**Countering violent extremism**

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Violent extremism has become a global concern, especially after the beginning of the 21 century. In recent years, the world has experienced new waves of violent extremism that have taken the lives of many innocent people. The violent extremism has remarkably subdued the entire social harmony of many nation-states. From the Middle East to South Asia and Europe to the US, every other society is challenged by the hardened ideological positions of violent extremism. In a quest to understand how to efficiently address the threat of violent extremism, it is crucial to examine frontline states like Pakistan. On incidences of terrorism and violent extremism, Pakistan has lost on socioeconomic, cultural, and educational grounds.
Pakistan is the world’s fifth-most-populous country and thirty-third largest country in the world in terms of area, and the biggest challenge of extremism is how it has been tagged as an extremist state; so far, Pakistan’s way of dealing with counterinsurgency has been generally unsuccessful. The government is facing many challenges because of the huge figure of terrorist organisations and extremist groups functioning in the country and the forte of the military is only one side of what is essential for counterinsurgency. The extremist groups possess a school of thought that anyone who belongs to diverse religious influence is inferior and consequently is an easy target. Hence, there is a need to explore the dynamics of violent extremism while finding reasons for how and why these extremist groups are involved in spreading extremism in society.
Instead of focusing on root causes, we should look towards solutions to the problem in Pakistan and other similar countries. Therefore, understanding the various aspects of violent extremism, and exceptionally multifaceted communication strategies that will be fit to handle the modern challenges has become imperative. Meanwhile, there are contending positions that the incessant attacks are due to the gap in proper communication between the security apparatus, government, and extremist groups. Therefore, there is a need to examine the roles of strategic communication in the countering of violent extremism and its influence on Pakistani society. It is imperative to take a more comprehensive approach that incorporates not only current, crucial security-based counter-terrorism measures but also systematic preventive procedures that directly address the drivers of violent extremism. Countering violent extremism is an emerging field in the realm of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency.
So, the need for time is to find out some of the significant insights about CVE that work as fuel first to understand the phenomenon of countering violent extremism and then to tackle the situation in Pakistan’s context.
Therefore, examining and proposing contemporary approaches as a balanced process between communication and security-related strategies that address the underlying motivations to support a violent extremist, in Pakistan is required. In today’s world, having multi-faced communication strategies is crucial; time has shown that countering violent extremism through strategic communication campaigns is more effective when a multi-layered approach is used. This involves using a variety of messages and communication methods that cater to different target audiences, aligning with strategic policies and politico-military actions.
Over the years, the foundational understanding of violent extremism and terrorism has mainly been established through the military, security institutions, and experts, along with the government. This came out in consideration of violent extremism and terrorism, with harmony on approaching a universal definition of this approach (CVE). Referring to terrorism as a tactic, the level of anger and hate that drives people to join their ranks. Addressing anger and hate is crucial, but it’s important to recognise that not all forms of violence stem from those emotions. Terrorists may believe they are doing what is right, based on their moral code and a belief in moral superiority. However, it’s necessary to approach their actions with a critical mindset and analyse what they consider to be “good.”
There are multiple ways to examine the root causes of violent extremism. There is no single cause or pathway into radicalisation and violent extremism; instead, there is a wide array of factors on the macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis. Violent extremism tends to thrive in an environment characterised by poor governance, democracy deficits, violations of human rights, corruption, marginalisation, discrimination against some sections of society, and a de-stable law and order situation. Repressive policies and violation of human rights combined with poor governance increase the allure of violent extremism. Hence, violent extremism can be best conceptualised as a “kaleidoscope of factors”.
Given these contexts, there is still much to be done in formulating comprehensive counterterrorism policies to lessen the threat and address the causes of an existential conflict in Pakistan. Although some jihadi groups may be targeted, distinguishing good and bad extremists remains part of the policy. Yet, some of the following questions continue to remain unanswered, like why Pakistan has been blamed as an extremist state and how can we minimise the extremist tag; in way that some of these unexplored resolutions like seeking its solution through strategic communication appear to be an important and worthy to investigate if we can remove or reduce these concerns? What should be done further to pull apart the narratives used by Western media for Muslims as extremists?