**Countering violent extremism**

**The National Action Plan (NAP), marks a significant stride in Pakistan’s fight against violent extremism**

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Owing to the evolving charac­ter of conflicts, countering violent extremism (CVE) has grown to be a challenging task on a global scale. Pakistan is presently dealing with a slew of issues and coun­tering extremism is a major one among them. The underlying causes of violent extremism, the emergence of terrorist or­ganisations that support it, and their connections to antago­nistic external sources not only disrupt the country’s social fabric but also leave an adverse impact on the country’s economic growth and prosperity. Since its inception, Pakistan has had various ecclesias­tical, religious, and sectarian con­flicts that took violent shapes. Pak­istan is the hardest hit by religious and ethnic radicalisation, which is encouraged by both external and internal actors who are giving non-religious as well as religious militancy a narrative and resourc­es. Nevertheless, since Pakistan joined forces with Washington to fight communists in South Asia, notably in Afghanistan, the degree of VE has multiplied. It is a well-es­tablished fact that the repercus­sions of the Taliban’s rise in Af­ghanistan, the twin tower attacks, and the ensuing WoT turned out to be much more severe for Pakistan than were expected. However, de­spite suffering significant damages Pakistan has stayed dedicated to eradicating terrorism.

['India expanding settler-colonial project in IIOJK by grabbing Kashmiris' land'](https://www.nation.com.pk/12-Feb-2023/india-expanding-settler-colonial-project-in-iiojk-by-grabbing-kashmiris-land)

Given the circumstances that contribute to violent extremism, combating it is a difficult task as it relies not only on the state’s inten­tions but also on foreign assistance. Violent extremism is deemed an intricate subject in academic set­tings and has several definitions and analyses. Additionally, phrases like terrorism and radicalism are used to describe VE interchange­ably. The treatment of radicalisa­tion and radicalism as different from terrorism and extremism is something that researchers and intellectuals are cognisant of. The reason is that radicalisation car­ries negative as well as positive un­dertones. However, this does not preclude radicals from becom­ing terrorists and extremists since radicalisation can result in extrem­ism. Extremism develops from po­larised philosophical narratives and behaviours that lead to a sense of superiority over other people. It also results from conflicts be­tween the government’s ideology and popular belief, socio-politico-economic inequalities, conflicting goals of big powers, and their use of violent means.

[President felicitates Iran on 44th anniversary of Revolution](https://www.nation.com.pk/12-Feb-2023/piaf-rejects-hike-in-power-gas-tariffs-fears-increased-energy-rates-to-damage-economy)

In recent decades, the concept of CVE has gained popularity among policymakers and practitioners. It focuses on strengthening popula­tions that are susceptible to rad­icalisation to resist the influence and pull of terrorist recruitment. It is thought of as a ‘soft’ counterter­rorism strategy. Many Western na­tions who have CVE programmes of their own, ranging from engage­ment to influencing public opinion, urged Muslim nations to follow their lead. In the case of Pakistan, it is crucial to realise that under­standing CT and CVE initiatives re­quires delving into the issues’ eco­nomic, historical, political, social, and ideological origins. With 184 million people, Pakistan is a melt­ing pot of regional, religious, and governmental identities. The ma­jority of Pakistani society may be described as falling somewhere between the two extremes, there­fore regardless of whether they are more secular or more religious in their beliefs and practices, they cannot be classified as fundamen­talists. Thus, there is a conflict be­tween those who favour segregat­ing religion and politics and others who favour a stronger role for re­ligion in politics. However, accord­ing to polls, the majority of the former do not support religious political parties, while the latter are categorised as liberals who ac­cept Western policies.

[Folk singer Bashir Baloch passes away in Quetta](https://www.nation.com.pk/12-Feb-2023/folk-singer-bashir-baloch-passes-away-in-quetta)

Another aspect worth consider­ing is Pakistan’s geopolitical sig­nificance. Pakistan may contrib­ute positively to CVE because of its strategic significance to both America as well as the rest of the globe. In my opinion, the Nation­al Action Plan (NAP), marks a sig­nificant stride in Pakistan’s fight against violent extremism. By de­claring zero tolerance for milita­rism and the moves to smother ter­rorist organisations by strangling their funding and tearing down their communications systems physically and in the media as well, the 20-point NAP effectively de­fined the state’s CVE approach.

To sum up, to counter violent ex­tremism efficiently, internal secu­rity must be strengthened based on consensus among the key stakeholders. Unfortunately, Pak­istan’s inadequate administration is the main obstacle to eliminat­ing this threat. So, in addition to creating systematic cohesiveness among all pertinent institutions and society as a whole, good gov­ernance will aid in the develop­ment of institutions. Additionally, it will contribute to the econom­ic and political stability necessary to address external threats. We, as a society need to acknowledge that ethnic and religious divisions will continue to be a major barri­er to economic progress. Dialogue amongst religious groups is cru­cial if we are to speak out against violence as a whole and defeat this threat. Political and religious lead­ers as well as civil society must debunk the terrorist narratives (which misrepresent Islam) and create a counter-narrative. Even if hundreds of radicals are killed, ex­tremism will persist if such views are not contested or condemned. The greatest way to stop the fi­nancing of terrorists, stop the mis­use of social media, and maintain lasting Madaris reform is to ful­ly implement the NAP. It is nec­essary to enact political and eco­nomic reforms in troubled areas (e.g. FATA), which will benefit the entire nation as well as the region.

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