**Radicalisation and media discourse**

By [Sadaqat](https://nation.com.pk/amp/author/sadaqat/) on February 24, 2022

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| Much has been written about the communication methods used for propaganda by western powers that have continued to use the media as a political tool to create hegemony. The world witnessed this during the Cold War, when the use of the media helped to redefine the national identity of the US as a virtuous and patriotic America, against a dangerous and destructive socialist east power of Russia. |

Often, the mainstream media portrays countries like China and North-Korea, ones with an authoritarian regime, to be the leader of propagandists, but this is misleading as history has told us otherwise. During the Greek revolution in the 19th century, Islamophobia was spread for the sake of propaganda against the Ottoman empire in order to free themselves from their rule.

In the 21st century, communication has been used to spread Islamophobia, especially after incidents like 9/11 and the war against Taliban in Afghanistan, which influences people to see all Muslims in the same negative manner, as opposed to different groups in which we find all kinds of people.

A similar issue is observed in Palestine where the Israelis have used media to spread misinformation about the activities of Palestinians in order to encourage hatred and opposition against them. Communication as a weapon of mass destruction was also used as a pretext for the war in Iraq, which further enforced negative ideas about the Muslim population throughout the world.

Propaganda exists everywhere, and through social media, it has widened its reach. In modern day, we have become oblivious to the influences that advertisement, campaigns and even regular social media posts have on our thought-process, and we often find ourselves attracted to the most popular trends. Certain jargons being used to spread propaganda have become an essential part of fifth-generation warfare.

How we choose our words and how we frame them could change the context and the subsequent impact of what we have to say. This not only applies to the words we use when we speak to others, but also the words we use to speak to ourselves.

First, one must recognise that they are surrounded by various opinions on different platforms, on every medium that they may consume information from. Once this belief is established, there are three steps we can take to ensure that we are free from any negative influence of propaganda.

The first is to recognise when a thought enters your mind, that could alter your judgement of a person or a situation, and whether this thought enforces a negative narrative. Next, you can pause from feeding yourself this narrative and allow your mind to explore alternate ideas and replace this judgement with a positive one.

A recent example of negative perception being fed to society with regards to the Muslim world, including Pakistan, is that of “Islamic Extremism”. This jargon is thrown around carelessly by international media, creating a false narrative about a certain group of people without realising the impact of such statements.

These narratives entirely disregard the work of academia, theorists and analysts who work hard to present more progressive and positive ideas and leave little room for healthy discourse and debate as such propaganda results in people already forming their own negative opinions and are less open to being convinced otherwise.

A similar situation is being observed in Pakistan, where the “Single National Curriculum” (SNC), introduced by Prime Minister Imran Khan, has been accused of aiming to spread Islamic radicalisation and extremism in the country. The SNC was developed as a single curriculum to be applied uniformly throughout the country to all educational institutes in order to remove the class-divide that exists in the society with the presence of multiple education systems, varying in different classes of the society.

These jargons of “radicalisation” and “extremism” were once again used carelessly, without proper knowledge of what the SNC aims to achieve in the long run. Most importantly, the SNC does not fulfil the requirement of a tool that is being used to radicalise the youth or spread extremism.

In order to understand how radicalisation takes place, it would be worthwhile to refer to Dr Mubarak Ahmed, a PhD from Newcastle University, UK, and his thesis on “Ideology and Radicalisation” in which he applies Hannah Arendt’s criteria of ideology to conceptualise the mindset of the Islamic radical.

The study develops and applies a novel theoretical framework to conceptualise the mindset of the central character of Islamic radicalisation and lists five essential elements of an ideological mindset from Hannah Arendt as his theoretical framework, namely: the superhuman source as origin of thought; the claim to global domination; violence and the call for action; the objective enemy; and rejection of factual reality.

If the SNC was to be qualified as a tool for radicalisation, it would need to fulfil all five of these criteria, which it is unable to do so since it aims to do the exact opposite of what is alleged; promote unity, uniformity and peace in society.

Pakistani media analysts generously use jargons of “radicalisation” and “extremism” without conducting any research to understand the background, history, reasoning and purpose of using specific jargons by west. This is just not restricted to SNC, and it is common phenomenon in our daily media discourse.

Thus, the allegation made against SNC about its goal to radicalise the youth or spread extremism is baseless since it does not meet the criterion of the five essentials discussed above. Imran Khan has time and again, stressed the importance of interfaith harmony, and if looked at closely, the SNC aims to achieve that by educating the youth on the fundamentals of religion which is based on peace, respect and logic.