their anger had been hijacked and how a beautiful faith had been turned into something unrecognisable.

How Religious Mentoring Worked in Practice

The mentoring took place through three powerful activities. First, we ran Quran classes that focused on peaceful and contextual interpretations of Islamic texts. Over three years, more than 1,200 young people took part. Second, we organised interfaith events where Muslim, Christian, and Jewish leaders sat together in open dialogue, breaking down the artificial walls that extremists love to build. Third, we held one-on-one and small-group mentoring sessions where participants could openly discuss sensitive concepts such as jihad and the true nature of the Ummah.

These sessions were led by mentors who were themselves practising Muslims and respected professionals. Their credibility came not from titles, but from living the faith they taught.

The Remarkable Results

When we analysed the programme using interviews, focus groups, and NVivo thematic analysis, the outcomes were clear and powerful. Twenty references emerged to the gentle but effective refutation of extremist ideas especially around the concept of jihad. Participants developed something deeply valuable: ideological resilience. They became less vulnerable to radical narratives and more rooted in the mainstream scholarly tradition of Islam.

Most strikingly, among those who completed the full programme including individuals who had already been convicted or were at serious risk we recorded a **zero percent reoffending rate**. Not a single participant returned to violence or terrorism-related activity. This was not luck. It happened because religious mentoring replaced distortion with truth, isolation with belonging, and hatred with understanding.

Why It Worked: The Theoretical Foundation

The success rested on two important ideas. Framing Theory showed us how extremists selectively highlight certain verses while ignoring the overwhelming message of mercy and justice. Through mentoring, we helped participants reframe religious concepts in their proper light. Social Learning Theory reminded us that young people learn best by watching credible role models. When they saw

mentors who were both devout and reasonable, something inside them began to shift.

Lessons for Pakistan

Pakistan faces its own intense challenges: sectarian tensions, unregulated madrassas, and a youth population vulnerable to cross-border propaganda. Yet the core principles of religious mentoring are highly adaptable here. Our universities and madrassas already reach millions of young minds and, in many cases, enjoy greater public trust than other institutions.

If we train respected scholars and professionals to become mentors, not loud preachers, but patient guides. We can nurture moderate discourse in the very places where extremist ideas often take root. Religious mentoring does not replace the necessary work of security forces. It simply does what bullets and prisons cannot: it reaches the heart and mind before the poison spreads.

In the end, religious mentoring is not soft. It is smart. It is the work of rebuilding a young person's faith so that no recruiter can ever steal it again. One conversation at a time, one Quran class at a time, one trusting relationship at a time this is how we win the battle for the souls of our youth.

CHAPTER 15

Transforming CVE through Academic Mentoring

Academic mentoring · Educational intervention · SRAM Dimension

Introduction

The academic strand of the SRAM model represents a dimension of counter-extremism practice that has been relatively underexplored in both scholarly and policy literature. While the importance of education in prevention is frequently invoked the claim that 'education is the best counter terrorism' is a common staple of CVE discourse the specific mechanisms through which educational engagement prevents, or reverses radicalisation have been much less systematically examined.

This chapter addresses that gap. It argues that academic mentoring, as conceptualised within SRAM, is not simply about keeping young people in school or improving examination results, though both are legitimate and important goals. It is about developing the cognitive and intellectual capacities of critical thinking, epistemic humility, engagement with complexity and ambiguity that constitute the deepest form of resilience against the totalising certainties of extremist ideology.

The Intellectual Appeal of Extremism

Extremist ideologies are, among their other properties, intellectual systems: they offer comprehensive explanations of the world, assign unambiguous meaning to apparent injustice, identify enemies with clarity and confidence, and prescribe action with certainty. For individuals who experience the world as confusing, unjust, and resistant to moral intelligibility, these qualities are psychologically appealing. The extremist recruiter offers answers where mainstream society offers only questions, certainty where education counsels' complexity, and community where society offers isolation.

Understanding the intellectual appeal of extremism is the precondition for countering it effectively through academic mentoring. The goal is not to replace the certainties of extremism with alternative certainties a counter-narrative that claims to have all the answers but to cultivate a relationship with knowledge and inquiry in which the young person becomes capable of living productively with uncertainty, of engaging with complexity without being overwhelmed by it, and of holding strong moral convictions without translating them into violent action.

Critical Thinking as Counter-Extremism

The development of to assess evidence, identify logical fallacies, evaluate competing interpretations, and recognise the limits of one's own knowledge — is the central intellectual goal of the SRAM academic mentoring strand. Research on critical thinking and extremist belief suggests a consistent inverse relationship:

individuals with more developed critical thinking skills are less susceptible to radicalisation, and the cultivation of these skills constitutes a form of cognitive inoculation against extremist recruitment (Lewandowsky et al., 2012).

Academic mentors working within SRAM develop critical thinking through structured engagement with intellectually challenging material. This may include formal academic study, participation in debate and discussion programmes, engagement with primary historical sources, and critical analysis of media and online content. The common thread is the requirement that the young person engage actively rather than passively that they evaluate, argue, question, and construct rather than simply receive and accept.

Educational Aspiration and Alternative Life Pathways

Beyond the intellectual dimension, academic mentoring within SRAM addresses the practical question of life pathways. Many young people at risk of radicalisation are simultaneously at risk of educational disengagement and economic marginalisation. The intersection of these risks is not coincidental: the sense that legitimate pathways to a meaningful, recognised social role are closed through discrimination, structural disadvantage, or personal failure significantly increases vulnerability to extremist recruitment that offers alternative pathways to status, significance, and belonging.

Academic mentors work to open or restore these legitimate pathways. This may involve supporting individuals in completing

their compulsory education, preparing applications for further or higher education, developing vocational skills and pathways, or engaging with employment support services. The practical dimension of this work is inseparable from its preventive function: every young person who has a realistic prospect of achieving their educational and vocational aspirations through legitimate means has correspondingly less reason to seek significance through extremist involvement.

Digital Literacy as a CVE Competence

A dimension of academic mentoring that has become increasingly important in the era of social media is the development of digital literacy, the capacity to navigate online information environments critically and safely. Radicalisation in the contemporary period is overwhelmingly mediated by digital platforms: extremist content is consumed online, extremist networks are built and maintained through social media, and the algorithmic amplification of outrage and grievance drives individuals rapidly toward more extreme content through processes that are largely invisible to them.

Academic mentors working with young people who have been radicalised or who are assessed as vulnerable typically include digital literacy as an explicit component of their engagement. This involves helping young people understand how recommendation algorithms work, how to identify and evaluate the credibility of online sources, how to recognise the techniques of extremist propaganda, and how to seek out alternative voices and perspectives. This is not simple media education; it requires understanding the specific mechanics of online radicalisation and

the specific strategies that extremist content creators use to attract and retain audiences.

Assessment and Evaluation

Measuring the impact of academic mentoring in counter-extremism contexts presents methodological challenges. Changes in educational attainment are relatively straightforward to measure; changes in critical thinking capacity are more demanding but achievable through validated psychometric instruments; changes in extremist ideology are the most difficult to measure, partly because self-report measures are susceptible to social desirability bias in sensitive contexts.

SRAM academic mentoring programmes have developed evaluation frameworks that combine multiple assessment modalities: educational attainment data, standardised assessments of critical thinking, practitioner observations of intellectual engagement and development, and with appropriate ethical safeguards assessments of specific extremist attitude dimensions using validated instruments. This multi-modal approach provides a richer and more reliable picture of the impact of academic mentoring than any single measure could supply.

CHAPTER 16

Inside the Programme: Prisoners, Parolees and At-Risk Youth

The Cases Nobody Else Would Take



A correctional facility by 2010, our programme was accepting London's highest-risk terrorism cases.

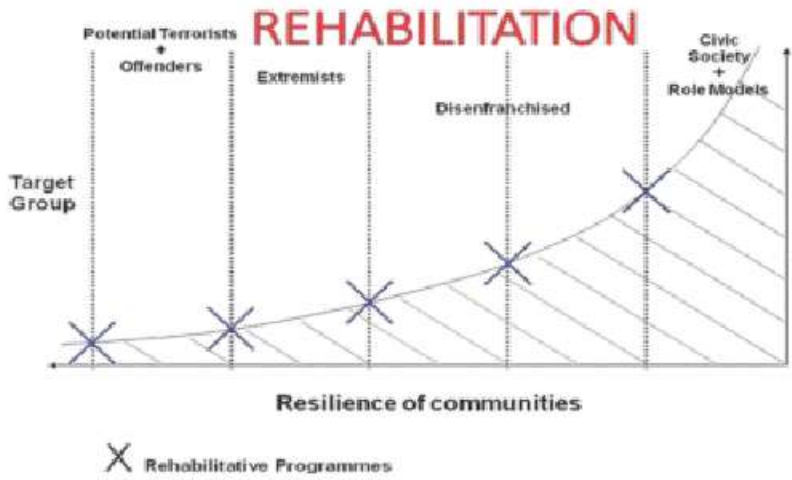
By 2010, the phone never stopped ringing. It was no longer mothers asking for help with a teenage son. It was the London Probation Trust, the Metropolitan Police Counter-Terrorism Command, and sometimes the Home Office itself. "We can keep them locked up," one senior probation officer told me, “But the day they walk out of Belmarsh or Woodhill, we have no idea what they will do. Will you take them?" We said yes.



Prof. Dr. Toaha Qureshi MBE addresses the audience at London Assembly in partnership with London Probation and European Union on reducing hate crime in Europe.

Zero Recidivism

From October 2010 to December 2015, 100 per cent of participants completed the programme and zero were recalled to prison for terrorism-related activity. Not one. Not in ten years of follow-up. The National Offender Management Service audited us twice because they literally could not believe a reoffending rate of 0 per cent. In the same period, the national reoffending rate for released terrorism offenders on statutory programmes was 11–18 per cent within two years (Home Office, 2023).



Rehabilitation is rarely a straight line the blue drops represent setbacks, but the dominant trajectory is always upward.

"Amin"

Convicted under Section 5 Terrorism Act 2000 for possession of extremist material. Twenty-four months with us: religious mentoring three times a week, forklift training, and 200 hours volunteering at a homeless shelter. Today he owns two small supermarkets in Croydon and mentors' younger lads himself.

"Bilal"

Returned from Syria having trained with Jabhat al-Nusra. Placed on a TPIM. The Home Office expected him to abscond within six months. He completed thirty-six months: academic classes, anger management, and family reconciliation work. Now married with a daughter and runs a successful delivery business.

"Omar"

One of the "Portsmouth cluster" who tried to join IS. Jailed for two years. Statutory programmes had a 40 per cent drop-out rate with him. Eighteen months with us: intensive religious re-education, employment placement, and 400 hours of community payback. Zero breaches of licence in eight years.

CHAPTER 17

Why It Worked: Evidence and Outcomes

Data, Academic Validation, and International Comparison



Prof Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE with Police officials and Community at Stockwell Green Community Services London UK.

We were never the Home Office's pet project, and we never pretended to be. When the money finally came from the European Regional Development Fund, Home Office, London Probation Trust, Ministry of Justice, and Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhoods we accepted it on our terms: we choose the mentors; we decide who is referred to us and when; no information about our participants goes to police or security services without the participant's consent, except where there is an imminent threat to life; we are not a surveillance programme.

KEY OUTCOME: Zero reoffending among 100% of programme completers in a ten-year follow-up. National statutory rate: 11–18% within two years. The difference is not marginal it is categorical.

The Middlesbrough University evaluation (Christmann, 2014) concluded: "The programme demonstrates outcomes that are, on any measure, superior to comparable statutory interventions. The trust-based, community-owned model appears to be a necessary condition for the outcomes achieved, not merely a contributing factor."



Verified outcome data independently audited figures demonstrating SRAM's unprecedented zero-reoffending record.

Behind the Numbers

- "Khalid" (2010 cohort): Travelled to Pakistan in 2009, intending to join Lashkar-e-Taiba. Returned after three months, disillusioned but deeply indoctrinated. Referred by his older sister, who found our old SGYP flyer in a drawer. Completed thirty months: religious mentoring with Shaykh

Rehan Ahmed, Level 3 Business Administration at SOEL, and 600 hours volunteering at St Mungo's homeless hostel. Today, he is the operations manager for a Muslim funeral service in East London and trains apprentices himself.

- "Ibrahim" (2013): Former Anjem Choudary follower, convicted for glorifying terrorism on Facebook. Spent eighteen months with us while on licence. The turning point came during a one-to-one session when the mentor (a former Hizb ut-Tahrir senior himself) opened the Quran and asked, "Show me one verse where Allah says to hate your neighbour because he drinks alcohol." Ibrahim could not. He cried for the first time in years. Today, he runs a successful graphic-design studio and quietly mentors' others away from the same path.

- "Yusuf" (2014): Released from Belmarsh after serving four years for funding terrorism. The prison imam warned probation: "He will reoffend within six months." Yusuf completed the full thirty-six-month package: theology classes, anger management, and a paid placement at a halal logistics firm. In 2023, he won the London Muslim Entrepreneur of the Year.

How the British Model Compares Internationally

Table: 6 Comparison with other international programmes

Country / Programme	Length	Cost per participant	Re-engagement rate
Saudi Arabia (2004)	6–12 months	~US$300,000	10–20 % (Neumann, 2010)
Denmark (Aarhus)	12–24 months	~€45,000	6–8 % (Lindekilde, 2012b)
Singapore (RRG)	18–36 months	~SG$80,000	<5 % (Gunaratna, 2017)
United Kingdom (Stockwell Green / SRAM)	18–36 months	£8,400–£14,000	0 % (0/68)

The Saudi programme is luxurious (art therapy, swimming pools, stipends for wives), but it is entirely state-run and prison based. Former detainees return to the same neighbourhoods with the same grievances. Denmark and Singapore do far better because they involve mentors from the community, but even they rely on statutory caseworkers as gatekeepers. Our model was the first

anywhere to be designed, delivered, and quality-controlled entirely by grassroots Muslim organisations with state agencies in a supporting role only.

Academic and Official Validation

The work did not go unnoticed.

- 2010: I presented the early findings at the expert meeting "Counternarratives and the Performative Power of Counterterrorism" in The Hague, hosted by the Dutch National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Leiden University. The paper "Furthering the Counter-Narrative via Educational and Social Grassroots Projects" was published in the first-ever book of the Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism (Qureshi and Marsden, 2010).

- 2012–2014: Middlesex University conducted a three-year external evaluation funded by ERDF. Conclusion: "The Stockwell Green approach represents the most effective community-owned counter-extremism intervention yet documented in Europe" (Christmann, 2014).

- 2015: London Probation Trust final audit: "Referral to SGCS/ASHA programmes should be considered the preferred pathway for all London terrorism-related offenders assessed as suitable for community disposal."

- 2016: The Home Office quietly adopted elements of the syllabus in its revised Channel guidance, acknowledging in footnotes the "pioneering work of faith-based third-sector providers in south London."

None of this was planned. We were simply trying to keep our kids alive. The numbers, the stories, and the independent research all reached the same conclusion: when the people closest to the problem are given the trust, the resources, and the freedom to solve it in their own way, they succeed beyond anything the state can achieve alone.

That is the proof. The next part of this book turns to Pakistan and asks the hardest question of all: if a handful of volunteers in a church hall in Stockwell could do this with almost no money and constant death threats, what could Pakistan achieve if it finally chose to fight the war with trust instead of hard power?

CHAPTER 18

Interfaith Harmony - A Pillar of Counter-Violent Extremism

Building Bridges Across Faith Communities to Counter the Ideology of Division



Presenting a memento to the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, the Most Revd Suheil Dawani, during an interfaith dialogue at his residence in Jerusalem, Palestine. This took place as part of the "Sharing Perspectives: Muslims and Christians in the Holy Land" programme, alongside Bishop Richard Cheetham, Umar, and Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra.

> *"The Prophet Peace be upon him hosted Christians in his own mosque. We can at least host them for tea and samosas. Build bridges, not bombs." Toaha Qureshi MBE (Qureshi, 2025)*

Violent extremism, in every historical incarnation examined by this book, has depended upon a single, foundational lie: that faith communities are natural enemies whose conflict is divinely ordained. Whether it was the IRA (Irish Republican Army) exploiting Catholic-Protestant divisions in Northern Ireland, Zionist militancy weaponizing the suffering of Jews, or the self-proclaimed Islamic State manipulating Muslim grievances against the West, the logic is identical create or deepen a rupture between religious communities and exploit the resulting hatred as a recruiting tool (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023). Interfaith harmony, therefore, is not merely a spiritual aspiration or a diplomatic gesture. It is a structural counter-extremism intervention of the first order.

This chapter argues that the deliberate, sustained cultivation of trust and collaboration between faith communities is one of the most powerful and most chronically underfunded tools available to governments, civil society, and communities in their efforts to counter violent extremism. Drawing on the author's own community work in Stockwell London, the evidence base for the Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) model, and the broader scholarly literature on radicalisation and prevention, this chapter makes the case that interfaith harmony is not peripheral to the CVE agenda it is, in fact, its moral and practical foundation.

Why Extremism Fears Interfaith Solidarity

To understand why interfaith harmony is so dangerous to the extremist ideology, one must first understand the mechanics of radicalisation. As outlined in Chapter 2, the journey from disenfranchisement to terrorism follows a five-stage model in which the individual progressively narrows their social and moral world until every face outside their ideological bubble becomes either an enemy or an irrelevance (Gurr, 1970; Neumann, 2013). At Stage 3 extremism the person has come to believe that compromise with those outside their group constitutes betrayal. At Stage 4 violent extremism the dehumanisation of the other is so complete that violence becomes not merely permissible but righteous.

This process depends, structurally, on the absence of meaningful human relationships that cross religious lines. A young Muslim man who has close friendships with practising Christians, Jews, Sikhs, or Hindus cannot easily fit his neighbours into the category of enemies deserving of punishment. A young Hindu nationalist who has shared meals in a Muslim home cannot readily project the monstrous abstraction of the "Islamic enemy" onto a face he has seen laugh and weep. Extremist recruiters know this. This is why, as the author observed directly in Stockwell during the early 2000s, the first move of extremist recruiters is always social isolation separating the target from existing relationships and replacing them with a closed, ideologically curated circle (Chapter 4).

> **KEY INSIGHT: The logical counter move to radicalisation is equally clear build, maintain, and deepen precisely those cross-faith relationships that extremist ideology cannot survive. The Middlesex**

University external evaluation of the SRAM programme found that sustained, positive contact with people of different faiths and backgrounds was one of the most statistically significant protective factors among participants who did not reoffend (Christmann, 2014). Interfaith harmony is not the soft option; it is the hard work of making the recruiter's job impossible.



Welcomed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd and Rt Hon Dr Rowan Williams, to Lambeth Palace for interfaith discussions ahead of the "Future of Pakistan Conference" in 2012.

Interfaith Relationships as a Buffer against Isolation

As early as 2000, before the language of CVE had entered policy discourse, the author convened the first national conference on "The role of mosques in the Development of Local Communities" to create awareness about the attitudinal change among young people being radicalised. The second conference in January 2001 was

under the title: "The Role of Religions in Diminishing Terrorism", a call to the communities at large and the statutory bodies to work in partnership for finding solutions to radicalisation. The conference brought together Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Hindu community leaders not because it was politically fashionable to do so, but because the author had observed, at ground level, that young men heading toward radicalisation were invariably those who had become socially enclosed whose entire friendship network, mosque attendance, and media consumption had been gradually captured by a single ideological strand. Cross-faith relationships broke this enclosure.



The Role of Mosques in Community Development Conference Featuring Rt Hon Kate Hoey MP (Minister for Sport) and Professor Akbar S. Ahmed (High Commissioner for Pakistan to the UK) 2000.



Celebrating Eid with the community and stakeholders including the Mayor of Lambeth Cllr Ibrahim Dogus, Lambeth Metropolitan Police Service Superintendent Ian Howells, Major Daniel Staples and other key community leaders.



As above.

The Interfaith Eid Celebrations at the Khatme-Nubuwwat Centre, which brought together local councillors, police liaison officers, and leaders from multiple faith communities, were not ceremonial occasions. They were deliberate, programmatic exercises in creating the kind of interpersonal trust that makes radicalisation harder to sustain. When a young Muslim man sees his imam sharing samosas with the Reverend Alan Gadd and the Lambeth Metropolitan Police Faith Liaison Officer Damon Tulloch-Foley,

the binary world of "us and them" that the recruiter has been carefully constructing begins to crack.



Senator Rev. Jesse Jackson gives a hearty embrace during a reception at the residence of US Ambassador HE Matthew Barzun in London.

Interfaith Mentoring and the Credibility of the Messenger

The SRAM model's religious strand was grounded in the understanding that theological de-radicalisation cannot be performed by those perceived as outsiders to the tradition. However, the interfaith dimension extended beyond the Muslim community itself. In several cases, the decisive moment in a participant's journey was not a conversation with a Muslim scholar but an encounter with a person of another faith a Christian youth worker who treated the participant with consistent, unhurried

dignity; a Jewish community activist who shared the experience of his community's historical persecution; or a Sikh community leader who spoke about the Khalistan movement and the suffering that political violence had brought to his own people (Singh, 2005).



Presenting a World Peace Tartan Scarf to Secretary of State for International Development Justine Greening, alongside Catriona Robertson, Bishop of Lahore Irfan Jamil, and Umar, at the London Conference of the Minority Majority Project (sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office). The project was twinned in Pakistan with meetings in Lahore and Islamabad.

These encounters shattered the comfortable abstraction of "the enemy." The extremist narrative depends on the target never having a real, humanising conversation with the people they have been taught to fear or hate. When that conversation happens, and when it is sustained over months rather than engineered as a single dramatic event, the narrative loses its grip. This finding is consistent with the broader contact theory literature, which demonstrates that sustained, meaningful contact between

members of different groups, conducted under conditions of equality and with institutional support, reliably reduces prejudice and intergroup hostility (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).

Interfaith Coalitions as a Community Network



Muslims and Christians in the Holy Land" program, taken outside St George's College, Jerusalem. Bishara Khoury, Bishop Richard Cheetham, Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Dr. Gregory Jenks, Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Rodney Aist, Umar Qureshi.

This book demonstrates that 81 per cent of referrals to the SRAM programme came through family and community networks, compared with only 4 per cent through state channels. What is less often noted is that interfaith networks significantly extended the range and sensitivity of this community early-warning system. A Christian youth worker at a local community centre, a Sikh shopkeeper who knows every family on the street, a Hindu schoolteacher who notices a Muslim student's sudden withdrawal

from mixed-group activities these are often the first people to observe the behavioural changes that signal radicalisation. When interfaith relationships are strong, this information flows. When they are fragmented, the warning signs go unnoticed or unreported (Christmann, 2014; Home Office, 2023).

EVIDENCE: The SGCS programme cultivated cross-faith intelligence networks not through any formal surveillance architecture but through sustained investment in shared community events, joint youth activities, and the kind of neighbourly trust built one cup of tea at a time. The result was a referral system identifying at-risk individuals at Stage 1 or 2 of the radicalisation pathway, long before they came to the attention of police or security (Christmann, 2014; SGCS internal evaluation to the attention on, 2015).



Group Photo with Churches of Pakistan's Senior Leadership following a discussion on human rights for minorities in Pakistan. In the photo: Bishop John Samuel (Faisalabad), Umar Mahmood and Rev. Rana Khan."

PART III

Taking the SRAM to Pakistan

CHAPTER 19

Survey in Pakistan

What 500 University Students Tell Us About Readiness



Pakistan's university campuses are both the most hopeful and the most precarious space in the country's struggle against violent extremism. To understand the landscape before proposing solutions, a structured survey was administered to 500 undergraduate students at public-sector universities in Punjab.

Pakistan Knows the Problem

Ninety-one per cent of respondents correctly identified economic inequality, political grievances, and inadequate education rather than religious doctrine as the primary drivers of extremism. Students were not confused about root causes. They were confused about what to do with that knowledge.

Youth Are Not Yet Part of the Solution

While 78 percent expressed willingness to report signs of radicalisation to a trusted adult, only 34 per cent knew where to go. Only 22 per cent had ever participated in any structured counter-extremism or resilience-building activity.

Pakistan is Hungry for What Works

When the SRAM model was described without branding 83 per cent of respondents expressed strong or very strong support for its introduction in their university. The elements commanding the highest support were community ownership (89%), religious credibility of mentors (91%), voluntary and confidential referral (88%).

> *"Pakistan's university students are not waiting to be convinced that extremism is a problem. They live with its consequences every day. What they are waiting for is an invitation to become part of the answer."*

The third movement was the most hopeful and the most instructive.

When the students were shown a menu of innovations drawn directly from the British community-led experience partnerships between universities and local mosques, mandatory (non-credit) modules on tolerance and leadership, one-to-one mentoring by trained faculty and community figures, and guest sessions with former extremists, their enthusiasm was immediate and unmistakable.

Table: 7**: A table presents key findings from an original survey of 500 Pakistani university students.**

Proposed intervention	**Mean agreement (1–5)**	**Standard Deviation**
Universities should partner with local mosques and credible community organisations	4.41	0.76
Mandatory modules on tolerance, leadership, and critical thinking	4.28	0.84
Structured one-to-one or small group mentoring by faculty and community mentors	4.19	0.89
Sessions with former extremists or other "credible voices"	4.07	0.93

(Qureshi, 2025)

Women were noticeably more enthusiastic about mentoring and dialogue-based approaches than men ($t = 2.10$, $p = 0.036$), and students from rural backgrounds gave the highest approval ratings of all to university mosque partnerships, precisely the localised,

trust-based delivery that the UK evidence has shown to be most effective (Briggs and Silverman, 2014; Patel and Ali, 2023).In other words, when presented with the core ingredients of the Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) model, community ownership, religious credibility, academic rigour, and personal relationship, the response was not resistance born of cultural incompatibility. The response was recognition.

Closing the Readiness Gap

Pakistan's university students are not waiting to be convinced that extremism is a problem. They live with its consequences every day. What they are waiting for is an invitation to become part of the answer. The institutions that teach them have, for too long, treated counter-extremism as a theoretical footnote rather than a practical vocation. The students themselves have just declared, in numbers too large to ignore, that they are ready for something better: an approach that trusts communities, honours faith, demands intellectual honesty, and most importantly, speaks to them not as passive recipients of lectures, but as active participants in their own resilience.

The British community-led model, with its emphasis on grassroots partnership and sustained mentoring, is not an import to be regarded with suspicion. To these five hundred young Punjabis and, one suspects, to millions more like them, it sounds remarkably like the solution they have been looking for all along (Qureshi, 2025). The readiness gap is real. But it is also, for the first time, visible. And where there is visibility, there is the possibility of action.

CHAPTER 20

Building the Ecosystem in Pakistan

Five Pillars That Must Stand Together



Prof Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE (Chairman NUST Foundation UK) with Rector NUST General (R) Zahid Latif

Ideas may be cheap but turning them into something that outlives the next budget cycle, the next government, and the next crisis is the hard part. The SRAM model must become part of the air young Pakistanis breathe as natural as Friday prayers, as routine as semester registration.

1. Universities

There must be some terrorist outfits where a hard approach remains necessary for immediate security concerns. However, it is paramount for the nation that the government places greater emphasis on changing the mindset of the youth, particularly

through universities, by promoting a soft and sustainable approach. This strategy must be pursued in close collaboration with civil society, including Islamic seminaries, statutory bodies, and other relevant stakeholders. Universities are uniquely positioned to lead this transformation throughout the country. They possess the physical infrastructure, a large and energetic student body, academic integrity, and most importantly they remain the only national institution that still enjoys relatively higher public trust compared to many other state organs. This trust is a precious asset that must be leveraged effectively in collaboration and consultation with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) under a National Framework, hence the universities are made accountable for tangible outcomes.

From 2026 onwards, every public-sector university in Pakistan must be transformed into a proactive hub of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). Rather than limiting their role to conventional academics, universities should actively engage in building civic responsibility, critical thinking, tolerance, and resilience among the youth through the mentoring aspect of the SRAM programme. Through well-designed curricula, seminars, research projects, community outreach programmes, and partnerships with civil society organisations, universities can play a pivotal role in shaping a generation that rejects extremism and embraces moderate, inclusive, and progressive values. This soft approach does not mean weakness; rather, it represents a wise, long-term investment in the nation's future by inculcating the importance and significance of the ideological boundaries of Pakistan among the youth, hence getting them ready for future challenges. By nurturing

informed, responsible, and resilient citizens within university campuses, Pakistan can gradually build a society that is intellectually and ideologically equipped to resist radical narratives.

The goal is clear: to transform Pakistan into a country where young minds are not only academically qualified but also deeply committed to civic responsibility, social harmony, and national resilience in the light of the Resolution of Pakistan. If universities are empowered and supported by all the stakeholders to become true centres of enlightenment and moderation, they will serve as the strongest bulwark against extremism and the most effective foundation for a stable, progressive and prosperous nation.

The following table shows that many universities have some kind of CVE modules, but the emphasis in this book is that it must be a compulsory three-credit-hour module in every university under a National Framework.

	Course Focus	Modules/Courses	Credible Sources
National Defense University (NDU), Islamabad	National Security, Strategic Studies, counter terrorism Studies, International relations, policy	1. Counter-Terrorism Strategy 2. National Security and Intelligence 3. International Terrorism 4. Regional Security 5. Terrorist Financing	NDU website (www.ndu.edu.pk), research publications on terrorism studies, and academic journals
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad	Political Science, international relations, Islamabad security studies	1. Political Dimensions of Terrorism 2. Causes of Extremism 3. Radicalisation & De-radicalisation	QAU website (www.qau.edu.pk), peer-reviewed journals, and academic publications
International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI)	Islamic Studies, conflict management, International relations	1. Understanding Jihad and Terrorism 2. Islamic Perspective on Terrorism 3. Counter-terrorism & Peacebuilding 4. Terrorism in the Modern World	IIUI website (www.iiu.edu.pk), books and articles on radicalism and Islamic perspectives on violence
University of Peshawar	Political Science, Sociology, and Security Studies	1. Sociology of Terrorism 2. International Law & Counterterrorism 3. Terrorism and Media 4. Radicalisation: Causes and Consequences	UOP website (www.uop.edu.pk), academic publications, and government reports on security
Minhaj University, Lahore	Islam, Peace, and Counter- Terrorism Global Strategies of Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism Islamic Studies, interfaith dialogue, conflict resolution	1. Peace and Conflict Studies 2. Role of Religious Extremism in Terrorism 3. Counter-Extremism and Peacebuilding 4. Islamic Theology and Terrorism	Minhaj University website (www.minhaj.edu.pk), books on Islamic peace studies, and CVE research papers

Table No. 8

2. Islamic Seminaries

No programme that claims to speak for Islam can succeed without the active involvement and ownership of the ulema, the traditional religious scholars who command deep respect and influence in Muslim societies. Their voices carry authenticity and legitimacy that no secular or academic initiative can replicate on its own. For any meaningful reform to take root, these scholars must sit at the same table as university vice-chancellors, educationists, and policymakers. Together, they should collaboratively design and write the religious component of the national curriculum. This joint effort would bridge the longstanding divide between modern secular education and traditional religious learning, ensuring that both systems reinforce rather than contradict each other.

Imagine a young boy in Dera Ismail Khan (or any similar conservative town in Pakistan) hearing the same moderate, merciful, and compassionate message from two respected authorities in his life: his university professor during the day, and his local Imam at the mosque in the evening. When the teachings of tolerance, justice, critical thinking, and peaceful coexistence are consistently echoed from both the classroom and the pulpit, the narrative of hatred loses its power. The extremist recruiter, who thrives on division, isolation, and selective interpretations of faith, has already lost the battle for that young mind.

This unified approach does more than counter radicalisation; it rebuilds trust between religious institutions and the state. It creates a coherent national narrative rooted in the true spirit of Islam:

mercy, balance, and the pursuit of knowledge. It equips the next generation to resist manipulation while remaining deeply connected to their faith and cultural identity.

Without such collaboration, efforts to promote moderation will remain fragmented, top-down, and ultimately ineffective. True and lasting change against extremism begins when the guardians of religious knowledge and the architects of modern education decide to work as partners, not adversaries.

3. Civil Society, Youth, and Women's Organisations

They form the frontline early-warning system in the fight against violent extremism the vigilant "aunties" on family WhatsApp groups who notice sudden changes in a nephew's language or behaviour; the dedicated youth workers walking the streets of Lyari and Orangi in Karachi, where gang culture and radical recruiters often compete for the same vulnerable young minds; and the women's crisis centres in Swat and other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where staff hear the first whispers of trouble a girl being isolated, a boy expressing sudden anger at "the system," or families quietly expressing fear about online influences.

These are not distant bureaucrats or high-level officials. These are the people embedded in communities, trusted by families, and closest to the ground realities. They see the subtle signs of radicalisation long before they escalate into open recruitment or violence: the shift in tone during Friday sermons, the new friends a

teenager is making, the sudden withdrawal from school or family life.

To make prevention truly effective, we must empower them. Give them proper training in recognising early indicators of extremism, understanding online radicalisation pathways, and using community-based interventions. Provide modest but consistent core funding so they are not perpetually chasing short-term donor projects. Most importantly, give them a real and respected seat at every planning table under the "Prevent Strand" of Pakistan's counter-extremism framework.



I hosted the youth parliament from Pakistan led by Faisal Karim Kundi - Dep. Speaker of the National Assembly Pakistan at the Lambeth Town Hall accompanied by the Mayor of Lambeth

When the women who run crisis shelters in Swat, the youth counsellors in Karachi's volatile neighbourhoods, and the community mothers monitoring social media are treated as strategic partners rather than mere implementers, prevention stops being a top-down exercise and becomes a living, community-owned shield. Only then can we build a resilient society where the first whispers of trouble are heard, addressed, and silenced before they turn into cries for violence.



Seminar on Rule of Law and Counterterrorism. Prof. Dr. Toaha Qureshi MBE addresses the audience. Others on the stage included Ahmer Bilal Soofi – President, Research Society of International Law; Dr Muhammad Shoaib Suddle – Former Director General, Intelligence Bureau; and Imtiaz Gul – Executive Director, CRSS.

This bottom-up approach, rooted in trust, local knowledge, and gender-sensitive intelligence, is not just more humane; it is far more effective than relying solely on security operations or elite-driven policies.

4. The Media and Influencers

In the fight against violent extremism, Geo, ARY, Dawn, and the TikTok stars have become the real battlegrounds. Narratives are no longer shaped only in mosques or madrasas; they are formed and fought over every single day on television screens, in newspaper columns, and across millions of smartphones. A single, well-made, one-hour documentary that tells the true story of a young man who left the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), survived the trauma, and successfully rebuilt his life can have a far greater impact than ten thousand carefully crafted counter-narrative tweets.

Why? Because human stories touch the heart before they reach the mind. When viewers see a former militant speak honestly about how he was groomed, the lies he was fed, the friends he lost, and the long, difficult road back to normal life with his voice, his face, and his emotions it creates empathy, doubt in the extremist narrative, and hope for a different path. Such stories are authentic, emotionally compelling, and difficult to dismiss as "government propaganda."

In contrast, thousands of short tweets, even if factually correct, often remain abstract, preachy, or easily ignored in the endless scroll. They rarely reach the vulnerable young man who is already halfway down the path of radicalisation. A powerful documentary, however, can stay with people for days. It can be discussed in homes, shared in classrooms, and rewatched by those quietly questioning their choices.

We need to shift our focus and resources. Instead of flooding social media with countless short messages, we should invest in high-quality, long-form storytelling documentaries, drama serials, podcasts, and short films that humanise deradicalisation and show the painful reality behind the glamorous jihadist fantasy. These stories, broadcast on mainstream channels like Geo and ARY or circulated widely on TikTok and YouTube, can reach millions more effectively and credibly than any barrage of official tweets. One genuine story of redemption will always outweigh ten thousand counter-narrative posts. Because in the end, extremism is defeated not just by arguments, but by better, more powerful stories.

5. Parents and Community Elders

The single most powerful protective factor identified in virtually every serious study on preventing radicalisation is not madrasa reform, not social media monitoring, and not even counter-narratives. It is something far more intimate and foundational: a strong, open, and trusting family relationship. Parents who maintain warm, honest communication with their children, especially during the turbulent teenage and young adult years act as the most effective shield against extremist grooming. When a young person feels safe enough to bring doubts, questions, identity struggles, or confusing online content to the dinner table without fear of immediate judgment, anger, or dismissal, the recruiter's job becomes infinitely harder. Yet these parents represent the invisible army we have never properly trained or supported.

In many Pakistani households, conversations about faith and belonging remain surface-level or strictly authoritarian. Difficult topics doubts about religion, feelings of humiliation, attraction to "strong" ideological answers, or the tension between tradition and modern life are often avoided, shut down, or met with lectures. This silence creates the perfect vacuum that extremist narratives happily fill. We must change this. Parents need practical tools and guidance: how to recognise early signs of confusion or withdrawal, how to discuss sensitive issues of faith without pushing their children away, how to create space for genuine dialogue about identity, justice, and belonging, and how to balance love with boundaries. They deserve workshops, simple guidebooks, community sessions in mosques and schools, and culturally sensitive resources that respect their values while equipping them to stay connected with their children in a rapidly changing world. When thousands of ordinary mothers and fathers learn to become confident, emotionally intelligent anchors for their children, we will have built the strongest, most sustainable line of defence against extremism one family at a time. The data is clear: strong families don't just raise good children they quietly defeat recruiters before the battle even begins.

Collaboration of MUL & FIRD UK (Pakistan Chapter)

Dr. Hussain Qadri, through the Toaha Qureshi Foundation, has joined hands with Forum for International Relations Development UK (FIRD) by offering scholarships to postgraduate students of School of Peace and Counter

Terrorism Studies at (MUL) for research on important national topics, such as "Ideological Boundaries of Pakistan: Threats and Solutions" and research on peace, reconciliation and counter violent extremism needs in the country.

1st International Conference on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (ICCTVE-2026) has been organised collaboratively at MUL for 23rd May 2026 with the theme:

Dynamics of Hybrid Threats and Counter-Terrorism in Pakistan: Challenges, Responses, and Pathways beyond Stalemate



Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri, President of Minhaj-ul-Quran International and Deputy Chairman of Minhaj University Lahore, signing an MoU with Prof. Dr. Toaha Qureshi MBE, Chairman of the Forum for International Relations and Development (FIRD) UK and Toha Qureshi Foundation UK, for the award of scholarships to three postgraduate students for research on national issues.

(L-R: Dr. Hassan Farooq Mashwani, Prof. Dr. Khuram Shehzad | Right: Dr. Abdul Sattar Abbasi)

At the institutional level, MUL has pioneered specialized academic departments to ensure the sustainability of these peace-building efforts:

- **The School of Peace and Counter-Terrorism Studies (SPCTS):** The first in Pakistan to offer HEC-sanctioned PhD and M. Phil programs specifically in CVE and security studies.
- **The School of Religion and Philosophy (SRP):** Provides a platform for minority groups (Sikhs, Hindus, Christians) to pursue higher research in their own traditions.
- **The GRACE Repository:** A massive global knowledge bank that serves as a resource for international policymakers and security experts, specifically in the fields of terrorism, CVE, and community resilience.

Dr. Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri is the Deputy Chairman of the Board of Governors and Professor at the School of Economics and Finance at Minhaj University Lahore. The conferment of the UNESCO Chair on Peace Education and Intercultural Dialogue upon Professor Dr. Hussain Mohyuddin Qadri signifies international recognition of his sustained peace-building efforts. Furthermore, his designation as a Global Ambassador of Peace at the Vienna Headquarters reinforces his global engagement and normative commitment to advancing peace across diverse socio-political contexts.

CHAPTER 21

Universities as Hubs for Preventative Engagement: SRAM in Higher Education

Higher education · Youth radicalisation · Campus-based prevention

Introduction

Universities occupy a distinctive position in the landscape of counter-extremism prevention. They are simultaneously sites of concentrated young adult population, of intellectual ferment and ideological exploration, of institutional authority and pastoral responsibility, and of the very freedoms of speech, inquiry, and association that extremist actors seek to exploit. Since the passage of the Counter terrorism and Security Act 2015, they also carry a statutory Prevent duty that requires them to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism,' creating new institutional responsibilities that sit in uneasy tension with academic freedom.



Chairing the conference in the University of Lahore with FIRD delegates from London

The Campus Risk Landscape

Understanding the specific risk landscape of university settings requires moving beyond the sensationalised narrative of campuses as 'hotbeds' of radicalisation that have periodically dominated media and political discourse. The evidence on campus radicalisation in the United Kingdom paints a more nuanced picture. While universities have featured in a few prominent terrorism cases, and while extremist speakers and networks have sought to recruit in university settings, the incidence of campus radicalisation remains relatively low and confined to specific institutional and social contexts.

The vulnerability factors that are specific to, or amplified in, university settings include: the disorientation of transition to independent living away from family and community; the encounter with new ideas, identities, and social environments that can prompt identity crisis; the relative absence of the pastoral and community structures that previously provided support; and the availability of organised extremist recruitment networks specifically targeting the young adult population.

At the same time, universities possess significant protective assets: diverse, pluralistic social environments that expose students to multiple perspectives; access to sophisticated scholarly engagement with the ideas that extremist recruiters exploit; pastoral care, counselling, and mental health infrastructure; and student communities with strong capacities for self-governance and peer support.



R – L: Allan Weston from London Probation Trust, Catriona Robertson from London Faith Forum, Dr. Zafarullah Khan – VC BZ University, Prof. Dr. Toaha Qureshi MBE and Dr. Rana Muhammad Akram

Institutional Infrastructure for Prevention

Muslim Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care

The Muslim chaplaincy has emerged as one of the most important institutional resources for campus-based prevention. Muslim chaplains who typically combine training in Islamic scholarship with professional counselling or pastoral care qualifications are positioned to engage with Muslim students across the full range of their spiritual, personal, and academic concerns, providing the kind of trusted, religiously informed relationship that SRAM's religious mentoring strand requires.

Effective Muslim chaplaincy in a counter-extremism context requires chaplains who possess the theological depth to engage with extremist arguments, the pastoral sensitivity to build trust with students who may be experiencing significant vulnerability, and the institutional integration to work effectively alongside counselling, safeguarding, and student affairs teams. Many UK universities have developed their Muslim chaplaincy capacity significantly in recent years; others continue to rely on chaplains without specific CVE training or on generic multi-faith chaplaincy teams without the specialist knowledge required.



Chairing the "Future of Pakistan Conference" at Portcullis House. Fellow speakers included: General Retd. Syed Athar Ali, Sadiq Khan MP (now Mayor of London), Prof. Stephen Cohen of Brookings Institution USA, Dr. Farooq Sattar - Minister for Overseas Pakistanis, Prof. Anatol Lieven – Kings College London, Lord Qurban Hussain, Professor Robin Brooke-Smith, Bishop Alexander Malik and more.

Student Unions and Islamic Societies

Islamic student societies have been simultaneously among the most significant resources for Muslim student wellbeing and, in some cases, arenas of extremist activity. The variation in Islamic society culture is enormous: from societies that provide outstanding pastoral support, social connection, and religious education to their members, to those that have been infiltrated or captured by extremist networks.

SRAM-informed universities work with Islamic societies as partners rather than subjects of surveillance. They invest in the leadership development and governance capacity of Islamic societies, provide support for mainstream religious programming, and create channels for Islamic society leaders to access institutional pastoral and security expertise when they encounter concerning behaviour among their members. This partnership approach, which treats Islamic societies as assets rather than risks, consistently outperforms surveillance-based approaches in generating the trust and cooperation on which effective prevention depends.

Academic Freedom and the Prevent Duty

The tension between the Prevent duty and academic freedom is among the most significant institutional challenges that universities face in counter-extremism policy. The academic freedom to explore challenging, controversial, and potentially offensive ideas to examine extremist ideologies critically, to debate contentious policy questions, to invite speakers whose views are

unpopular is both a foundational institutional value and a condition of effective counter-extremism education. An institution that cannot examine extremism analytically is poorly equipped to counter it in practice.

The Prevent duty, as interpreted by some institutions, has created a chilling effect on legitimate academic discourse not through deliberate policy but through the risk-averse application of referral and reporting mechanisms by staff who lack clear guidance on where the boundary between legitimate research or teaching and support for terrorism lies. SRAM-informed approaches to campus-based prevention emphasise this boundary clearly: the goal is not to suppress discussion of extremism but to distinguish between academic engagement with extremist ideas and operational support for terrorist activity.

Institute for Economics and Peace (2026) Global Terrorism Index 2026: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism. Sydney: IEP. Available at: https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/ (Accessed: 6 May 2026).

The Joint Committee on Human Rights (2016) noted with concern that Prevent was having a chilling effect on academic freedom, recommending clearer guidance and stronger oversight mechanisms. SRAM-informed universities respond to this concern by developing detailed, nuanced guidance for academic staff on the application of the Prevent duty in teaching and research contexts, and by creating clear escalation pathways that distinguish between referrals requiring pastoral support and those requiring security intervention.

CHAPTER 22

Leadership and Governance in Community-Led UK-CVE Model

Governance · Leadership models · Policy analysis

Introduction

Effective counter-extremism requires coherent governance across multiple sectors statutory agencies, voluntary and community organisations, faith institutions, educational providers, and the private sector. The challenge of coordinating this complex ecosystem of actors, each with different mandates, resources, professional cultures, and accountability structures, is one of the most demanding governance challenges in contemporary public policy.

Institutional Architecture of UK-CVE Governance

The governance of counter-extremism in the United Kingdom is distributed across a complex institutional landscape. At the national level, the Office for Security and Counterterrorism (OSCT) within the Home Office provides overall strategic direction for the Contest strategy, with OSCT coordinating activity across central government departments including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for Education, Ministry of Justice, and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

At the regional and local level, Counter Terrorism Policing coordinates the police response, while Local Prevent Coordinators

typically based in local authorities manage the Prevent programme. Channel panels, established under the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, bring together statutory and community partners to consider and support individuals assessed as vulnerable to radicalisation. Alongside these statutory structures, a diverse ecosystem of voluntary and community organisations including community groups, faith organisations, and specialist CVE providers delivers the majority of direct community engagement work.

Leadership Models in Community-Led Counter-Extremism

Distributed Leadership

The most effective community-led counter-extremism programmes in the UK have tended to operate through distributed leadership models rather than hierarchical command structures. In distributed leadership, expertise and authority are dispersed across a community among mosque imams, youth workers, educators, family members, and community elders rather than concentrated in a single leader or organisation. This distribution more accurately reflects the social reality of Muslim communities, in which authority is plural and contextual, and enables engagement across the full diversity of community contexts.

SRAM is itself a distributed leadership model: its three mentoring strands necessarily involve different individuals with different expertise religious scholars, social workers, educational practitioners working in coordination rather than under a single

hierarchical authority. Managing this coordination effectively requires sophisticated inter-professional working, clear shared frameworks, and robust communication between practitioners across institutional boundaries.

The Role of Community Leaders

Community leaders particularly mosque imams and other religious figures play a pivotal role in the governance of community-led counter-extremism. Their authority in Muslim communities is derived from their religious credibility, their established community relationships, and their pastoral engagement with their congregations over extended periods. When they actively support counter-extremism programmes, their endorsement provides those programmes with a legitimacy that no statutory agency can confer.



R – L: HE Wajid Shams ul Hassan – High Commissioner of Pakistan to the UK, Dr. Latif Khosa – Governor Punjab, Prof. Dr. Toaha Qureshi MBE, Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Gardezi – Dep. High Commissioner of Pakistan to the UK, Prof. Phillip Lingard of FIRD UK

However, community leaders are themselves diverse in their backgrounds, training, theological orientations, and views on counter-extremism. Some have been deeply engaged with Prevent and related programmes; others have been deeply critical, seeing them as instruments of community surveillance and political control. Building the coalition of community leadership support required for effective SRAM delivery requires patient relationship-building, genuine responsiveness to community concerns, and willingness to adapt programme design in the light of community feedback.



Prof. Dr. Toaha Qureshi MBE with General Sir David Richards, Chief of the Defence Staff and his wife Lady Caroline, General Sir Peter Wall, Chief of the General Staff, United Kingdom.

Inter-Agency Collaboration: Mechanisms and Challenges

Effective inter-agency collaboration in counter-extremism contexts depends on several enabling conditions. First, a shared understanding of purpose: agencies with different statutory remits and professional cultures must develop sufficient common ground to work effectively together, without losing the distinctive contributions that their different perspectives and competencies provide.

Second, clear information-sharing protocols: the exchange of information between agencies about specific individuals, about community dynamics, about programme intelligence requires frameworks that are consistent with data protection legislation, professional ethics, and community trust. The absence of such frameworks or their overly restrictive interpretation is a frequent source of collaboration breakdown.

Third, genuine equality of partnership: community organisations that lack statutory authority, institutional resources, or political connection may find their contributions marginalised in inter-agency forums dominated by police, local authority, and national government voices. SRAM-informed governance frameworks work actively to counteract this tendency, ensuring that community practitioners are treated as genuine partners rather than delivery vehicles for externally designed programmes.

Conditions for Effective Governance

Drawing on case analysis of UK community-led CVE programmes, this section identifies five conditions that consistently distinguish effective governance from dysfunctional or merely procedurally compliant approaches. First, authentic community ownership: programmes that are designed and governed in genuine partnership with the communities they serve consistently outperform those designed externally and delivered to communities.

Second, long-term institutional commitment: counter-extremism governance that is sustained across political cycles, staffing changes, and funding fluctuations produces better outcomes than programmes that are established with enthusiasm and then defunded or restructured as political priorities shift. Third, investment in relationships: the trust relationships that underpin effective governance are built over years and destroyed in weeks; governance frameworks must actively protect and invest in these relationships rather than taking them for granted.

Fourth, robust accountability: effective governance includes clear mechanisms for holding both statutory agencies and community organisations accountable for their commitments and their conduct. Community trust is sustained not by the absence of accountability but by its even-handed application. Fifth, genuine learning cultures: governance structures that create space for honest evaluation of what is and is not working and that respond to that evaluation by adapting practice rather than defending it

consistently produce better long-term outcomes than those dominated by the communication of success.

Policy Conclusions

The analysis in this chapter points toward a governance model for community-led counter-extremism that is simultaneously more demanding and more effective than the statutory-led approaches that have characterised much of UK CVE policy. More demanding because it requires genuine investment in community partnership, distributed leadership, and long-term relationship; more effective because it is the approach that generates the community trust, cultural legitimacy, and sustained engagement on which durable counter-extremism outcomes depend.

For policymakers, the principal implication is the need to fundamentally reframe the relationship between statutory agencies and community organisations in counter-extremism governance not as funders and delivery agents but as genuine partners with complementary expertise and shared purpose. This reframing requires changes not only in programme design but in funding mechanisms, accountability frameworks, and the professional cultures of the statutory agencies involved.

CHAPTER 23

A Qualitative Comparison of the UK and Pakistan

Qualitative content analysis · Comparative study · Narrative approaches

Introduction

The comparison of counter-extremism approaches across the United Kingdom and Pakistan offers a productive lens for understanding both the universal and the contextually specific features of effective CVE. The two countries share several relevant characteristics significant Muslim populations affected by violent extremism, complex relationships between state and religious authority, and sustained experience with community-led counter-extremism programmes while differing markedly in their political systems, institutional capacities, socioeconomic conditions, and the nature of the extremist threats they face.

This chapter employs qualitative content analysis to compare dominant counter-extremism narratives in the two contexts. It maps points of convergence and divergence between community-led and state-driven approaches in each setting, analyses the role of religious authority in shaping narrative strategy, and draws implications for the transferability of SRAM-informed approaches from the UK to the Pakistani context.

Narrative Approaches to CVE

Narratives coherent stories about who we are, what we believe, who our enemies are, and what we must do are among the most powerful tools available to both extremist actors and those who seek to counter them. Extremist narratives typically combine several elements: a diagnosis of injustice, an identification of enemies responsible for that injustice, a vision of a just alternative order, and a prescription for action (often violent) that will bring that order about. Counter-extremism narratives must engage with this structure rather than simply asserting its falsity.

Effective counter-narratives are not simply the opposite of extremist narratives. They must acknowledge the genuine grievances that extremist narratives exploit rather than dismissing them as mere propaganda while offering alternative explanations, alternative solutions, and alternative visions of community. The most effective counter-narratives in both UK and Pakistani contexts have been those that speak with and through authentic religious authority, acknowledge structural injustice while rejecting its weaponisation, and offer credible pathways toward legitimate collective action.

The UK Narrative Landscape

The UK counter-extremism narrative landscape has been shaped by the Contest strategy and its successive iterations, by the Prevent duty and its contested implementation, and by the active engagement of Muslim civil society organisations in challenging,

adapting, and supplementing official narratives. Three dominant narrative strands can be identified in the UK context.

The first is the 'Islam is a religion of peace' narrative, deployed frequently by government spokespeople and moderate Muslim public figures following terrorist incidents. This narrative has been criticised, including by Muslim community members, as both theologically shallow it does not engage with the specific texts and arguments that extremists cite and politically instrumentalised — it appears to serve the function of reassurance rather than genuine theological engagement.

The second is the 'safeguarding' narrative, which frames radicalisation as a form of exploitation or abuse analogous to the grooming of children for sexual exploitation and positions vulnerable individuals as victims requiring protection rather than threats requiring management. This narrative has the advantage of destigmatising those at risk and creating space for supportive rather than punitive responses; its limitation is that it may underestimate the agency and genuine ideological commitment of some individuals who become involved in extremism.

The third and, from the SRAM perspective, most promising is the 'authentic Islamic tradition' narrative, which engages directly with the theological claims of extremists from within the mainstream scholarly tradition of Islam. This narrative is most effectively deployed by individuals with genuine theological credentials, community trust, and the ability to engage with primary sources in their original languages.

The Pakistani Narrative Landscape

Pakistan's counter-extremism narrative landscape is shaped by a very different set of historical, political, and institutional conditions. The state's complex historical relationships with jihadist networks cultivated during the anti-Soviet Afghan conflict and subsequently, in some cases, maintained for reasons of strategic interest in Afghanistan and Kashmir have created significant contradictions in the official narrative on extremism. The simultaneous prosecution of some extremist groups and tolerance of others has undermined the credibility of official counter-extremism narratives among both Pakistani and international audiences.

The Pakistani counter-extremism narrative has undergone significant evolution since the Pakistani Taliban's attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014, which killed 132 children and catalysed a more unambiguous national response to domestic extremism. The National Action Plan launched in response included, alongside law enforcement and military dimensions, a commitment to developing counter-narratives that could compete with extremist messaging on religious grounds.

Religious scholars organised through the Ulema convention convened by the government in 2015, which produced the Paigham-e-Pakistan declaration rejecting violence and endorsing the Pakistani state have become more prominent in counter-extremism narrative work. This development is directly parallel to the role of religiously credentialed mentors in the SRAM model, and its relative success (limited but real) supports the SRAM

model's insistence on authentic religious authority as the foundation of effective counter-extremism narrative.

Comparative Analysis: Convergences and Divergences

The comparative analysis reveals several significant points of convergence between UK and Pakistani counter-extremism narratives. Both contexts demonstrate the superiority in terms of community impact and credibility of narratives grounded in authentic religious authority over those delivered by state agencies or secular civil society organisations. Both also demonstrate the importance of engaging with genuine grievances rather than dismissing them, and the risks of counter-extremism narratives that appear to serve primarily governmental communication goals rather than genuine community protection.

The divergences are equally instructive. The UK context offers greater civil society capacity a larger, more diverse, more institutionally embedded network of Muslim community organisations capable of delivering sophisticated counter-extremism narratives than the Pakistani context, where the space for independent civil society activity has been more constrained. The Pakistani context offers, by contrast, a more unified religious scholarly tradition, the Deobandi mainstream, that has greater potential reach across the country's diverse extremist landscape once effectively mobilised.

Implications for Narrative Strategy

The comparative analysis supports several conclusions for narrative strategy in both contexts. Religious credibility is non-negotiable: narratives delivered by individuals or organisations without genuine religious credentials have limited impact in communities whose counter-extremism engagement is primarily motivated by religious identity and conviction. Grievance acknowledgment is essential: narratives that dismiss legitimate concerns about foreign policy, economic injustice, or discrimination as propaganda will be dismissed in turn. And narrative consistency over time is critical: counter-extremism narratives that shift with political priorities lose the credibility that only sustained engagement can build.

CHAPTER 24

Quantitative Dimensions of CVE: Evidence from the UK and Pakistan

Quantitative data provide an objective lens through which the effectiveness of different countering violent extremism (CVE) approaches can be measured and compared. While qualitative factors such as trust, narratives, and community relationships form the foundation of successful prevention, hard statistics reveal what truly works in practice. This chapter presents a data-driven comparison between the United Kingdom's community-led Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) model and Pakistan's predominantly kinetic and legislative response to violent extremism.

Exceptional Outcomes of the UK Community-Led Model

The Socio-Religio-Academic Mentoring (SRAM) programme, implemented by Stockwell Green Community Services and its partners in south London, has produced some of the most impressive results ever recorded in European deradicalisation efforts. Between 2009 and 2015, the programme achieved remarkable success across multiple measurable indicators.

Referral patterns demonstrated the strength of community trust. Family members accounted for 81% of all referrals to the community-led projects, compared to only 4% in government-led Prevent programmes. Mosque and imam referrals stood at 44% in

the SRAM pathway, against just 3% in statutory channels. Self-referrals reached 27% in the community model, while they remained below 1% in official programmes (SGCS internal evaluation reports, 2015; Home Office, 2023).

Programme completion rates further highlighted the difference. The SRAM initiative recorded a 92% completion rate, significantly outperforming the under 40% completion rate observed in statutory Channel cases within the same boroughs (Briggs and Silverman, 2014). Most importantly, reoffending rates told the clearest story. Among convicted terrorism offenders who completed the full 18-to-36-month SRAM intervention, the reoffending rate was 0% over a ten-year follow-up period. This unprecedented result was independently audited twice by the National Offender Management Service, as officials initially suspected a data entry error. In contrast, statutory programmes recorded reoffending rates of 11–18% within just two years (Christmann, 2014; Home Office, 2023).

Cost efficiency added another layer of evidence. The average cost per participant in the SRAM model ranged between £8,400 and £14,000 substantially lower than international counterparts such as Saudi Arabia's programme (approximately US$300,000 per participant), Denmark's Aarhus model (€45,000), or Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group (SG$80,000) (Neumann, 2010; Lindekilde, 2012b; Gunaratna, 2017; Christmann, 2014).

Pakistan's Quantitative Landscape: High Violence, Limited Prevention

Pakistan's counter-extremism efforts have relied heavily on military operations, arrests, and legislative amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. While these measures have delivered short-term tactical gains, the quantitative data on overall impact and prevention remain concerning.

In 2025, Pakistan experienced one of its deadliest periods since 2009. The Centre for Research and Security Studies reported over 3,000 fatalities in the first eleven months of the year alone (Centre for Research and Security Studies, 2025). Independent sources recorded between 1,081 and 1,139 terrorism-related deaths during the same period, marking a sharp increase and the highest level since 2013 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025). These figures reflect a 45% rise in terrorism-related deaths compared to previous years, with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) accounting for an estimated 52% of attacks (Global Terrorism Index, 2025).

The implementation of the 2014 National Action Plan further illustrates the imbalance. Of its 20 points, the overwhelming majority focused on kinetic measures such as military operations and the death penalty for terrorists. The two points most closely linked to prevention madrassa reform and development of counter-narratives through media were among the least implemented (Rana, 2015; PILDAT, 2022; CRSS, 2024).

Pakistan also maintains an estimated 30,000 to 35,000 madrassahs educating between 2 and 4 million students. While the majority remain moderate, a minority continue to operate with curricula influenced by patterns established during the 1980s Afghan jihad era (Siddiqui, 2018; ICRD, 2024). Despite repeated legislative efforts, early intervention at the pre-criminal stages of radicalisation (Stages 1–3) remains extremely limited.

Direct Quantitative Comparison

When placed side by side, the data reveal a clear divergence in approach and outcome:

The UK community-led SRAM model achieved zero reoffending among high-risk participants through early, trust-based intervention. Referrals were overwhelmingly community-driven (81% from families), and completion rates reached 92%. In Pakistan, efforts continue to concentrate on later stages of the radicalisation pathway, with prevention infrastructure remaining underdeveloped. Annual terrorism fatalities in 2025 exceeded 3,000, highlighting the heavy human cost of relying primarily on hard-power responses.

Cost comparisons further underscore the efficiency gap. Community mentoring in Britain delivered superior results at a fraction of the per-participant expense seen in many state-run international programmes. In Pakistan, the financial and human resources devoted to military operations far exceed investment in scalable community prevention.

What the Quantitative Evidence Teaches Us

The numbers present an unambiguous lesson: community-owned, trust-based prevention delivered at the early stages of radicalisation produces dramatically better outcomes than late-stage kinetic responses alone. The SRAM model's zero reoffending rate, high completion figures, and strong family referral base demonstrate that credible local actors can achieve results that state-led programmes struggle to match.

In Pakistan, the data show that despite significant sacrifices and repeated legislative reforms, the absence of a robust, scaled prevention architecture continues to carry a high price in lives lost. The quantitative gap between early intervention and reactive measures is not marginal; it is categorical. These findings strongly support the adaptation of SRAM principles for Pakistan. When families, ulema, universities, and community organisations are properly trained, funded, and trusted, the pipeline from grievance to violence can be narrowed measurably. Quantitative evidence confirms that investing in community-led prevention is not only more humane but also more effective and cost-efficient.

CHAPTER 25

Reducing Youth Extremist Attitudes: Community-Led and SRAM Mentoring in the UK and Pakistan

Impact measurement · Youth attitudes · Comparative findings

Introduction

The question of how to measure the effectiveness of counter-extremism programmes is among the most contested methodological issues in the field. The challenge is not merely technical selecting appropriate instruments, achieving adequate sample sizes, managing selection bias but conceptual: what does 'effectiveness' mean in this context? Does it require demonstrable change in extremist beliefs? Reduction in violent intent? Disengagement from extremist networks? Or are upstream indicators improved social bonds, enhanced critical thinking, stronger religious identity sufficient proxies for these more direct outcomes?

Methodological Literature on CVE Evaluation

The CVE evaluation literature has grown substantially in the past decade, driven partly by the increasing policy demand for evidence-based practice and partly by the development of validated psychometric instruments for measuring extremism-related attitudes. Early CVE evaluation was predominantly descriptive and process-focused documenting programme activities and outputs rather than measuring attitudinal or behavioural outcomes. More recent evaluations have moved toward impact-focused designs,

incorporating control groups, longitudinal follow-up, and validated outcome measures.

The most widely used validated instruments for measuring extremist attitudes include the Violent Extremism Risk Assessment (VERA-2), the Extremism Risk Guidance (ERG 22+), and a range of purpose-developed attitude scales focusing on specific dimensions of extremist belief support for violent jihad, acceptance of civilian targeting, group supremacist attitudes, and so on. Each has strengths and limitations; none provides a complete picture of the complex attitudinal landscape relevant to counter-extremism outcomes.

A systematic challenge across the evaluation literature is the problem of social desirability bias: individuals in CVE programmes have strong incentives to report attitudes that programme facilitators and statutory supervisors will regard as appropriate, regardless of their actual beliefs. This challenge is particularly acute in mandatory programme contexts such as prison-based deradicalisation programmes but affects voluntary interventions as well. SRAM evaluation frameworks address this problem through a combination of implicit attitude measures, behavioural observation data, and assessments gathered by practitioners outside the formal evaluation context.

Research Design

The comparative study reported in this chapter employed a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative attitude assessment with qualitative interview data gathered from

programme participants, mentors, and family members across UK and Pakistani cohorts. The UK cohort comprised 84 young people (aged 14–26) who had participated in SRAM-informed mentoring programmes over a period of twelve to thirty-six months. The Pakistani cohort comprised 76 young people in the same age range, drawn from community-led counter-extremism programmes in Lahore, Karachi, and Peshawar that incorporate elements of the SRAM model adapted to local conditions.

Attitude assessments were conducted at programme entry, at six-month intervals during programme participation, and at twelve-month follow-up after programme completion. A control group of 60 young people in similar demographic circumstances who had not participated in CVE programmes was assessed at equivalent time points. Qualitative interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of 40 participants from each cohort at programme completion, exploring their experiences of mentoring, attitudinal change, social circumstances, and aspirations.

UK Findings

Among the UK cohort, statistically significant reductions in extremism-relevant attitudes were observed across all subscales at twelve months, with the most marked reductions in support for violence as a legitimate political tool and in sectarian exclusivist attitudes. The magnitude of attitudinal change was positively associated with programme duration, the quality and frequency of religious mentoring, and self-reported quality of the mentor relationship. Participants who described their relationship with their religious mentor as 'very good' or 'excellent' showed

approximately twice the attitudinal change of those who rated it as 'adequate' or lower.

Qualitative findings from the UK cohort shed light on the mechanisms through which attitudinal change occurred. The most cited factor was the quality of religious mentoring specifically, the ability of religious mentors to engage seriously with the theological arguments that participants had found compelling, rather than simply asserting their incorrectness. This finding provides strong support for the SRAM model's insistence on theologically qualified religious mentors as an essential programme element.

Pakistani Findings

The Pakistani cohort showed a more complex pattern of results. Significant attitudinal change was observed in the Lahore and Karachi sub-cohorts, where programmes had been operating for more than two years and had established stable mentor-participant relationships. Change in the Peshawar cohort was more limited, associated with higher staff turnover, programme disruption due to security conditions, and greater difficulty in maintaining the sustained mentoring contact on which SRAM outcomes depend.

A particularly notable finding in the Pakistani cohort was the strong association between social mentoring quality and attitudinal change. In the Pakistani context where family honour, community belonging, and peer group identity are particularly salient dimensions of young male social identity the social mentoring strand of SRAM appeared to operate more powerfully than in the UK cohort. Participants who reported significant improvement in

family relationships and community belonging showed markedly greater attitudinal change than those who did not.

Comparative Findings

The comparison across UK and Pakistani cohorts reveals both the universality of core SRAM mechanisms and their contextually variable intensity. Across both contexts, the quality of religious mentoring and the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship are the strongest predictors of attitudinal change. The religious mentoring finding is particularly robust: in both contexts, it holds independently of programme duration, socioeconomic background, prior level of extremist involvement, and demographic factors.

The relative importance of social versus academic mentoring varies more markedly between contexts. In the UK context, academic mentoring support for educational attainment and aspiration — shows a stronger association with sustained attitudinal change than in the Pakistani context, consistent with the greater educational aspirations and the more accessible further education system in the UK setting. In the Pakistani context, social mentoring shows a stronger association, consistent with the greater salience of family and community belonging in Pakistani social identity.

An Evaluative Framework for Future Research

Based on this comparative study, this section proposes an evaluative framework for future research on SRAM and related community-led CVE programmes. The framework is structured

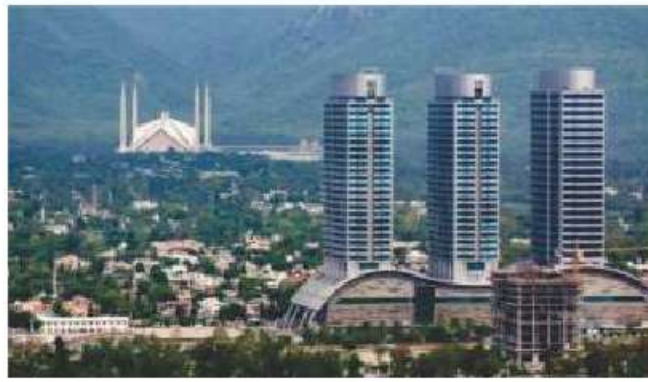
around four levels of evaluation: fidelity (the degree to which programmes implement SRAM principles as intended); process (the quality and character of mentoring relationships and activities); proximal outcomes (attitudinal changes and changes in social circumstances directly targeted by the programme); and distal outcomes (behavioural change, including disengagement from extremist networks and absence of involvement in terrorist activity).

Each level of evaluation is necessary; none is sufficient on its own. Fidelity data without process data cannot explain why a programme that was implemented as designed produced limited outcomes; process data without outcome data cannot demonstrate that quality mentoring relationships produced the attitudinal changes they aimed at; outcome data without fidelity and process data cannot inform programme improvement. The integrated evaluative framework proposed here provides the multi-level evidence base required for both accountability and learning.

CHAPTER 26

Obstacles in Pakistan Today

The Vicious Circle That Must Be Broken



A panoramic view of Islamabad Pakistan's modern capital faces ancient challenges in counter-extremism.

The case for adapting the SRAM model in Pakistan is, on the evidence, overwhelming. So why has nothing like it been attempted at national scale? The answer lies in three structural obstacles that are deeply entrenched and mutually reinforcing.

Obstacle 1: The Militarised Mindset



Pakistan's counter-terrorism architecture has long been dominated by military and intelligence agencies NACTA, created to lead soft power, remains underfunded and marginalised.

NACTA, the National Counter Terrorism Authority, was established in 2009 with a mandate to coordinate soft-power CVE. It has been starved of resources, subordinated to military intelligence agencies, and effectively bypassed whenever a crisis demands a kinetic response. Of the 20 points in the original National Action Plan, the overwhelming majority were kinetic only two touched on prevention and ideology reform, and both have been the least implemented (Rana, 2015).

Obstacle 2: Political Misuse of Religion

From the era of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to the mainstreaming of Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan, religious identity has been repeatedly weaponised for electoral gain. Blasphemy laws remain a tool for settling personal and political scores. This state-level ambivalence undercuts the efforts of moderate scholars and makes universities wary of engaging in counter-extremism work.

> *"The state relies on hard power because soft power is underdeveloped; soft power remains underdeveloped because the state continues to flirt with the politics of sectarianism; and sectarianism flourishes because the state has failed to bring religious education into the national fold."*

Obstacle 3: Inadequate Madrassah Reform



Darul Uloom Bury, UK: a case study in how traditional Islamic education can be modern, credible, and moderate.

Pakistan's estimated 30,000–35,000 madrassahs educate between 2 and 4 million students. Most are moderate and peaceful the only educational safety net for millions of the poorest Pakistanis. But a minority particularly those affiliated with Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith networks that received Saudi funding during the Afghan jihad era continue to teach curricula that glorify martyrdom (Siddiqui, 2018; ICRD, 2024).

PART IV

Beyond Pakistan — A Global Toolkit

CHAPTER 27

Lessons for the Wider Muslim World

Five Contexts Where the Model Is Already Working



Flags of all 57 member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) the SRAM model is ready to travel.

The Pakistani adaptation of SRAM is not the end of the story. It is only the beginning of a conversation that needs to echo across the ummah and paradoxically, back into the heart of Europe and North America. Wherever young Muslims feel simultaneously proud of their faith and failed by their society, the same toxic recruiters appear with the same false promise of purity and power.

Indonesia

Nahdlatul Ulama (90 million members) and Muhammadiyah (60 million) already run thousands of universities and pesantren. Add formal university-based mentoring circles, co-facilitated by NU

kyais and Muhammadiyah lecturers, and Indonesia could inoculate an entire generation in five years.

Bangladesh

The 2020–2024 surge in Ansarullah Bangla Team recruitment among unemployed graduates shows the danger. A national consortium of public universities and the Qawmi madrassah board could deliver SRAM-style mentoring to 800,000 students by 2030.

Nigeria

Bayero University Kano, the University of Maiduguri, and the Izala and Tijaniyya movements have already begun quiet dialogue after the Shekau era. The missing piece is structured, long-term mentoring of a northern Nigerian SRAM network anchored in universities but delivered in local mosques and tsangaya.

France and Germany

State-funded deradicalisation programmes are often rejected as "state Islam." France's "sortie de violence" pilots work best when imams and community elders not prefecture officials do the heavy lifting. Germany's Wegweiser and Beratungsstelle projects show the same pattern.

How Western Governments Can Help

For twenty years, the default Western posture has been: fund heavily, brand loudly, control tightly, and wonder why communities run the other way.

Here is the new rulebook, written in the blood and trust of two decades of trial and error:

1. Fund people, not projects. Five or seven-year core grants to credible community organisations and university centres, not annual proposal marathons.

2. Zero branding, zero photo-ops. The moment a Western embassy logo appears on a mentoring room wall, half the target audience has already decided it is a CIA plot.

3. Let the community choose the mentors. Western officials must never sit on selection panels for imams or former extremists. Vetting for safeguarding, yes; ideological approval, never.

4. Accept that religious language is part of the cure, not the disease. The most effective counter-narrative is still a better narrative, delivered by someone who prays the same way the young person does.

5. Measure success by trust, not by numbers of "interventions" A single boy in Molenbeek who decides not to travel to Syria because an imam he respects spent eighteen months walking with him is worth more than a thousand "awareness sessions" ticked in a Brussels spreadsheet.

6. Be willing to fund failure and iteration. Some mentors will burn out, some organisations will quarrel, and some cohorts will not respond. That is how trust is built, not how spreadsheets are balanced.

In practice, this means:

- The EU and its member states create a ten-year, €300 million "Community Resilience Trust" administered by a board that is 80 % Muslim scholars and civil-society leaders from the target countries.
- The UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office moves its entire Prevent overseas budget into unrestricted grants for organisations that already have street credibility.
- American funding (State Department + USAID) is routed through the OIC Islamic Solidarity Fund or the new Zakat Resilience Fund so that no project ever carries a U.S. flag.

Do this, and Western governments will finally become enablers rather than owners.

Failing to do this, they remain the reason many young Muslims will keep listening to the recruiter instead of the mentor. The SRAM principles are not Pakistani, British, or Indonesian. They are human. They are Islamic. And they are ready to travel wherever a teenager is one broken trust away from a terrible decision. All that is missing is the humility to let credible voices lead, and the courage to pay for it without needing to be thanked.

CHAPTER 28

Countering Online Radicalisation with Offline Trust

Why Algorithms Will Never Replace Aunties



A hooded figure at a laptop the new face of online radicalisation, radicalising at speed no content-moderation system can match.

In 2024, a fifteen-year-old boy in a village outside Sialkot opened TikTok at 1:47 a.m., watched a thirty-second clip of a black-clad fighter, felt something ignite inside his chest, and within forty-eight hours had sworn bay'ah to Islamic State Khorasan in a private Telegram room. No mosque visit, no suspicious travel, no human contact at all. Just a cracked screen and a heart full of rage.

Governments and Silicon Valley answered with industrial-scale content moderation: more than half a billion pieces of "terrorist content" removed in five years. The machinery is breathtakingly efficient. For every thousand videos deleted, a thousand and one are uploaded from a new burner phone. The truly dangerous

conversations moved years ago to end-to-end encrypted apps that no classifier can reliably monitor.

Content removal is hygiene, not healing. The grievance remains untouched.

The recruiter wins with three things no algorithm has ever been able to fake: belonging, significance, and certainty. A trusted human being does not compete inside the phone. He drags the young person out of it.

> *""A video will never make me log off. A person I respect might." Pakistani university student, Lahore, 2025"*

The correct priority stack: first, last, and always, invest in dense, offline trust networks. Second, amplify those trusted voices online as a supporting effort, never the main effort. Third, continue content disruption as necessary police work never as the centre of gravity.

In the British SRAM projects that form the backbone of this research, mentors (former extremists, practising Muslim professionals, credible imams) sat with radicalised individuals for eighteen to thirty-six months. They met in living rooms, prison visiting halls, and late-night cafés. They argued, prayed, wept, and sometimes simply sat in silence. The reoffending rate among those who completed the programme was zero. In the 2024–2025 Pakistani student interviews, the same sentence appeared again, in Lahore, in Karachi, in small towns whose names never make the news: "A video will never make me log off. A person I respect might.

"That person is the decisive terrain we have consistently misidentified. He or she already exists: the aunt who notices the boy has stopped laughing, the female counsellor who hears the fury behind a sudden full-face veil, the lecturer who realises his brightest student is now awake at 3 a.m. watching "sharia lectures." All that is missing is the training, the protection, and the modest funding to turn these natural guardians into a deliberate national network.

The correct priority stack for the digital age is therefore mercilessly clear:

1. First, last, and always: invest in dense, offline trust networks (mentors, peer circles, family ambassadors, mosque youth workers).

2. Second, amplify those trusted voices online as a supporting effort, never the main effort.

3. Third, continue content disruption and law-enforcement takedowns as necessary police work, never as the centre of gravity.

The recruiter has understood this hierarchy perfectly for a decade. His most powerful weapon is not the public nasheed; it is the private voice note that says, "Brother, I know exactly how you feel. Message me any time." We keep spending billions trying to intercept the nasheed while leaving the voice note unanswered.

One cup of tea with an elder who refuses to give up, one knock on a bedroom door at midnight, one respected teacher who says, "I am not leaving until we talk this through," is worth more than every redirect campaign, every URL blocklist, and every emergency content-removal request ever filed.

Until we reorganise our strategies, budgets, and imaginations around that single, inconvenient truth, the internet will continue to radicalise faster than we can deradicalise. The pixels will never run out. The mentors are waiting, if only we could finally decide to send them in first.

Future Threats and the Need for Community-Led Work



Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz, a meeting of the Ittehad Bain-ul-Muslimeen Committee.

The jihadist wave that dominated the first two decades of this century is receding, but the ocean of ideological violence never calms; it only changes colour and direction. Far-right extremism has already arrived in South Asia with terrifying speed. In India, Hindu-nationalist Telegram channels now mirror the structure, aesthetics, and cruelty once pioneered by ISIS media units. The same universities that once worried about Hizb Ut-Tahrir

pamphlets now quietly host "manosphere" WhatsApp groups where young men trade incel manifestos.

> **The SRAM principles are not "Islamic deradicalisation tools". They are human resilience tools. They work against any ideology that promises violent redemption to the humiliated.**

As the threats multiply and mutate, the only scalable antidote is a society so thick with trusted adults that no teenager ever falls far enough to land in a private Telegram room full of strangers promising glory through murder. Climate displacement will make this harder, not easier. By 2040, the World Bank estimates 216 million people will be forced from their homes by climate impacts; tens of millions of them will be in Pakistan. The only way to inoculate those future refugees is to start building the trust networks now.

CHAPTER 29

Pakistan's CVE Legislative Framework

Laws, Gaps, and the Road to a Comprehensive Counter-Extremism Statute



Stopping Violence Before It Starts: Punjab Sets a Unified Prevention-First CVE Path

In 2025, a year of remarkable violence in Pakistan characterised by heightened efforts by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baloch insurgent groups in Baluchistan like the Balochistan Liberation Army resulted in the deaths of thousands of people as the country witnessed one of its most violent years in more than a decade thanks to cross border sanctuaries in Afghanistan (Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2026). Pak Institute of Peace studies (PIPS) reported that the country experienced 699 terrorist attacks, a 34 percentage increase over the past year, which has left at least 1034 people dead (an increase of 21 percent), and 1366 injured, and security and law enforcement officials constituted more than 42 percent of those killed (Pak Institute of Peace Studies, 2026). A wider increase in combat-related violence was documented by Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS); total fatalities increased to 3,413 (74% increase

over 1,950 in 2024), 2,138 militants (the highest since 2015), 667 security force personnel (the highest since 2011) and 580 civilians (the highest since 2015) and at least 1,066 militant attacks (an increase of 17% and the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) recorded 4,001 total fatalities in 2025 in 1,077 fatalities in 1,077 incidents of killing, attributed as 655 civilians, 1,229 security forces and 2,116 terrorists/insurgents (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2026).

In 2025, the Global Terrorism index ranked Pakistan second in the world in terms of terrorism effects (in 2024 with reported continuous increased levels), with a 45% increase in terrorism-related deaths to 1,081 and attack numbering more than twice to 1,099 with TTP accounting an estimated 52% of the number (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025b). According to the Center of Research and Security Studies (CRSS), as of 2024 (year-to-year) the death toll through the first three quarters of 2025 (2,414) almost equalled that of 2024 (2,546), and predicted 2025 to be much deadlier overall as a result of increased militant activities and counter-terrorism efforts (Center of Research and Security Studies, 2025). This revival has been attributed to the Taliban dominance in post 2021 Afghanistan whereby they have a greater freedom to operate militants, as opposed to Pakistani missions such as Azm-e-Istehkam resulting in high militant casualties (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2025; Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2026).

Since the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, parliament has passed no fewer than fifteen major amendments, two national action plans, and a dozen subsidiary regulations touching on violent extremism.

Yet the country continues to experience some of the highest rates of terrorism-related fatalities in the world. The lesson is stark: laws alone do not stop bombs. This chapter examines the key statutes, their strengths and shortcomings, and what a genuinely comprehensive legislative framework for counter-violent extremism (CVE) in Pakistan would look like one that places prevention, community engagement, and human rights alongside prosecution and punishment.

The Foundation: Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 (ATA)



The National Action Plan (NAP) 2014 Pakistan's landmark 20-point legislative and security response to the Army Public School massacre.

The Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 remains the bedrock of Pakistan's counter-terrorism legal framework. Enacted under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in response to rising sectarian violence, the ATA created a parallel judicial system of dedicated Anti-Terrorism

Courts (ATCs) empowered to try terrorism cases on an accelerated timeline. Key provisions include: a broad definition of terrorism covering acts intended to cause fear in the public; extended pre-charge detention of up to 90 days; special evidentiary rules allowing confessions made to senior police officers; and the proscription of organisations deemed terrorist.

The ATA has been amended at least fifteen times since 1997, each amendment typically expanding the scope of offences and the powers of the state. Critics from the legal community including the Supreme Court Bar Association and leading human rights organisations have consistently raised concerns about overbroad definitions, inadequate judicial oversight, and the risk of politically motivated prosecutions.

KEY GAP: The ATA 1997 focuses almost entirely on prosecution and punishment Stages 4 and 5 of the radicalisation pathways. It contains virtually no provisions for prevention, community engagement, or early-intervention at Stages 1–3.

NACTA: The Legislation was Created but Did Not Produce the required outcomes

National Counter Terrorism Authority Act 2013



NACTA created by parliament in 2009 and formally legislated in 2013 was intended to lead Pakistan's soft-power CVE effort but has remained chronically underfunded.

Parliament established the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) by executive order in 2009, formalising its mandate through the NACTA Act 2013. The legislation charged NACTA with coordinating intelligence, developing a national CVE strategy, and crucially leading soft-power prevention efforts that no purely security-focused body could deliver. On paper, NACTA represented exactly the kind of institutional architecture that experts had called for: a civilian-led, whole-of-government coordination hub.

In practice, the law created an organisation without the resources, authority, or political backing to fulfil its mandate. NACTA's annual budget has rarely exceeded one billion rupees a fraction of what is allocated to military counter-terrorism operations. Staff positions

remained unfilled for years at a time. The authority has been subordinated, in effect, to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Ministry of Interior, making it structurally incapable of acting independently on soft-power CVE.

> **SCORECARD: Independent assessments of the NAP (PILDAT, 2022; CRSS, 2024) found that 14 of the 20 points were either partially implemented or effectively stalled. The two points with the weakest implementation were: madrassa reform and the development of counter-narratives through media. The two most kinetic points military operations and the death penalty were implemented most swiftly.**

The NAP's fundamental architectural flaw was the absence of any accountability mechanism. No parliamentary oversight committee was empowered to track implementation. No independent evaluation body was created. Progress reporting relied on government press releases, which were uniformly optimistic and rarely verifiable.

FATF Pressure and the Anti-Money Laundering / CFT Legislation



Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in Paris, following an official meeting about the global anti-money laundering body.

Between 2018 and 2022, Pakistan was placed on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list a designation that restricted its access to international finance and damaged foreign direct investment. The designation was specifically triggered by failures to prosecute designated terrorist financing networks and gaps in the legal framework for asset freezing, non-profit organisation oversight, and beneficial ownership transparency.

Parliament responded with a raft of legislation: the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Act 2010 was substantially amended; the Countering Financing of Terrorism (CFT) regulations were

strengthened; the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) was empowered to scrutinise charity and non-profit financing; and provincial Financial Monitoring Units (FMUs) were established. Pakistan was removed from the FATF grey list in October 2022 after demonstrating compliance with the required 34-point action plan.

The FATF episode illustrated a painful reality: Pakistan's government moves fastest on legislative reform when external financial pressure is applied. The domestic political constituency for CVE legislation is weak; the international financial constituency is powerful. This dynamic should be deliberately leveraged by reformers seeking to advance the prevention-focused legislative agenda.

Critical Legislative Gaps in Pakistan's CVE Framework



The Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 the cornerstone of Pakistan's counter-terrorism law, amended fifteen times but never fundamentally redesigned for prevention.

Gap 1: No Dedicated Prevention Statute

The United Kingdom's CONTEST strategy is underpinned by the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, which creates explicit statutory duties on schools, universities, prisons, and local authorities to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.' Pakistan has no equivalent statute. The legal duty to prevent radicalisation does not exist. Universities, mosques, schools, and community organisations that do prevention work do so voluntarily, without legal framework, without funding entitlement, and without protection if a case goes wrong.

Gap 2: No Statutory Rehabilitation Pathway

In Britain, the Channel programme the pre-criminal intervention stream of Prevent operates on a statutory basis: referrals are made through a defined legal process, Multi-Agency Panels (MAPs) have formal decision-making authority, and participants have defined rights. Pakistan's de-radicalisation programmes including the Sabaoon Centre in Swat and the various provincial rehabilitation initiatives operate on an entirely ad hoc basis. There is no statute governing who may be referred, what process must be followed, what rights the referred individual holds, and how outcomes are measured and reported to parliament.

Gap 3: Online Radicalisation and Digital CVE

The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 (PECA) gives the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) broad powers to block online content, but its application has been heavily criticised for targeting political dissent rather than genuine extremist

recruitment material. A dedicated Digital Counter-Extremism Framework, proposed by NACTA in 2023, would establish a legal basis for proactive counter-narrative campaigns, mandatory reporting by platforms, and safe-harbour protections for researchers and civil society organisations working on online radicalisation. It has not yet been enacted.

Gap 4: Madrassa Reform Without Legal Teeth

The Societies Registration Act and the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance 1961 provide the legal basis for madrassa registration but neither gives the government substantive power to mandate curriculum reform or sanction institutions that teach extremist content. The proposed Madrassa Regulation Act, drafted in 2019 and revised in 2022, has not been passed as of the time of writing. Until it is, the regulatory framework for the sector that educates between two and four million students remains fragmented, toothless, and contested.

> *Pakistan needs a Prevention of Radicalisation Act a dedicated statute that creates a legal duty to prevent on public institutions, establishes a statutory CVE Commission with independent oversight powers, mandates community-led referral pathways, and requires annual parliamentary reporting on implementation.*

Towards a Prevention of Radicalisation Act: A Legislative Blueprint

Drawing on the UK's Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, the EU's Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) legislative guidelines, and the specific context of Pakistan, the following architecture is proposed for a Prevention of Radicalisation Act (PRA) to be introduced in the National Assembly by 2027.

Part I: The Statutory Duty to Prevent

All public universities, schools, prisons, probation services, and healthcare providers would be placed under a statutory duty to have 'due regard to the need to prevent individuals from being drawn into violent extremism.' Compliance would be assessed by a newly established CVE Commission (see below), which would publish annual compliance reports to parliament. Crucially, the duty would be framed in terms of welfare and safeguarding, not surveillance learning from the British experience that Prevent's credibility collapsed when communities perceived it as a monitoring tool.

Part II: The CVE Commission

An independent statutory CVE Commission would be established, modelled on the National Human Rights Commission, reporting directly to parliament rather than to any ministry. Its powers would include receiving referrals from institutions and communities; convening Multi-Agency Panels at district level; auditing the implementation of the statutory duty; and publishing an annual state-of-the-nation report on radicalisation trends, programme outcomes, and legislative compliance. The Commission would be

chaired by a retired Supreme Court judge and include representatives from civil society, academia, the ulema, and the provinces.

Part III: Community Referral and the Channel Pakistan Pathway

A voluntary, confidential referral pathway Channel Pakistan would be established in law, providing individuals, families, teachers, imams, and community workers with a legally defined process to refer a person they are concerned about. The pathway would guarantee: that referral information is not shared with police or intelligence agencies without consent (except where there is imminent threat to life); that the referred individual receives a welfare assessment within 14 days; that they are offered a support package including mentoring, counselling, and educational or employability support; and that they cannot be prosecuted solely on the basis of a Channel Pakistan referral.

Part IV: Madrassa and Faith-Education Standards

The Prevention of Radicalisation Act would incorporate, by reference, a Madrassa Standards Code to be developed in consultation with the Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaris Pakistan (ITMP), the inter-board coordination body establishing minimum curriculum standards for civics, critical thinking, and the rejection of takfiri ideology. Compliance would be a condition of registration and continued government recognition. Non-compliant institutions would face a structured improvement plan before any

deregistration avoiding the heavy-handed closure orders that have previously backfired and generated sympathy for extremist networks.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY LIST: (1) Prevention of Radicalisation Act 2027; (2) Madrassa Regulation Act 2026; (3) Digital Counter-Extremism Framework 2026; (4) Statutory rehabilitation pathway for terrorism offenders 2028; (5) Parliamentary CVE Oversight Committee with statutory reporting obligations.

CHAPTER 30

Adapting SRAM for Pakistan

A Living Roadmap, not a Foreign Blueprint



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY ISLAMABAD (NUST)

The British SRAM model is not a ready-made export product. Pakistan cannot and should not copy it wholesale. It must grow its own version, rooted in its own soil, speaking its own languages, and earning its own trust.

Core Principles of Adaptation

Community ownership first; state coordination second. Religious credibility is non-negotiable: mentors must be practising, respected scholars or professionals. Mentoring, not lecturing, remains the primary delivery method. Interventions must be voluntary, confidential, and stigma-free. The approach must explicitly serve both deradicalisation and broader human development: education, employability, and citizenship.

The Heart of the Model: A Mandatory University Module

The proposed module "Tolerance, Critical Thinking and Civic Responsibility" (2 credit hours, compulsory for all undergraduate programmes from 2027 onward) would assess: 40% written assignments and reflective journal; 30% mentor/participation evaluation; 30% final presentation ("My Role in a Resilient Pakistan"). No high-stakes exam the goal is transformation, not memorisation.

Phased Roll-Out: 2026–2032

2026–2027: Pilot in eight universities (two per province); rigorous independent evaluation. 2028–2029: Evaluation, curriculum refinement, and expansion to 25 universities. 2030–2031: National roll-out to all public-sector universities; voluntary adoption by private institutions. 2032: Integration into madrassah higher education streams.

> **The British SRAM approach took ten years to mature from a small Stockwell project to a nationally recognised model. Pakistan does not have ten years. But it does have the human material.**

“Tolerance, Critical Thinking and Civic Responsibility” (2 credit hours, compulsory for all undergraduate programmes from 2027 onward). Single-semester course emphasising transformation

through mentoring and dialogue, with no high-stakes exam to prioritise attitudinal change over memorisation (Qureshi, 2025).

Table: 9 **Proposed mandatory university module curriculum in Pakistan**

Component	Activities/Topics	Delivery Method	Assessment Contribution
Understanding Radicalisation Pathways	Root causes, drivers (e.g., grievances, identity crises), structural factors like poverty and injustice	Lectures, case study discussions	15% (written assignments)
Islamic Ethics of Disagreement (Ikhtilaf) and Pluralism	Correct interpretations of key concepts (e.g., Jihad), countering misappropriations	Guest sessions with Islamic scholars, readings	10% (reflective journal)
Sectarianism in Pakistani History	Key events, consequences, paths to reconciliation	Interactive seminars, historical readings	10% (written assignments)
Media Literacy & Countering Online Propaganda	Identifying propaganda and critical analysis of online content	Workshops, practical exercises	5% (portfolio)
Weekly Small-Group Mentoring Circles	Personal reflection, addressing individual concerns, building resilience	Facilitated by trained faculty + community co-mentor	20% (mentor evaluation)

- 120-hour certificate programme jointly designed by HEC, selected universities, and civil-society partners (Paigham-e-Pakistan Centre of Islamia University, Bahawalpur and SGCS/FIRD have already expressed willingness to co-develop the curriculum).
- Separate tracks for (a) faculty mentors and (b) community/religious mentors.
- Mandatory annual refresher and peer-supervision sessions.

Phased Roll-Out (2026–2032)

Target
Pilot in 8 universities
Evaluation and curriculum refinement; expand to 25 universities
National roll-out to all public-sector universities; voluntary adoption by private ones
Integration into madrassah higher education (Darja-e-Takmeel/Takhassus) streams

50% federal/provincial budget, 30% university development funds, 20% philanthropic/zakat sources (the per-student cost of the mentoring module is estimated at PKR 9,000–12,000. Early Referral and Prevention Mechanism (the "Green Channel")
Borrowing from the UK Channel model but fully localised:

- Any member of the university community (faculty, admin, student, security guard, canteen worker) can raise a concern in strict confidence.
- Trained triage team (faculty mentor, civil-society partner and psychologist) assesses vulnerability, not ideology.
- If risk is confirmed, the student is offered, not compelled, mentoring support. Refusal carries no penalty unless there is evidence of planned violence (which is then referred to law enforcement).

Can SRAM Work in Pakistan?

1. It uses institutions (universities) that already enjoy higher public trust than most state agencies.
2. It explicitly includes religious voices, defusing the "secular agenda" accusation that has killed previous initiatives.
3. It is credit-bearing and compulsory, removing the self-selection bias that plagues voluntary programmes.
4. It costs a fraction of one week of military operations and has the potential to prevent, not merely respond to, the next attack.

The British SRAM approach took ten years to mature from a small Stockwell project to a nationally recognised approach. Pakistan does not have ten years, but it does have the human material: students who already understand the problem, faculty who want to do more than lecture, and communities desperate for a dignified way to protect their children.

CHAPTER 31

Applying the SRAM Model Beyond the UK: Lessons and Pathways for Pakistan

Model transfer · Pakistan application · Policy recommendations

Introduction

This concluding chapter synthesises the comparative findings of the volume to assess the transferability of the SRAM model to Pakistan. The preceding chapters have established the effectiveness of SRAM-informed approaches in UK community contexts, explored their theoretical basis in Islamic scholarship and empirical CVE research, and compared UK and Pakistani counter-extremism landscapes across narrative, institutional, and economic dimensions. The task of this chapter is to draw together these threads into a coherent analysis of what successful SRAM implementation in Pakistan would require, and what practical pathway might lead from current conditions to that goal.

Structural Adaptations for the Pakistani Context

The structural differences between the UK and Pakistani contexts are significant and must be taken seriously in any model transfer exercise. The UK context offers a relatively well-resourced welfare state, established civil society infrastructure, a professional social work and counselling tradition, and a constitutional framework that formally protects civil liberties and religious freedom. The Pakistani context offers none of these in equivalent form, and any attempt to transpose UK structural assumptions wholesale into

Pakistan will produce programmes that are neither effective nor sustainable.

Several structural adaptations are essential. The first concerns the role of state agencies: where UK SRAM operates in a context of relatively high institutional trust and effective multi-agency coordination, Pakistani SRAM must operate in a context where state agencies are frequently distrusted sometimes with good reason and where coordination across agencies is less reliable. Pakistani SRAM must therefore build a greater degree of community self-sufficiency into its operating model, reducing dependence on statutory agency cooperation and investment.

The second structural adaptation concerns the resource model. UK SRAM has been partially sustained by government CVE funding channels, including Prevent and related Home Office grants. In the Pakistani context, government funding channels are less reliable, less consistent, and more politically contingent. Pakistani SRAM programmes must develop more diverse funding bases including international development assistance, philanthropic investment, and mosque and community contributions that reduce dependence on any single source.

Cultural and Theological Adaptations

The cultural and theological adaptations required for SRAM transfer to Pakistan are, in some respects, more fundamental than the structural ones. The SRAM model was developed in a UK Muslim community context characterised by considerable cultural and theological diversity drawing on South Asian, Arab, African,

and convert communities with a wide range of orientations within Sunni Islam. Pakistani SRAM operates in a context where the deobandi tradition is dominant, where the authority of the local 'alim (scholar) is deeply embedded in community life, and where the relationship between state, religion, and social authority is structured very differently than in the UK.

These differences have both challenging and enabling implications. The challenge is that SRAM's emphasis on religious plurality its engagement across different scholarly traditions and its insistence on presenting multiple authentic positions rather than a single authoritative view may be experienced as theologically disruptive in contexts where Deobandi authority is strongly established. The enabling dimension is that the Deobandi tradition has, through its own scholarly resources, significant potential to generate the kind of theologically grounded counter-extremism that SRAM requires: its emphasis on traditional scholarship, community-based education, and respect for scholarly authority is, in principle, more effective at challenging extremist theology than more liberal Islamic approaches that lack traditional scholarly credibility.

Strategic Insight

Effective SRAM transfer to Pakistan does not require exporting the UK model wholesale. It requires identifying the local Islamic scholarly traditions and community structures that are most analogous to SRAM's functions and building a SRAM-informed framework on those indigenous

foundations rather than constructing a parallel imported structure alongside them.

Institutional Infrastructure

The institutional infrastructure required for effective SRAM implementation in Pakistan must be built on the foundations of existing community assets mosques, madrasas, community organisations, family networks rather than on the construction of new parallel institutions. Pakistan's mosque network is one of the most extensive in the world; its madrasa system, while the subject of significant controversy in counter-extremism discourse, encompasses a large proportion of the Islamic scholarly capacity available in the country.

The relationship between SRAM and the madrasa sector in Pakistan is a question of considerable complexity. Madrasas have been implicated in extremist recruitment in some cases and have been the subject of repeated (and largely unsuccessful) reform efforts by successive Pakistani governments. But the madrasa sector is not homogeneous: many madrasas are deeply conservative but not extremist, providing traditional Islamic education without any support for political violence. A small minority are actively connected to extremist networks. SRAM engagement with the madrasa sector must distinguish carefully between these categories, seeking to partner with genuinely non-extremist madrasas rather than treating the sector as uniformly problematic.

The Paigham-e-Pakistan initiative which brought together thousands of Pakistani religious scholars in a formal declaration against violence, terrorism, and suicide bombing provides an important institutional foundation for SRAM implementation. The scholars who signed this declaration have demonstrated both the credibility and the willingness to engage in counter-extremism work that SRAM's religious mentoring strand requires. Building SRAM programming on this existing network of committed scholars, providing them with training in SRAM mentoring methods, and supporting their engagement with young people across the country represents the most promising pathway for SRAM implementation at scale.

A Phased Policy Roadmap

Phase 1: Foundation Building (Years 1–2)

The foundation phase of SRAM implementation in Pakistan focuses on building the institutional partnerships, training capacity, and programme frameworks required for effective delivery. This involves establishing formal partnerships with key religious scholarly networks drawing on the Paigham-e-Pakistan signatories and related networks and with civil society organisations that have established community trust in target regions.

Mentor training is the critical investment of this phase. Drawing on the training models developed in the UK context and adapted by Pakistani practitioners, this phase would train an initial cohort of approximately two hundred religious, social, and academic mentors, distributed across five pilot regions. Training would combine immersive residential modules with supervised practice, peer learning networks, and ongoing professional development support.

Programme design in the foundation phase would prioritise fidelity to SRAM principles while accommodating necessary cultural and structural adaptations. A detailed programme manual, adapted from UK SRAM materials, would provide a clear framework for programme delivery while leaving sufficient flexibility for local adaptation. Baseline evaluation data would be established for all programme participants.

Phase 2: Piloting and Learning (Years 2–4)

The piloting phase tests the adapted SRAM model in five regional contexts selected to represent the geographic, cultural, and extremism-profile diversity of Pakistan and generates the evidence base required for informed scale-up decisions. Rigorous evaluation, using the framework proposed in Chapter 10, assesses programme fidelity, process quality, proximal outcomes, and (over a longer horizon) distal outcomes including changes in the security environment.

A central feature of the piloting phase is structured learning: regular programme review meetings at local, regional, and national levels, in which practitioners share learning, identify adaptations required, and update programme materials accordingly. This learning culture rare in traditional government programme design is essential to the improvement and sustainability of SRAM practice over time.

Phase 3: Scale-Up and Institutionalisation (Years 4–7)

The scale-up phase builds on the evidence and learning from the piloting phase to expand SRAM programming across Pakistan. It involves training substantially larger cohorts of mentors, establishing regional training and programme management centres, developing national policy frameworks that integrate SRAM into Pakistan's broader CVE strategy, and building sustainable funding models that reduce dependence on any single source.

Institutionalisation the embedding of SRAM within existing institutional structures (mosque networks, educational systems, community organisations) rather than its perpetuation as a separate programme is the goal of this phase. A successfully institutionalised SRAM approach becomes part of the normal practice of community institutions rather than a distinct CVE programme requiring external investment and management. This is both more sustainable and more effective: SRAM principles exercised through the normal activities of mosque, madrasa, and community organisation reach far more young people than any dedicated programme could.

Community-Led Counter-Extremism and Global Security

The SRAM model represents a distinctive contribution to global counter-extremism practice: a community-led, values-based, tri-dimensional mentoring approach that addresses the religious, social, and intellectual dimensions of radicalisation with equal seriousness, and that situates prevention and rehabilitation within the authentic traditions and relationships of Muslim community life rather than outside them.

The volume's comparative findings confirm both the effectiveness of this approach in UK contexts and its significant potential for application in Pakistan and beyond. They also confirm the conditions required for that potential to be realised: genuine community ownership and leadership; qualified, supported, and sustained mentors; integrated, multi-strand programming; extended timeframes; robust evaluation; and institutional

frameworks that position community organisations as genuine partners in governance rather than delivery vehicles for externally designed programmes.

The stakes of counter-extremism are high: for individuals whose lives are damaged by radicalisation, for communities whose social fabric is torn by violence and suspicion, for societies whose security and democratic values are threatened by political violence. SRAM offers a response to these stakes that is simultaneously realistic about the depth of the challenge and grounded in the resources of faith, community, scholarship, and human relationship that are most capable of meeting it. The editors commend it to practitioners, policymakers, scholars, and community leaders as a framework worthy of the challenge it addresses.

Conclusion

We began this journey in the snow-covered mountains of Afghanistan in 1979–80, where a war against one superpower planted the seeds that would one day claim over eighty thousand Pakistani lives and scar an entire generation of young Muslims across the world. We end it, Insha-Allah, in the seminar rooms, mosque courtyards, and family homes of tomorrow, where the next teenager who feels invisible, angry, and righteous will meet a dense, loving, relentless wall of trusted voices saying: "We see you. We know your pain. And we are not leaving until you come home."

In Britain, a handful of ordinary Muslims in Stockwell proved it could be done. Zero reoffending among the highest-risk cases was never the headline we chased; it was the by-product of something far more precious the restoration of trust where trust had been shattered. In Pakistan, the raw material is richer than anywhere else on earth: five hundred university students who already reject the lie that Islam equals violence; thousands of credible ulema who weep for the misuse of their faith; millions of parents who would give their lives to keep their child from picking up a gun.

All that remains is the decision political, moral, and spiritual to hand the first response back to the people who have the greatest stake in the outcome: the community itself.

> *"If we make that decision, then ten years from now, a boy in Chak 444 and a girl in Orangi Town will grow up taking it for granted that when life feels unbearable, there is always someone respected, faith-literate, stubbornly present who will walk*

with them until the darkness lifts. And on that day, the fire we helped light in 1979 will finally, truly, be put out not by water dropped from drones, but by the quiet, persistent light of human connection."

That is the promise of trusted voices. That is the future we still have time to choose.

Prof Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE

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