

Countering Violent Extremism: Evaluating Pakistan's Counter-Radicalization and De-radicalization Initiatives

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Abstract

Of the several by-products of terrorism that have affected the Pakistani state and society, the threat of violent extremism is the most potent one. It has damaged the country's tolerant cultural and religious ethos. The killing of 132 school children in Peshawar on 16 December last year is a sobering reminder that extremism poses an existential threat to Pakistan. To overcome the challenge of growing extremism, Pakistan should introduce a national Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) policy, in addition to the on-going de-radicalization programmes in different parts of the country. The CVE policy should comprise of individual-focused de-radicalization, and environment-focused counter-radicalization strategies. In this regard, a contextual understanding of the extremist challenge in Pakistan's ethnically heterogeneous and religiously diverse society is essential to formulate the right-kind-of CVE policies. In Pakistan violent extremism is a multifaceted and multi-layered phenomenon. Given the multifaceted scope and magnitude of the problem, Pakistan needs to fight both the reality and ideality of the challenge through a whole of community approach. A joint state-society response is indispensable for creating an environment that helps people to resist the appeal of militant ideologies. The on-going narrow-focused de-radicalization interventions in Pakistan will gradually lose their efficacy, as long as a moderate environment hostile to terrorism and militancy is not created through a comprehensive national level CVE policy.

Keywords: Countering Violent Extremism, Radicalization, Counter-radicalization, De-radicalization. Talibanization, Terrorism, Moderation.

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Introduction

Since 9/11, Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism, losing over 80,000 human lives, incurring economic losses of around 102.5 billion USD along with serious damage to its cultural and religious ethos.¹ Of the several by-products of terrorism that have harmed the Pakistani state and society, the threat of violent extremism is the most potent one.

Notwithstanding that masses are the ultimate victims of radicalization; a certain level of sympathy exists in the Pakistani society for the extremist causes which are couched in religious tone and colour. In a traditional religious society like Pakistan's anything offered in a religious guise wins immediate appeal and unknowingly people end up supporting the extremist agenda. However, it is important to assert that support for such causes does not mean that people condone violence.²

With the mushrooming of Islamist groups within Pakistan, violent extremism has gained ground and marginalised the moderate voice. This is evident from the killing of former Governor Punjab Salman Taseer, attack on female education activist Malala Yousafzai, as well as targeted assassinations of moderate Islamic scholars like Maulana Hassan Jan and Mufti Sarfraz Naeemi.³

The problem has been further compounded by ambiguous and ambivalent perception of home-grown terrorism as something external. Weak governance, widespread social injustices and the intellectually

¹ "80,000 Pakistanis Killed in US War on Terror: report," *Express Tribune* (Islamabad), March 29, 2015.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/860790/80000-pakistanis-killed-in-us-war-on-terror-report/>; among the killed are 48,504 civilians, 45 journalists, 5,498 security personnel and 26, 862 militants; Zaila Hussain, "Cost of War on Terror for Pakistan Economy," in *Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-14*, Ministry of Finance Pakistan,

http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_11/Special%20Section_1.pdf

² Hedieh Mirahmadi, Waleed Ziad, Mehreen Farooq and Drobert D. Lamb, "Empowering Pakistan's Civil Society to Counter Global Violent Extremism," *Brookings Institute*, January 6, 2015,

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/01/us-islamic-world-forum-publications/empowering-pakistan-civil-society-to-counter-violent-extremism-english.pdf>

³ "Pakistan and the Threat of Extremism: Turning Point," *Economist*, October 20, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21564907-despite-outrage-over-malala%E2%80%99s-shooting-dark-forces-are-gathering-again>

stagnant madrassa and public education system have further helped this thinking.⁴

This paper argues that in order to overcome the threat of violent extremism in Pakistan, a comprehensive counter-terrorism policy, which possesses a soft component in the form of CVE, is required. The heavy reliance on hard CT-policies—without a corresponding soft-CT regime—is not only capital intensive but counter-productive as well. For a sustainable CT-policy, Pakistan needs to balance the hard and soft CT-approaches to introduce smart approaches. The soft-CT strategies remain underutilized in Pakistan. At best such strategies operate on ad-hoc basis lacking a systematic long-term vision.

The paper also identifies major challenges facing Pakistan's soft-CT initiatives and puts forward some policy recommendations for improvement.

Framing the Issue of Violent Extremism in the Pakistani Context

Before launching any major CVE programme, evolving a conceptual framework is imperative to understand the trends that underpin the phenomenon. It will be the first step towards well-meaning and holistic CVE-programme in Pakistan. Theoretically, CVE initiatives are sub-component of a country's national CT-policy. Moreover, all CVE initiatives are context-bound and case-specific. A nuanced understanding of what works, and what does not, in a particular environment is crucial for the success of any CVE initiative.

In this regard, the Western one-size-fit-all approach to understand a complex phenomenon like violent extremism in Pakistan's complicated local environment is problematic. Most of the Western analyses of extremism in Pakistan tend to look at increasing religiosity as an indicator of extremism. For instance, the increasing trend of wearing the hijab in women and sporting of beards by men or the people stressing their Islamic identity over their national identity in public polls are taken as markers of extremism. In the Pakistani context, the growing religiosity may not be the right indicator of extremism and radicalization. Thus, the understanding

⁴ Manzar Zaidi, "Pakistan's Security Dilemma: On Doctrines, Perceptions and Institutional Interests," *SISA Report Number 6*, Centre for International and Strategic Analysis, June 2013, http://strategiskanalyse.no/publikasjoner%202013/2013-06-14_SISA6_Report_PakistansSecurityDilemmas_Manzar_Zaidi.pdf

flowing from such analyses is flawed and misleading. It leads to an oversimplified and lopsided understanding of the issue. Therefore, Western definitions and frameworks are not appropriate tools to understand extremism in Pakistan.⁵

Violent extremism in Pakistan is a multifaceted and multi-layered phenomenon. It exists in the form of sectarianism, Shariah (Islamization) movements, Talibanization and a multitude of Jihadist organizations.⁶ Other forms of extremism manifest in the general opposition to American or Western policies, in nationalist-separatist insurgency in Balochistan and ethno-political violence in Karachi and parts of interior Sindh.⁷

Extremism and radicalization take place against a contextual background with its surrounding push and pull factors.⁸ For the purpose of this paper, the definition of extremism has been adopted from the research carried out by a Pakistan-based think-tank, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS). According to its definition, “Extremism means forcefully rejecting the existing means of political participation, attempting to create new ideologies and narratives to bring about a structural change in all spheres of life (social, political, economic or ethnic) by challenging the legitimacy of existing system institutions.”⁹

Against this backdrop, while the end-goals of all CVE programmes are identical, the means to achieve them differ: they are context-bound and country-specific.¹⁰ Pakistan is a heterogeneous society with diverse ethnic communities and multiple denominations of Islamic practices in different parts of the country. While these diverse communities have several

⁵ Muhammad Amir Rana and Safdar Sial, *Radicalization in Pakistan*, (Islamabad: Narratives, 2012), 22.

⁶ Marisa L. Proges and Jessica Stern, “Getting Radicalization Right,” *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2010, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66227/marisa-l-porges-jessica-stern/getting-deradicalization-right>.

⁷ “Fears of Extremism Rise in Pakistan: Poll,” *Express Tribune* (Islamabad), July 2, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/730029/fears-of-extremism-rise-in-pakistan-poll/>

⁸ Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, “The Process of Radicalization: Contextualizing the Case of Pakistan,” *Conflict and Peace Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, April-July 2011, 41-61.

⁹ “Defining the Phenomenon of Radicalization in Pakistan,” *Pak Institute for Peace Studies*, January 2009.

¹⁰ John Horgan, “What makes a Terrorist Stop being a Terrorist,” *The Conversation*, November 18, 2014, <http://theconversation.com/what-makes-a-terrorist-stop-being-a-terrorist-33119>

common attributes but their cultural traditions and customs are distinct and peculiar.¹¹ For instance, the nature of radicalization in FATA is ideological driven by the Islamist militant organizations like the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qaeda. However, radicalism in Balochistan has its roots in economic grievances and political marginalization. Additionally, the radicalization in Punjab and urban Sindh has its roots in sectarian agendas.¹²

At the same time, the patterns of radicalization at the societal level simultaneously overlap and vary among the socio-economic classes: this is present at three levels. Among the lower-income groups radicalization is sectarian in nature. In the middle-income groups in the country's urban and semi-urban areas, radicalization is mainly political emanating from issues like occupation of Afghanistan by the US-led coalition forces and the Indian occupation of Kashmir. So, Kashmir and Afghanistan-focused militant groups shape the views and behaviours in this category. The upper-middle class and elite of the country is closer to pan-Islamist causes like caliphate or revival of Islamic laws and practices. Religious organizations like al-Huda and Hizb-ut-Tharir (HT) are active in indoctrinating this class. It is important to mention that these trends among different socio-economic classes are not fixed.¹³

Henceforth, across Pakistan's geographical units, communities and classes, the implementation strategies will vary. So, while the overall structure of CVE programme in Pakistan may be the same, the implementation mechanism will have to factor in the local dynamics.¹⁴

Why have a CVE Programme in Pakistan?

The CT-lessons learnt from the American experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan indicate that combating terrorism only through kinetic means is capital-intensive and long-drawn. Such blunt and hardened CT-approaches

¹¹ Interview with Dr. David Hansen, Associate Professor at the Correctional Service of Norway Staff Academy and Director Pakistan Program at the Centre for International and Strategic Analysis, Norway, April 15, 2015.

¹² Email interview with Hussain Nadim, former director Planning Commission of Pakistan with extensive experience in security sector, April 4, 2015.

¹³ Email iinterview with Hussain Nadim, former director at the Planning Commission of Pakistan with extensive experience in the security sector, April 4, 2015.

¹⁴ Khalid Iqbal, "De-radicalization: Pakistan's Dilemmas," *Criterion Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 4, October 31, 2014, <http://www.criterion-quarterly.com/de-radicalization-pakistan%E2%80%99s-dilemmas/>

spark terrorist recruitment. Moreover, the use of power is necessary but not a sufficient factor of success in CT. Likewise, a military victory is hard to achieve as the terrorists do not fight on the traditional battlefield rather they lurk around in the society as for them, civilian population is both a target and sanctuary. The traditional conception of victory-defeat framework is useless in CT when the real idea is to “win the hearts and minds” of the people.¹⁵

As there are no silver bullets for victory against the terrorist threat, in 2009 Pakistan felt a need to combine the kinetic and non-kinetic means to work out a more flexible and innovative CT- approach. The idea was to have a cost-effective and result-oriented policy to adequately address both the tangible and intangible aspects of terrorism.¹⁶

So far, Pakistan has used hard and soft-power without a strategy resulting in a vacuum. The primary purpose to have a CVE is to: a) stop terrorist organizations from growing; b) deprive them of social support base available in the form of supporters and apologists; c) build resilience in community against extremist propaganda, especially in the vulnerable and at-risk segments of population; d) and, stop youth recruitment by terrorists’ outfits.¹⁷

The rationalization to have a comprehensive CVE programme in Pakistan has following six factors:

- a) In Pakistan, extremism and terrorism have a cause-and-effect relationship. So, terrorism cannot be tackled without weakening this bond. It can be achieved by targeting the avenues which the extremist groups use to increase their influence in society.¹⁸ Neutralizing extremists’ ideological appeal in society is

¹⁵ Emilie Simpson, “Why We Failed to Win a Decisive Victory in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy*, March 2, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/02/why-the-war-in-afghanistan-was-lost-from-the-start-coin-taliban/>

¹⁶ “The challenges of counter radicalization in Pakistan,” *United States Institute of Peace*, May 9, 2012, <http://www.usip.org/publications/the-challenges-countering-radicalization-in-pakistan>

¹⁷ Jessica Stern, “Mind Over Martyr: How to Deradicalize Islamist Extremists,” *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2010, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65896/jessica-stern/mind-over-martyr>

¹⁸ Hedieh Mirahmadi, Mehreen Farooq and Waleed Ziad, “Pakistan’s Civil Society: alternative Channels to Countering Violent Extremism,” *World Organization for Resource Development and Education*, October 5, 2012, <http://www.worde.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/WORDE-Report-Pakistan-Civil-Society-Alternative-Channels-to-CVE.pdf>

necessary.¹⁹ So, there is a need to reach out to at-risk individuals and society segments to prevent further radicalization of individuals and groups.²⁰

- b) From the supply-demand standpoint, CVE is carried out to reduce the size of terrorist groups by depriving them of active membership and a support base among local communities.²¹
- c) No military can jail or shoot its way out of militancy: a multi-pronged and non-kinetic framework is also needed. At the core, it is fundamentally a war of ideas.²² While the military operations in CT work like a surgeon's knife which must cut before healing; the actual healing touch comes from CVE.²³ Violence is just one miniscule but well-publicized expression of terrorism; however, it is just the tip of the iceberg.²⁴ The broader issues and root causes of terrorism lie beneath the surface. The under-surface issues can be effectively solved through softer measures like CVE.

There are around 8,000 militants detained in different Pakistani jails and internment centres. Keeping such a large number of militants in prison without trials or a rehabilitation programme is fraught with risks. Given the problems of capacity and inefficiency of Pakistan's criminal justice system, it is a tall order to try all of them. Learning from what happened in the Iraqi prisons resulting in creation of the

¹⁹ Safdar Sial, "Role of Religious Scholars in Counter-Radicalization and Deradicalization Strategies in Pakistan: The Need and the Scope," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, January-June 2013, 69.

²⁰ Muhammad Amir Rana, "Folds or Radicalization," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, July-September 2010, 5-8.

²¹ John Hargon, "De-radicalization or Disengagement," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 2, no. 4, 3,
<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/32/html>

²² Tariq Pervez, "Challenges of establishing a rehabilitation programme in Pakistan," *Terrorist Rehabilitation and Counter-Radicalization: New Approaches to Counter-terrorism*, ed., Rohan Gunaratna, Jolene Jeral and Lawrence Rubin, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 122.

²³ John Horgan, "Fully Operational? The Ongoing Challenge of Terrorist Risk Reduction Programs," *Global Policy*, August 16, 2013,
<http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/16/08/2013/fully-operational-ongoing-challenge-terrorist-risk-reduction-programs>

²⁴ Moeed Yusuf, "Pakistan's Militancy Challenge: From Where, to What?" in *Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Challenge*, Moeed Yusuf, eds. (Washington DC: George Town University Press), 36.

Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS), Pakistan needs to introduce rehabilitation programmes in different prisons. As it is said, jails are the universities of the criminals, the prisons housing militants can turn into nurseries of extremism in the future. It is in the fitness of things to mention that the militants arrested during the 2009 Swat operation are still languishing in jails waiting for their trials.

- d) Research on various asymmetrical conflicts indicates that the youth that constitute the rank-and-file of any insurgent or extremist group participate in violence for a variety of overlapping reasons. They are either coerced by their families and communities or motivated by their adverse socio-economic circumstances to join terrorism. Such reasons have very little to do with the extremist ideology. These people can change their trajectory away from rather than towards violence if they are provided proper guidance for course correction.²⁵
- e) While fighting terrorism, states at some stage look for a political settlement and CVE offers a way out. Research indicates that all terrorists are not ideologically motivated. There are active and passive supporters and participants of terrorism. Usually only twenty per cent of them are active members while eighty per cent are passive participants.²⁶ Active participants form the top-hard-core of the terrorist pyramid while the passive participants are the middle and bottom layers of the pyramid. The sets of motivations of the middle and low rankers are different from those of hard core militants. Paradoxically, the demands of hard-core militants are intangible and the demands of the soft-core militants are tangible. If the layer of passive participants can be neutralized, the social-support base of the terrorist groups vanishes. Later, the handful hard-core elements can be sorted out through the use of hard power.²⁷

²⁵ Georgia Holmer, "Creating Spaces for Effective CVE Approaches," *Peace Brief 178*, United States Institute of Peace, September 2014, <http://www.usip.org/publications/effective-cve-approaches>

²⁶ John Horgan, "What makes a Terrorist Stop being a Terrorist?" *Conversation*, November 18, 2014, <http://theconversation.com/what-makes-a-terrorist-stop-being-a-terrorist-33119>

²⁷ M. Zaidi, "Radicalization of the young," *Express Tribune* (Islamabad), January 7, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/490547/radicalisation-of-the-young/>

- f) Those militants, who want to surrender by actively disengaging from their organizations, demobilize from violence, and agree to follow the law of the state, deserve a second chance to live a normal life.²⁸

Pakistan's CVE Initiatives

Pakistan has the following CVE initiatives:

- i. De-Radicalization:
 - a) Swat Programme;
 - b) Punjab Programme.
- ii. Counter-Radicalization:
 - a) Madrassa Reforms;
 - b) National International Security Policy 2014;
 - c) National Action Plan 2014;
 - d) Counter Terrorism Operations;
 - e) Pakistan Protection Act 2014.

De-radicalization Programmes

Pakistan's first de-radicalization programme started in September 2009, after completion of Pakistan army's counter-terrorism offensive against the Pakistani Taliban in Swat. Most of the militants apprehended during the operation were teenagers and young kids who were trained as suicide bombers.²⁹ The overwhelming presence of youth among the detainees forced the security forces to revisit the traditional counter-terrorism approaches. A need was felt to introduce a militant rehabilitation programme. To start the programme, Pakistan army converted four-large school buildings in Swat into de-radicalization centres.³⁰

²⁸ Shehzad H. Qazi, "De-radicalizing the Pakistani Taliban," *Huffington Post*, October 4, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shehzad-h-qazi/de-radicalizing-the-pakistani-taliban_b_993208.html

²⁹ Jason Burke, "Fighting Terrorism: Do De-radicalization Camps Really Work," *Guardian*, June 9, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/terrorism-do-deradicalisation-camps-work>

³⁰ Hassan Abbas, "The Roots of Radicalization in Pakistan," *South Asia Journal*, Issue 9, Summer 2013, <http://southasiajournal.net/the-roots-of-radicalization-in-pakistan/>

Swat De-Radicalization Programme

The programme in Swat aims to rehabilitate the militant detainees who worked with the Taliban. The idea is to provide them with a second chance by restoring their self-worth and make sure they do not return to terrorism.³¹ So far, 2500 Taliban militants have been rehabilitated.³²

The Swat de-radicalization programme comprises Sabaoon for kids (between 12-18 years), Rastoon (for youth between 19-25 years) and Mishal centres (for militants' families to create awareness to look after the rehabilitated individuals).³³ In general, the programme is termed as De-Radicalization and Emancipation Programmes (DREPs) and run through public-private partnership. The overall management and supervision of the programme is in Pakistan military's hand; however, an umbrella body of local civil society and non-governmental organizations, Hum Pakistan Foundation (HPF) is involved in different activities inside the centres. Since 2009, Sabaoon has rehabilitated around 200 militants,³⁴ while the Rastoon has rehabilitated 1196 militants.³⁵

Punjab De-Radicalization Programme

In 2011, another de-radicalization programme was initiated in eastern Punjab under the joint management of police's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and Technical Vocational Training authority (TEVTA). The de-radicalization programme in Punjab was shelved in 2012 by the Punjab government due to fund scarcity. Around 1300 more militants, who

³¹ Jamie Scharf, "Pakistani boot camps want to reprogram ISIS terrorists," *New York Post*, November 16, 2014 <http://nypost.com/2014/11/16/pakistani-boot-camps-want-to-re-program-isis-terrorists/>

³² Ibid.

³³ Muhammad Amir Rana, "Swat De-radicalization Model: Prospects for Rehabilitating," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, April-June 2011, 5-13.

³⁴ Shehzad H, Qazi, "A War without Bombs: Civil Society Initiatives Against Radicalization in Pakistan," *Policy Brief no. 60*, Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, February 2013, http://www.ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU_Brief_CounterDeradicalization_2_14.pdf

³⁵ "Rehabilitation and integration: 47 ex-militants freed after they receive vocational training," *Express Tribune* (Islamabad), October 13, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/617202/rehabilitation-integration-47-ex-militants-freed-after-receiving-vocational-training/>

had to undergo rehabilitation in different batches, could not be taken on board because of the closure of the programme.³⁶

The Punjab rehabilitation programme focused on ex-militants of the Kashmiri Jihadi groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT, Army of the Pure), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM, Muhammad's Army) and anti-Shia militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ, Army of Jhangvi) and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP).³⁷

The programme was based on a three-pronged strategy of prevention, rehabilitation and after-care. It had three modules: psychological assessment, religious rehabilitation and vocational training.³⁸ Three batches of around 311 participants completed the training. The training and rehabilitation were organized at various regional and district headquarters to make it convenient for participants to attend.³⁹

³⁶ Faisal Ali Ghuman, "De-radicalization in Disarray," *Dawn* (Islamabad), October 24, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1139983>

³⁷ Zill-e-Huma Rafique and Mughees Ahmed, "De-Radicalization and Rehabilitation Efforts: Analysis of Anti-terrorism Activities in Pakistan," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 2, Issues, February 2013, 115-124, https://www.counterextremism.org/download_file/48/134/270/

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Saba Noor, "From Radicalization to De-Radicalization: The Case of Pakistan," *Counter Terrorists Trends and Analysis (CTTA)*, vol. 5, Issue 8, August 2013, <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CTTA-August13.pdf>

Process of De-radicalization in Swat

A dedicated team of doctors, psychologists, religious scholars and other professionals manage the de-radicalization programme in Swat. The programme has four-components: psychological rehabilitation, religious counselling, formal education (upto 10th and 12th grade) and vocational training. The programme also includes family meetings, participation in sports and cultural events.¹ On average, a normal case of rehabilitation can take six-months to one year. In extreme cases, rehabilitation can take as long as three years.

Psychological Rehabilitation (Screening)

The militants undergo psychological rehabilitation before being exposed to other rehabilitation modules. The psychologists determine an individual's emotional, psychological, and intellectual development through cognitive tests. Understanding the meaning of an individual's involvement in terrorism is central for any de-radicalization programme. The psychologists evaluate the militants' personal narratives to investigate method of their recruitment, role within the organization, nature of their relationship with militants (e.g. community-based links or family ties), and their continued inclination toward militancy.

The motivations vary from person to person based on individual context, personal life experiences and incidents. The main motivations for individuals to join militancy and terrorism in Pakistan include sense of serving God, poverty, coercion by the Taliban on local community to send their kids for jihad, social pressures and tribal affiliations. One worth mentioning finding of militants' psychological counselling is that only a handful of militants are ideologically motivated. For majority of the militants Jihad is just a job.

Based on the set of motivations and root causes the psychologists classify the terrorist into four broad categories: 'very high risk, high risk, medium risk and low risk.' For instance, a child who served for a short time and mostly carried out menial tasks would be considered low-risk. A medium-risk inmate may be the one who only provided logistical help, such as transport and access to food. Those trained for combat operations are considered high-risk while very high risk are those who voluntarily trained as suicide bomber and firmly believe in the Taliban ideology.

Religious Counselling

Religious counselling is the second stage of militant's rehabilitation programme. It aims at correcting the extremist views of militants through behaviour modification without changing their religious beliefs. The emphasis is on religious dialogue to address the detainees' understanding of Islam. It is critical in challenging the extremists' mindsets, which rely on religion for legitimacy of their behaviour. The purpose of such sessions is that at the end of the programme the subject-individuals should entertain more balanced, moderate and tolerant views. This is a slow and time consuming process.

Formal Education

The programme also offers formal education from grade 1 to 12 (or high school). The aim is to equip these individuals to pursue higher education after the rehabilitation; to help them have more informed views of different things rather than blindly buying into distorted form of religion. The curriculum is liberal in nature, trying to teach students about tolerance and religious pluralism.

Vocational Training

It focuses on teaching the rebels employment skills, like electronics, computers, carpentry, masonry, automobile mechanics, welding, appliance repair, word-work, basic electrician skills and poultry farming. The idea is to equip them with a set of technical skills to support themselves if they are academically weak or unable to find employment. It follows the basic philosophy that having an actual job and a place to go every day is a better protective mechanism to avoid re-engagement in terrorism.

Reintegration Criteria

After successfully going through the aforementioned four stages, the militants are reintegrated back in the society. What happens to these individuals after re-integration is more important than what happens to them inside the de-radicalization centers. The reintegration criterion includes educational performance, vocational skills, expert psychosocial assessment, and the family's level of engagement with the child. Low risk children are reintegrated earlier if they and their families do not have militant connections and there is no militant presence in their community. Teams visit villages and communities to investigate this. Furthermore, it is also ensured that the beneficiaries either transition into a school or are employed at the time of reintegration. To counter the risk of recidivism, a major challenge for de-radicalization programmes, military officers' check in with reintegrated children on weekly and monthly basis, depending on the child's risk level. This monitoring process lasts minimum for two years.

Counter Radicalization

Madrassa Reforms

The debate on the role of madrassas in spreading radical Islamist ideologies is central to extremism-terrorism nexus in Pakistan. The growth of extremism in Pakistan is closely linked with the proliferation of radical madrassas across the country. The debate on madrassa reforms in Pakistan gained prominence in the aftermath of 16 December 2014 Taliban attack on a school in Peshawar. The post-attack investigation revealed that the seven attackers stayed in a mosque before launching the attack.⁴⁰ Though, all madrassas are not involved in supporting terrorism; however, it is a fact that majority of terrorist leaders and ideologues, such as former chiefs of the Pakistani Taliban Baitullah Mehsud and Hakimullah Mehsud and the current head of al-Qaeda's South Asian Branch (AQIS) Maulana Asim Umar are the products of different Pakistani madrassas. Maulana Sami-ul-Haq's madrassa Haqqaniain Akora Khattak, Nowshera is the alma mater of the Afghan Taliban's top leadership including its late chief Mullah Muhammad Umar.

Reforming madrassas into centres of excellence and learning, which promote moderation and tolerance of other faiths, is critical for combating religious extremism in Pakistan.⁴¹ Madrassas networks and mosques are the main constituencies of religious-political parties, jihadist groups and sectarian militant organizations. Sectarian organizations and religio-political parties look towards madrassas to expand their support base. According to Wiki Leaks, annually around \$ 100 million is transferred to Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith madrassas in South Punjab from Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab Gulf states.⁴²

In the recent years, two attempts have been made to reform and regulate madrassas in Pakistan. In 2008, President General (R) Pervez Musharraf issued the Madrassa Regulation Ordinance. He built on the 2002

⁴⁰ Munawar Azeem, "TTP Getting Active Support from Seminaries in Twin Cities: report," *Dawn* (Islamabad), April 7, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1098291>

⁴¹ Zahid Gishkori, "Reforming madrassas: The revolution within," *Express Tribune* (Islamabad), January 25, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/825216/the-revolution-within/>

⁴² "Saudi Arabia, UAE financing extremism in south Punjab," *Dawn* (Islamabad), May 21, 2011, <http://www.dawn.com/news/630599/saudi-arabia-uae-financing-extremism-in-south-punjab>

ordinance to bring madrassas under regulation and state oversight.⁴³ The purpose was twofold: register with the government and teach curriculum which does not preach militancy, hate speech and sectarianism. In 2010, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP)-led coalition government signed an agreement with the Ittehad-e-Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Pakistan (ITMP), an umbrella organization of madrasa oversight boards.⁴⁴ The agreement carried provisions to recognize the five ITMP madrasa boards and link them to the ministry of education through an act of parliament.⁴⁵ In return, the agreement prohibited madrassas from publishing literature that promotes militancy or sectarianism and teach a more inclusive curriculum. However, the agreement could not be presented to the parliament for legislation due to bureaucratic bottlenecks.⁴⁶

To this date, the oversight of madrassas and their activities remains foggy at best. Despite the fact that majority of the madrassas have registered with the government, they are reluctant to cede their autonomy to the government. The madrasa registration and bringing them under the direct control of government institutions is a litmus test for the state's resolve to overcome the challenge of radicalization and religious extremism.⁴⁷

⁴³ "Madrasa Education: 2014 Challenges, Reforms and Possibilities," Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, March 2015, 14, <http://www.youthparliament.pk/downloads/CR/educationandyouthaffairsstandingcommitteeereport.pdf>

⁴⁴ Kaja Borchgrevink, "Pakistan's Madrasas: Moderation or Militancy: The madrasa debate and the reform process," *NOREF Report*, June 2011, 9. http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/d6f77e0632a20fcf1ae1ad65041acdc7.pdf

⁴⁵ The five madrasa boards in Pakistan include: 1) Tanzeem-ul-MadaarisAhl-e-SunnatWal-Jamaat of the Barelvi school of thought; 2) Wafaq-ul-Madaaris Al-Arabia of Deobandis; 3) Wafaq-ul-Madaaris of Ahl-e-Hadith; 4) Rabta-ul-Madaaris Al-Islamia of Jmaat-e-Islami; 5) and, Wafaq-ul-Madaaris Al-Shia of Shia school of thought.

⁴⁶ Syed Irfan Raza, "Accord for introducing contemporary subjects in madrassahs signed," *Dawn* (Islamabad), October 8, 2010, <http://www.dawn.com/news/569392/accord-for-introducing-contemporary-subjects-in-madrassahs-signed>

⁴⁷ Dr Farzana Bari, "A fractured consensus," *Express Tribune* (Islamabad), February 3, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/831754/a-fractured-consensus/>

National Internal Security Policy (NISP)

On 24 February 2014, government approved the country's first National Internal Security Policy (NISP). The policy has adopted a five-pronged counter-terrorism approach to dismantle, contain, prevent, educate and reintegrate.⁴⁸ NISP has given Pakistan the institutional structure which was required to manage the competing demands of different security and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) for countering terrorism. It provides a clear road map about the mandates and roles of different LEAs in CT but it has not come into effect as yet. According to NISP, National Counter Terrorism Authority (NCTA), created in 2009 is the central agency to coordinate and implement counter-terrorism operations in Pakistan.⁴⁹ However, the NACTA is still a paper body without a functioning head or secretariat. Moreover, NIPS is an ambitious policy; implementing it in Pakistan's divisive political culture, is not an easy task.

Pakistan Protection Act 2014

In July 2014, Pakistan's National Assembly passed the anti-terror Pakistan Protection Bill 2014. The bill provided the Pakistani security forces with additional powers to fight terrorism. It empowered Pakistani security forces with shoot at sight powers, as well as to arrest suspects and search houses without search warrants. The bill adopted the approach of guilty-until-proven innocent putting the burden of proof on the accused to prove his innocence against charges levelled against him. Several civil society and human rights organizations fear that such a sweeping body-of-law will turn Pakistan into a police state. Pakistan's history is replete with examples where such laws have been abused to victimize the opponents. So, there is a fear that in the future authorities can use this bill for their own vested purposes as well. This is why the bill has been enacted as a special set of laws for two years. At the end of two years, its status will be re-evaluated to see if it should be implemented further or not.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ "Nisar unveils national security policy in NA," *Dawn* (Islamabad), February 26, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1089598>

⁴⁹ See the full text of NISP here, https://www.academia.edu/6337566/National_Internal_Security_Policy_of_Pakistan

⁵⁰ Irfan Haider, "Protection of Pakistan Bill 2014 approved in NA," *Dawn* (Islamabad), July 2, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1116529>

Counter-terrorism Operations

Since 9/11, the Pakistan Army has conducted four large-scale and around eight medium-to-small-scale counter-terrorism operations against the Pakistani Taliban. The large-scale operations include, Rahe-e-Rast (Path to Righteousness), Rah-e-Nijat (Path to Salvation), Zarb-e-Azb (Sword of the Prophet) and Khyber-I. Generally, these operations have depleted the operational capability of the Pakistani Taliban to carry out major terrorist operations in the country along with destroying their physical infrastructure. Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Khyber-I have been conducted since 2014 under the incumbent Pakistani army chief General Raheel Shareef, while Rah-e-Rast and Rah-e-Nijat were carried out in 2009 during the tenure of former Pakistani army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kiani.

Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched on 15 June 2014 against local and foreign militants in FATA's North Waziristan Agency. The operation was launched after the peace talks between Taliban and government failed.⁵¹ So far, the Army has cleared around 90 percent of North Waziristan from militants' presence along with destroying IED factories and militants' command and control structure.⁵² According to Pakistan military, the operation will continue till the whole area is cleared of militants. Meanwhile, Khyber-1 operation was launched on 17 October 2014, against the militant groups Lashkar-i-Islam in Khyber Agency.⁵³

Additionally, operation Rah-e-Nijat was carried out on 19 June 2009, against the Mehsud faction of the Pakistani Taliban in FATA's South Waziristan agency.⁵⁴ Army cleared the area from militant possession in four to five months. Similarly, operation Rah-e-Rast was carried out on 11 May 2009 against the Swat Taliban in KP's Malakand Division. In four months, military restored the writ of the state in Swat district and adjoining area.⁵⁵

⁵¹ "Operation Zarb-e-Azb: All terrorists being hit, says Gen Raheel," *Express Tribune* (Islamabad), January 17, 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/823149/operation-zarb-e-azb-all-terrorists-being-hit-says-gen-raheel/>.

⁵² Mateen Haider, "80pc of Miramshah cleared, army says," *Dawn* (Islamabad), Pakistan, July 10, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1118087>

⁵³ "Army launches 'Khyber One' operation," *Nation* (Lahore), October 18, 2014, <http://nation.com.pk/national/18-Oct-2014/army-launches-khyber-one-operation>

⁵⁴ Muhammad Amir Rana, Safdar Sialnd Abdul Basit, *Dynamics of Taliban Insurgency in FATA* (Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, 2010), 238.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 239.

Challenges to Pakistan's CVE Efforts

Generally, there is a lack awareness about the threat extremism poses to society. The moderate majority in Pakistan rejects violence, but not necessarily disagree with the extremist agenda as such, which is couched in religious language. Following are some of the major challenges confronting Pakistan's existing CVE strategies:

Hostile Social Environment

In Pakistan where radicalism is said to be wide-spread, few de-radicalization centres are akin to isolated islands of normalcy where militants are provided with a healthy environment to facilitate their return to normal life. However, when they are reintegrated back into a society where all the factors of radicalization are still present, a real time danger of their re-radicalization looks quite imminent.⁵⁶ On top of that, a broken governance system, widespread socio-economic disparities and political marginalization provides an ideal breeding ground for the growth of radicalization. Without improvement in the afore-mentioned factors, the narrow-focused and targeted de-radicalization interventions alone cannot overcome the problem of extremism in Pakistan. At the same time, in the absence of a national level CVE policy, overcoming extremism in Pakistan will remain an uphill task.⁵⁷

Narrow-resource Base

Given the scale and scope of the problem, the limited gains achieved against radicalization are fragile and reversible due to limited funding. Providing an adequate resource base is the second major challenge confronting the CVE efforts. The donor-driven initiatives have short life-span. Sustaining these programmes on long-term basis and then expanding them as a national-level activity looks a tall order.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Interview with Feyyaz Ahmed, Assistant Professor Political Science at University of Management Technology (UMT), Pakistan, on March 18, 2015.

⁵⁷ Syed Shoaib Hassan, "Analysis: Pakistan's militant rehabilitation problem," *Dawn* (Islamabad), December 30, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1153913>

⁵⁸ Interview with Feyyaz Ahmed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

CVE is an on-going, ever-evolving and long-term process. The authorities managing the de-radicalization programme claim low recidivism rates (one per cent). Such claims appear to be misleading, premature and exaggerated. The real success or failure of a de-radicalization programme can only be determined after a passage of 10-15 years. Pakistan's de-radicalization programme is only-six years old and in such a short time-span, it is very hard to determine which strategies have had long-lasting impact on the individuals.⁵⁹ Conversely, high-success rate also exposes loose monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

In Pakistan, CVE is an emerging subject within the counter-terrorism field which needs improvements and rigorous re-evaluation. Low recidivism rate is not a good indicator of the programme's success or failure. Most of the data on Pakistan's de-radicalization programme is commentary or interview based. An independent evaluation based on empirically verifiable data has not been carried out. Improving the monitoring of the programme along scientific lines is another major challenge.

Cyber Radicalization

In the last few years, smart use of internet and social media by extremist organizations for propaganda and recruitment has taken the threat of online radicalization to a whole new level. It has alarmingly increased the youth's vulnerability to online-self-radicalization. With increasing internet penetration in the country, Pakistan has shown great vulnerability to online radicalization. Currently, there are 32.4 million internet users in Pakistan (30 million), half of whom use internet on their mobiles.⁶⁰ More than 70 per cent of these internet users are young-people. As a sub-component of its CVE, Pakistan should devise a mechanism to closely monitor online chat-rooms of the Jihadist organizations, their websites and the subscribers to their material.

⁵⁹ Marisa L. Porges and Jessica Stern, "Getting Deradicalization Right," *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2010, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66227/marisa-l-porges-jessica-stern/getting-deradicalization-right>

⁶⁰ "30m internet users in Pakistan, half on mobile: Report," *Express Tribune* (Islamabad), June 24, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/567649/30m-internet-users-in-pakistan-half-on-mobile-report/>, (accessed December 23, 2014)

Civilian Control of the De-radicalization Programmes

To turn the on-going CVE initiatives in Pakistan into a national-level comprehensive programme, the oversight and supervision of the programme should be in the hands of civilian authorities as the army's control of de-radicalization programme politicizes it. A bottom up CVE approach in civilian oversight is needed.⁶¹

Policy Recommendations

National Counter-radicalization Policy

Overcoming the challenge of radicalization is a long-term process which requires collective enduring commitment at the policy level. Pakistan's CVE policy should comprise of three main areas: education policy (madrassa and public education system), national youth policy and a comprehensive counter-terrorism policy.⁶² The policy should clearly state its goals and means to achieve them. Since Pakistan's existing de-radicalization initiatives put emphasis on providing employability skills to militant detainees, a national youth policy exploring job-creation options should also be made part of the CVE. It will help stop more young people falling prey to militant recruitment and radicalization propaganda.⁶³ At one level, the extremist groups are trying to redefine and reshape the Muslim identity. There is a big vacuum in the minds of the Pakistani youth where they fit in the society as a critical segment which constitutes Pakistan's future.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Interview with Bilveer Singh, Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and Associate Professor of Political Science at the National University of Singapore, April 21, 2015

⁶² Interview with Wajahat Masood, Public Intellectual and Journalist, Pakistan, April 13, 2015.

⁶³ "Creating an environment that counteracts militant ideologies and radicalism in Pakistan," *Norwegian Peace building Resource Center*, Seminar Report, March 2014, http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/be49e0a57107072741eca4da942f835f.pdf

⁶⁴ Interview with Faisal Bin Muhammad Hassan, Associate Research Fellow at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and member of the Religious and Rehabilitation Group (RRG), April 16, 2015, Singapore.

Community Engagement and Community Resilience

To effectively overcome the challenge of extremism, Pakistan needs to evolve a whole-of-community approach targeting both the reality (through kinetic means) and 'ideality' (non-kinetic means) of terrorism. In this regard, a joint state-society response is indispensable. It aims to create an environment that helps people to resist the appeal of militant ideologies.⁶⁵ In Pakistan, social polarization and religious fragmentation has been a major stumbling block in evolving effective counter-extremist responses. The chances of overcoming these challenges increase if a cooperative environment is created. In this regard, a CVE policy can provide engagement opportunities to different segments of the society to discuss and evolve joint response to extremism.⁶⁶

Extremism may have penetrated almost all segments of the Pakistani society. In the long-term defeating terrorism only through state-led efforts looks dim without engaging the community at multiple levels. The mind-set prevalent among the Pakistani community is that eradicating extremism and terrorism is only the government's job. However, in recent years government-public joint ventures have emerged as an essential component of contemporary conflict resolution frameworks. Britain's CONTEST approach working around four pillars; prevent, pursue, protect and prepare and Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) are two cases in point.⁶⁷

Pakistan should build mechanisms for community resilience and community engagement to create an environment hostile to extremism and terrorism. The policy should help the community to entertain moderate values, spirit of peaceful co-existence, interfaith harmony and respect for diversity. In addition, mechanism of community engagement can also be used to disrupt terrorist plots and recruitment efforts. Given the magnitude

⁶⁵ Interview with Rohan Gunaratna, head of International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research and Professor of Security Studies at the S. Rajatnam School of International Studies, Singapore, April 20, 2015.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Marisa L. Proges and Jessica Stern, "Getting Radicalization Right," *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2010, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66227/marisa-l-porges-jessica-stern/getting-deradicalization-right>

of the problem, Pakistan can only defeat terrorism through joint state and society efforts.⁶⁸

Counter Narratives

Creation of counter-narratives is another important aspect of CVE policy. Individuals and communities process events around narratives that resonate with them at an emotional level.⁶⁹ People often believe a particular version of events because they want to. Narratives represent human emotions, desires, fears and expectations. Pakistani state's counter-narrative has been ineffective because it is built on rationality, logic and facts rather than common human desires and emotions.⁷⁰

In counter-terrorism, restoring the writ of the state involves dominating both physical (recapturing the territory) and psychological domains (winning back the hearts and minds). In Pakistan the militant narrative dominates the propaganda space, both offline and online. The extremist message gains traction because it is couched in religious rhetoric and feeds on popular notions like pan-Islamism and anti-Americanism. In Muslim majority countries like Pakistan, religious symbols are more important than the conceptual ideas or arguments. Anything presented in religious colours generate immediate public sympathy.⁷¹ The use of religion makes extremist message attractive to the masses. For instance, the fight against terrorism is portrayed as a War on Islam that is a conspiracy to divide Pakistan and promote Western values.

The public opinion in Pakistan gets ambivalent due to dearth of ideological responses against terrorism. Moreover, the state's contradictory CT-policies have further confused the public opinion. It has allowed militants to exploit the communication gap between the state and society.⁷²

⁶⁸ Interview with Bilveer Singh.

⁶⁹ Amil Khan, "Pakistan and the Narrative of Extremism," *Special Report*, United States Institute of Peace, March 2013, 3, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR327-Pakistan-and-the-Narratives-of-Extremism.pdf>

⁷⁰ Interview with Khuram Iqbal, Assistant Professor of Terrorism at the National Defense University, Pakistan, April 8, 2015.

⁷¹ Email interview with Sami Raza, Assistant Professor University of Peshawar, April 15, 2015.

⁷² Madiha Afzal, "Education and Attitudes in Pakistan: Understanding Perception of Terrorism," *Special Report 367*, United States Institute of Peace (USIP), April 5, 2015,

People see the extremist narrative as an attractive way of understanding the world. The heavily polarized political and religious environment is tilted in favour of extremists and terrorists. As a result, successive Pakistani governments have failed to create a public buy-in by putting forth a national counter-narrative against terrorists.⁷³

Faith-Based Networks and Moderate Religious Scholars

Religious scholars and faith-based networks not only enjoy public trust in Pakistan but also hold a great sway in shaping, moulding and directing public opinion. Projecting the voice of moderate Muslim scholars in Pakistan against extremist-narrative is critically important. General masses, literate and illiterate, mostly rely on religious clergy for their belief system. Public opinion mostly resonates with those held by religious scholars not just in the religious domain but on the political and social issues as well. The militants and extremists exploit this dynamic by injecting their agenda through extremist clergy.⁷⁴

On the contrary, Pakistani government can use faith-based networks and moderate religious scholars to refute the extremist message and promote message of peaceful co-existence, moderation and inter-faith harmony. The apathy of the Pakistani state and increasing life threats to moderate religious scholars has pushed such voices in isolation of silence. For instance in October 2010, the Pakistani Taliban assassinated a moderate religious scholar and Vice Chancellor of the Islamic University of Swat, Dr. Muhammad Farooq. He worked extensively on refuting terrorists' extremist messages.⁷⁵ Similarly in 2010, the Taliban assassinated renowned religious scholar Maulana Hasan Jan in Lahore when he issued a fatwa against

<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR367-Education-and-Attitudes-in-Pakistan.pdf>

⁷³ Wajhat Masood, "Militants' Media in Pakistan: Political Etymology and Professional Craft," Pak Institute for Peace Studies, January 2010, sanpips.com/download.php?f=155.pdf

⁷⁴ Safdar Sial, "Role of Religious Scholars in Counter-Radicalization and Deradicalization Strategies in Pakistan: The Need and the Scope," *Conflict and Peace Studies*, vol. 5, no 1, January-June 2013, 69.

⁷⁵ Muhammad Riyaz Mayar, "VC of Swat University shot dead in Mardan," *News International* (Islamabad), October 3, 2010, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-1040-VC-of-Swat-varsity-shot-dead-in-Mardan>

suicide bombing.⁷⁶ In order to engage religious scholars in CVE, it is the government's duty to provide them and their families with security so that they can work independently without any fear.⁷⁷

Faith-based networks are active on every level of the society. They are an effective medium within Pakistan's conservative religious framework. Their grass-root outreach and connections with the local communities make them ideal partners to work with. In addition, such networks also enjoy a fair amount of trust within the eyes of public. Religious scholars are familiar with arguments used by extremist networks to promote their agenda, and these can be useful in providing a point-by-point rebuttal enveloped in a plausible religious framework. They understand the dynamics of their communities and quickly identify radicalization and know how to intervene appropriately.⁷⁸

Public-Private Partnership

While a public-private partnership already exists between the Hum Pakistan Foundation (HPF) and the Pakistan army in managing the de-radicalization programme, it needs to be enhanced further to rope-in more partners. This will not only help in diversifying the existing set up but also to broaden the scope of the programme from narrow-focused to the national-level.

Annual CVE Summits and Symposiums

In 2010, the Pakistani government arranged an international conference on "radicalization and counter-radicalization". Earlier in 2008 Islamabad Policy Research Institute had organised an international conference on "de-radicalization and engagement of youth in Pakistan". Experts from different parts of the world participated in the conference. After that there has been

⁷⁶ Sabir Shah, "Prominent religious scholars killed in last 25 years," *News International* (Islamabad), February 28, 2014, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-235428-Eminent-religious-leaders-killed-in-25-years>

⁷⁷ Interview with Wajahat Masood, Public Intellectual and Journalist, Pakistan, April 13, 2015.

⁷⁸ Hedieh Mirahmadi, Mehreen Farooq and Waleed Ziad, "Pakistan's Civil Society: alternative Channels to Countering Violent Extremism," *World Organization for Resource Development and Education*, October 2012, 13, <http://www.worde.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/WORDE-Report-Pakistan-Civil-Society-Alternative-Channels-to-CVE.pdf>

no national level conference or symposium held on the subject. The government should convene such symposiums on annual basis to share its findings with other stakeholders, learn from others' best shared practices and the emerging CVE model. These measures will act like an annual audit of the programme which will help improve it further.

Conclusion

Contemporary terrorism evolves at an astounding pace. The terrorist groups in Pakistan keep changing their recruitment, attack and propaganda strategies with time and space. They are innovative and adaptive to changing circumstances with tremendous regenerative capacity. Those involved in counter-terrorism have to be equally innovative with their preventive and pre-emptive policies. To be successful, counter-terrorism practitioners have to be two steps ahead of the terrorists. CVE allows CT-practitioners to keep pace with innovative and ever-changing terrorist strategies if not get ahead of them.

Extremism in Pakistan is certainly not confined to religiously inspired militancy and terrorism only; it is prevalent in the society at all levels. A large segment of the Pakistani society, especially youth, is vulnerable to extremist propaganda. The on-going narrow-focused de-radicalization interventions in Pakistan will gradually lose their efficacy, as long as a moderate environment hostile to terrorism and militancy is not created. So, there is a dire need to build community resilience to immunize the society against extremism.

At a broader level, without improvement in governance, economic and security situation CVE efforts will have a minimal impact. A national level CVE policy, if implemented judiciously, is one component among many others to bring about a positive change in the society. CVE alone cannot bring about a positive change in society. The aforementioned efforts without CVE will also be missing an important link. The two have to go hand-in-hand.

After the dreaded Taliban attack on the Peshawar Army Public School (PAPS) in December last year, Pakistan's internal security policy is undergoing a paradigm-shift. This paradigm shift can act as a catalyst for the Pakistani political and military leadership to devise a comprehensive CVE policy within the ambit of counter-terrorism policy keeping the scope and magnitude of the issue in view. Pakistan needs a CT-policy which balances the hard and soft aspects of counter-terrorism that targets both the

reality and ideality of terrorism. Until that does not happen, Pakistan may continue to stumble from one tragedy to another and from one military operation to another. ■