**Counter Violent Extremism: Genesis, Media & Culture (Part-2)**

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In the wake of the Peshawar school attack in 2014, civil-military leadership came up with a 20-point agenda called the National Action Plan (NAP) to rid the country of a repeat of a similar terrorist attack. The NAP was made with a specific, mostly quantifiable, and ultimately time-bound agenda to curb the scourge of terrorism. NACTA chalked out this 20 Points NAP primarily for countering violent extremism (CVE) in consultation with stakeholders and approved it on December 24th, 2014, through Parliament. Based on the lessons learnt from NISP 2014-18 and the implementation of NAP 2014, the NISP 2018-23 was drafted. This policy is entirely different from NISP 2014-18 as it focuses on areas and issues that were earlier not in focus in the earlier policy and implementation plan like the establishment of a writ of state, institutional reforms, improving governance, social justice, establishing a shared vision and ensuring political stability.

This policy has identified that lack of accountability, external influence and actions, lack of political inclusion, lack of social justice, regional inequalities, exclusionary identity and youths’ alienation and frustration narrative are the main causes of insecurity and violent extremism.

So, to address these issues, the policy suggests an approach based on “6-Rs”, which are: (1) Reorganizing the Security Apparatus, (2) Reimaging of National Narrative and the society, (3) Reconciling with affected people and groups, (4) Redistribute of resources on basis of needs, (5) Regional and International Approach to terrorism, and (6) Recognize the issues through effective research on socio-economic problems.

Media is the fourth pillar of the state. In the contemporary global context, media is no longer an entertainment tool. Technological advances have transformed the very nature of communication, making it interactive and taking its dissemination scale to another level. The rise of social media has pushed the communication domain beyond borders, making global communities interact with each other.

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This has redefined the regulatory role of government, in the backdrop of efforts to curb extremism and build counter-narrative against terrorism, radicalism and violent extremism. Given the scope and authority of PEMRA Ordinance 2002, efforts to streamline and manage content on print and electronic media as well as monitoring social media platforms have not been easy.

Pakistan’s media landscape continues to be fertile ground for those seeking to promote violent conflict. Social media plays a most influential part in the formation of public opinion through analysis and comment upon news and other matters of interest. Extremists and violent extremists have always sought to use compelling messages and narratives as a means of attracting followers to their cause. In the modern age, it follows that the internet and social media represent a significant and easy-to-use medium to inspire, radicalise and recruit young people.

Following the National Action Plan in 2014, which banned the glorification of terrorism, the media has come a long way in understanding and realizing its role to augment government efforts in countering violent extremism (CVE). The Prevention of Electronic Crime Act, of 2016, had played a significant role in countering extremist ideological content, material and propaganda on social media. The implementing agencies (LEAs) at the federal and provincial levels are monitoring as well as proactively pursuing extremist content, sites and social media platforms to check glorification, hate speech, and cyber-terrorism on social media.

A national-centric media strategy owned by the government, which spells out the objectives desired to be attained, is imperative to achieve success in the interventions against CVE. Given the fact that extremist outlets possess mastery in technology and cyberspace utility, the government needs to meet the challenge through an equally determined resolve, compatibility and competence. Potential media interventions for countering efforts include efforts to Deconstruct Violent Narratives, Post-Incident Reporting, Establish a Council of Complaints, an exclusive Media Cell for CVE, Oversight on Registration of Media, and building the Capacity to Discern Online Content.

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