[**Two approaches**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1742789/two-approaches)

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TRADITIONAL approaches to prevent and counter violent extremism have often relied on reactive and security-based responses. Such measures include identifying individuals and groups involved in VE, curbing financing that sustains their efforts, preventing their movement, and disrupting their plans and activities.

The two most popular approaches to combating VE are whole-of-government (WoG) and whole-of-society (WoS). The former aims to prevent and counter VE based on an integrated government response, the second to prevent and counter VE via a role for civil society and other non-governmental and government actors.

An effective WoG approach needs coordination among government actors, including police, the interior ministries, labour, women’s development, education, youth, religious affairs and social welfare. Under a WoS approach, preventing VE requires dialogue and cooperation between government and non-governmental actors. Youth and women are the preferred targets of extremist narratives, but they can also be powerful agents of social change. Adoption of WoS creates space for a partnership between the state and its citizens.

Kinetic responses don’t address socioeconomic causes, and may exacerbate radicalisation and limit rights. Preventing radicalisation requires resolving the grievances and motivation that lead people to join ext­remist groups. A security-based appro­ach alone is insufficient to root out terrorism. Fighting extremism demands that youth, families, women, victims of terrorism, religious, cultural and educational leaders, civil society and media play their role.

Society must play its role in fighting extremism.

A WoS approach faces multiple irritants. CSOs are often seen as suspicious, unable to address security issues, and working to get grants. Conducting research in extremism issues is considered out of bounds, and researchers often avoid showing interest in this. Partnerships are often hampered by poor awareness and skills in civil society, and CSOs may not know how to help prevent extremism. In developing societies, lack of trust between the state and CSOs creates hurdles.

Media coverage of terrorism is not a routine journalistic affair. Terrorism is not only an act of violence but also communication. In covering terrorism, the media may play a positive or negative role. The way terrorism is reported has a negative impact on public safety and LEAs’ efforts. Exaggerated and biased coverage may polarise communities, fan hatred and encourage terrorist groups. Responsible reporting fulfils professional as well as social duties. A responsible media not only reports incidents of terrorism but also encourages the debate regarding the push-and-pull factors and uses a diagnostic approach. Journalists should be familiar with national commitments to international human rights law, privacy and the presumption of innocence.

Militants prefer innovative technological options. Hence, including IT specialists in the counter-narrative is essential. A few countries have incorporated engagement with formerly violent extremists, which has enhanced understanding about the prevention of extremism.

Traditionally, women have been presented as victims, but research indicates an active role by women in supporting or being an active partner in VE, eg, gathering intelligence, recruiting and mobilising resou­rces. Militant groups enlist female fighters to shame men. Increasing women’s role in VE prevention requires them to play a larger part in decision-making in the security sector, and to include them in peace processes.

Parental influence is very important too. Where parents have little influence over their children’s decisions, they are less able to guard against their radicalisation. ‘Parent-son’ ties can represent gaps. While fathers are away, mothers in developing societies have to shoulder the responsibilities. They are well placed to recognise the early signs of radicalisation; but unless they’re empowered they can’t do much. Parents should be the first ones to detect proclivities to violence. But they are not always equipped to address psychological, sociological and ideological issues. In a recent attack in Karachi, reportedly, for the last few months, the parents of one attacker were unaware of their son’s whereabouts. Training parents to recognise and deconstruct VE narratives will pay dividends.

For two decades, the US and its allies wa­ged a war against terrorism, yet, the virus of extremism infected many societies. Terrorists may be killed, but extremism won’t be.

NAP I makes no reference to any policy to address VE. NAP II lists the formulation, institutionalisation and implementation of the CVE policy. Last year, Nacta drafted the national CVE policy, which awaits approval. Pakistan needs separate CT and CVE policies, plans and laws to ensure clarity.

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*Published in Dawn, March 18th, 2023*