



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Countering Violent Extremism and Combating Models in Pakistan**

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**ABSTRACT**

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) has become redoubtable task to combat the amorphous nature of conflicts around the globe. Extremism is a daunting phenomenon which requires persistent efforts at societal, political and socio-economic level to counter the recurrence, resurgence and involvement of hostile extraneous agencies to disrupt the peace in Pakistan. The study familiarizes the reader with the application of non-kinetic measures to counter violent extremism through deradicalization and undercutting the ideological and violent discourse narratives. This study is an endeavour to construct a context-based and multi pronged model of countering violent extremism in Pakistan. Counter violent extremism (CVE) helps in combating the scourge of terrorism through countering the extremist narrative, prevention, rehabilitation and after care programmes of terrorists. This research helps in devising the CVE models to deal extremism on Macro, Meso and Micro level. The research methodology is qualitative, based on the study of research journals, article, books, newspapers, non-structured interviews and personal reflections.

**KEYWORDS**      Counter Narrative, Counter Violent Extremism, De-radicalization, Rehabilitation, Terrorism, Sectarian Conflict

**Introduction**

The term of CVE is not static in meaning and interpretation. Diverse programme with different outlook are coagulate under the same rubric. Notwithstanding, some programmes are initiated on community engagement basis and some involve individual-level interventions. The basis of CVE programmes are to deconstruct the violent ideology, militant adhere to and commits violent actions. Once the subject knows about the horrific consequences of his nefarious violent activities, he renounces the violence and disengages from the violent landscape. Therefore, the militant after repentance either abandon the violence or at least lessen their ideological underpinnings. Such endeavours of renouncing violence and mitigating ideological viewpoints, collectively termed as “Combating Violent Extremism”, “Countering Violent Extremism”, and Preventing Violent Extremism” with the acronym of CVE and PVE (Stephens, Sieckelinck, & Boutellier, 2019). Counter violent extremism (CVE) is defined as “proactive actions to counter efforts by extremists to recruit, radicalize, and mobilize followers to violence”. Fundamentally, CVE actions intend to address the conditions and reduce the factors that most likely contribute to recruitment and radicalization by violent extremists.

The phenomenon of Extremism means to adhere to the ideas and ideology of specific school of thought. The extremists lend support to their peculiar ideas and have least compromise and resilience for the ideas of others and do extreme actions according to their predilections. The transformation of extreme belief system and dogmatic thoughts into violent actions turns into extremism in the society which renders harm at broader level. The horrific actions of militants engender feelings of fear and terror in the society, impacting the minds of people fearful of terrorist activities. These acts of terrors are modus operandi of militants which they dub as success and accomplishment (Javaid & Chawla, 2021).

Dr Zubair Iqbal Gauri illustrated in his interview that Radicalization is not the major cause of terrorism though one of the causes to spread terrorism. However, injustice and disparity is the root cause of terrorism, people feel in their heart about the actual and perceived grievances (Ghauri, 2022).

Counter violent extremism (CVE) is a broader concept. The scholars employ prevention classification to demarcate the three clear forms of prevention: Primary, secondary and Tertiary. The classification on the basis of prevention framework first used in the domain of health and after that to elaborate the crime and violence prevention. The prevention approach deals with the causes of violent extremism and not the effects. The ultimate aim of prevention approach is to eradicate the risk factors leading to crime, disease and violent extremism. Primary prevention revolves around taking away the breeding ground and root out the causes of violent extremism. It concentrates on community engagement, building the resilience, positive identity making and allegiance to country for protection of rights and fulfillment of responsibility. Secondary prevention works on the individual level, those who are in the vortex of radicalization but did not act of violence yet. At this stage, the people who are adhere to the cause of violence, they are mentored thorough special intervention such as giving family support and alternative means of livelihood. Secondary prevention phase also requires expert practitioners to identify the vulnerable individuals who have fostered radicalized tendency. Tertiary prevention focused such individuals who become victim of violent extremism such as indigenous and foreign fighters. They need curative intervention. The basic purpose is to convince the radicalized element to abandon the extremist viewpoint. Disengagement focuses on transforming the extremist behaviour and end of violent activities. Deradicalization refers to “changing extremist attitudes and rejection of the violent extremist ideology”. Both the programmes Deradicalization and Disengagement accomplished through exit programmes. Exit programmes predicate on diverse methods of interventions such mentoring, parenting, practical, socio-economic sustenance, ideological transformation, religious discourse, family security and creation of alternative maintenance social network (Harris-Horgan, Barrelle, & Zammit, 2015).

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a quest to construct and explain the model for CVE that constitute the factors, elements, responsible actors and devised strategies. Extensive reading of literature helped in devising CVE models and strategies to cope with ghastly phenomenon of Extremism. The research methodology is qualitative, based on the study of research journals, article, books, newspapers, non-structured interviews and personal reflections. The study identified four drivers of violent extremism at Macro level, two at Meso level and four at micro level. Each Major driver is responded with response and strategies were devised according to the prevailing security environment.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

A lot of books, articles and critical reviews have been written on the subject related to this research. However some major books and articles which are most relevant to the proposed research work are being discussed.

Afzal delineates the security challenges to Pakistan in the context of increasing extremism, militancy and radicalization. She explains that how the culture of exclusion pervades in the society, giving leverage to the forces of extremism and obscurantism. The narrative of terrorists embedded the society with the passage of time and engulfed the whole country into the morass of terrorism. She explains in an impeccable manner the trio relationship of military, democratic Governments and Islamist parties and their relative strength to rein the affairs of country The Madrassa education and its role in fostering extremism are elaborated at length. However, the implementation of National Action Plan

and different Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) measures has not discussed in the book. The survey and interviews will be extended to Religious scholars, security experts and reformed militants (Afzal, 2018).

Zaman dilated upon the evolution process and emergence of Ethno-National, sectarian and political intolerance in Pakistan. The different phases of scourge of terrorism dealt with dexterously. The chapter Religion, Violence and the State reveals the in-depth analysis of Religion based bigotry. However, the book does not explain the counter terrorism strategies and deradicalization efforts in Pakistan. This research endeavour will abridge the interregnum through the insightful analysis of Post 9/11 endeavours of Pakistan in the domain of countering extremism, militancy, terrorism and deradicalization efforts to reform the militants (Zaman, 2018).

Javaid in her book *Pakistan Fights Extremism and Terrorism* explains the various facets of terrorism, Religious Extremism, Fundamentalism, Militancy and its challenges and security implications for Pakistan. The book comprises Thirteen Chapters based on research articles published in different Journals. The book maintains that the most formidable issue gives forth from the Islamic militancy. This research endeavours will cover the soft approach and non kinetic method and measures to deal and combat the militant extremism and radicalism in society. The rehabilitation efforts which were carried out in 2009 will be analyzed and fathom out the ways to obliterate terrorism through the application of deradicalization and counter violent extremism (Javaid, 2013).

Anita M. Weiss delineates the profound political, economic and social trial and tribulations in her beautiful book "Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan; local actions, local voices" she describes the violent extremism as follows "Violent extremism in Pakistan exists in the form of sectarianism, Sharia (Islamization) movements. She explicitly explains the resistance of people of KP to fight against the evils. The book also deals with efforts of religious leaders to promote interfaith harmony and Pluralism. However, the process of Deradicalization and counter violent extremism in Pakistan has not been elaborated with full vigour. The research endeavour is academic Struggle to delve deep the issues facing the country of Pakistan (Weiss, 2020).

Sara Zeiger and Anne Aly in their edited book "Countering Violent Extremism: Developing an evidence-base for Policy and Practice" is comprising of five four parts and sixteen chapters. The book highlights the policy and programming to counter the rising trends in violence and extremist tendencies. The authors provide the insight to comprehend the indigenous push and pull factors that further lead to radicalization and conducive to recruitment in the terrorist networks. Nevertheless, the best practices of western countries and South East Asian states will help in understanding the concepts of radicalization and implementation mechanism to root out the terrorism and adopt the deradicalization and disengagement procedures according to the demands of homegrown enabling environment (Zeiger & Aly, 2015).

Muhammad Ijaz, Waqas and Jamshed in the article "Pragmatic Model of Countering Violent Extremism for Pakistan" explain the perils of rising militancy and resultant instability and existential threat to the state of Pakistan. The study reveals that the models being adopted to counter radicalization and violent extremism are not synchronized with the security environment of Pakistan. The authors devised CVE Model, keeping in mind the different drivers, changing in individual behaviors, responsible actors and devised strategies to cope the menace of extremism. The drivers of violent extremism are charted into three layers: Macro, Meso and Micro in the study. The community engagement is lacking in CVE measures. The study focuses on the drivers of extremism and strategies to implement effective CVE's. However, the study does not elaborate the drivers of radicalization and measures to deradicalize the belligerent actors. This research focuses not only on Counter violent extremism measure but also deals effectively to deradicalize the society (Ejaz, Ahmed, & Jamshed, 2022).

## Terrorism as a Non-Traditional Security Hazard for Pakistan

The advent of the Twenty-First Century stirred up myriad of challenges for the Global community especially for Pakistan, the soaring rise in terrorism became glaring challenge to the National security. The terrorists targeted both military and civilian to make an irreparable loss to the state. The terrorism in its severest form emerged after 9/11. This incident changed the dynamics of security and compelled the Govt community to treat terrorism as potential common threat (Afzal & Iqbal, 2012). The GWOT badly affected the internal security dynamics of Pakistan. The 9/11 incident transformed the shape of foreign policy of Pakistan. President Musharraf kow towed in front of America and extended complete support to the USA to counter terrorism. This shift wrought sedition, militancy and violence, especially in KPK, FATA and Balochistan. The Government failed to palliate the anger of disgruntled elements. Therefore, getting the benefit of political turmoil, communication hiatus and fragile governance, Al-Qaeda and TTP took the advantage of void and started their saboteur activities in Pakistan to destabilize it. The connectivity between transnational and indigenous terrorist outfits became the main source of target killings, suicide onslaughts and bomb blasts throughout Pakistan (Khayyam, Shah, & Tahir, 2018).

The gruesome incident of 9/11 was the only horrendous terrorist attack on the soil of USA, but Pakistan suffered myriad of nefarious attacks after becoming the frontline state in the US-led GWOT. Nevertheless, Pakistan got economic and military hardware assistance but suffered tremendous wreck in terms of economics and human loss due to flagrant terrorist activities in the nook and corner of country (Daraz, Naz, Khan, & Khan, 2012).

The hotbeds of extremists do not reflect the whole nation. The extremist's pockets in Pakistan are due to absence of proper Islamic education, ill information about Islam and the political engineering of the religious feelings of the general masses is main contributor to spread of extremism. However, meticulous usage of education through the employability of long term planning holds the solution to end the menace of extremism. This educational methodology can grip the genie of extremism and malady of fundamentalism in a slow but surely manner (Ahmad D. A., 2007). 'Given the facts that democracy in Pakistan hold good for the success of moderation' (Trivedi, 2009).

It has been dilemma that political governments has remained themselves isolated and let Pakistan's military to take kinetic action against extremism, however, combating violence with violence has its upshots and drastic sequels which also need to be enumerated. The institution of military has been taken as bulwark against arch adversary India, external aggressors and internal actors that led to confusion and internal instability. Since the inception of Pakistan, military reigned for four times, seldom quell the fear of population in respect of instability and mayhem. The most pivotal role of military is launching of distinct military operations to root out extremism since 11 September, 2001:

**Table1**  
**Military Operations to counter violent Extremism in Pakistan after 9/11**

Kinetic measures	Year Of Operation	Area of Operation
Operation Al-Mizan	2002-2006	As many as 80,000 military troops were deployed within FATA
Rah-e- Haq	2007-2009	This operation was launched to exterminate the violent movements of Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) and later the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the Valley of Swat
Sher-e-Dil	2008	Military operation was launched in Bajour Agency of FATA
Zalzala	2008-2009	Locale at South Waziristan Agency (FATA)
Sirat-e-Mustaqeem	2008	'The Straight Path' was short-lived operation after getting the control of Bara Tehsil in Khyber Agency (Ex FATA)
Raah-e-Raast	May 2009	It was second Operation in Swat for the purpose of regaining control of Mingora
Rah-e-Nijat	October 2009	The operation " Path to salvation" in South Waziristan Agency for the second time to get hold of complete area

Koh-e-Safaid	July,2011	To gain control of Thall-Parachinar road, operation launched with name of " White mountain" in Kurram Agency
Zarb-e-Azb	2013-2014	Zarb-e-Azb " Strike of the Prophet Muhammad's Sword" was the most critical and redoubtable operation in North Waziristan Agency to weed out the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) , Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Al-Qaeda, Jundullah and the Haqqani network
Radd-ul-Fassad	2017	This operation was launched to apprehend the facilitators, eliminate the terror financing and get rid of sanctuaries of terrorists. The " elimination of Discord" has been the most outstanding and aspiring military endeavour to launch as many as 17,685 intelligence based operations throughout the country between the month of February-December 2017

(Weiss, 2020, p. 8).

The Government of Pakistan established committees to bolster sectarian consonance and religious acceptance of each other. Federal minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti established National Interfaith Council in the year 2010 aiming at promoting interfaith harmony, fraternity, brotherhood among diverse faiths and creeds. Likewise, Pakistan Army established rehabilitation centers for treatment of violent militancy in the turbulent area of Swat. The purpose of De-radicalization centers was to provide vocational skills and brain washing against violent ideologies and radical teaching. Moreover, the De-radicalization centers were to combat extremism and motivate the young minds to bring towards peaceful existence.

### **Building National Identity**

Resilience and peace-building both have same connotations as both struggle to bring positive change in society. Both meant to transform the people from subjectivity to objectivity and conflict to rapprochement. However, going deep in the understanding of concept, both are little different in meaning. Peace building relates to efforts and possible interventions before the conflict occurs. It revolves around the concept of taking measures to prevent the probable conflict in future. This concept also enlists the causes and dimensions of conflict to control it effectively as soon as it erupts. On the other hand, Resilience deals with reformation in the society. It prepares the society to bear the impact from short term and long term tumults in the broader security environment (Menkhaus, 2013). The cohesion and national identity plays a vital role in promoting peace and rejuvenation of culture and ethos in society. However, the sense of Nationalism is crucial area to thwart violence and build peace in the country (A.Barnette & Rosen, 2020). Language is the most important tools to foster national identity. It is a pre-requisite to start peace-building process in Pakistan. Combating violent religious militancy can be consummated through buttressing the National identities. There are diverse ethno-religious identities in Pakistan co-exist for progressive and peaceful nurture in heterogeneous society. Countering Violent Religious Extremism is indispensable to enhance the National identity. It is imperative for Pakistan to develop the homogeneity to build cohesive national identity as it is crystal clear that in Pakistan , Regional and ethnic cohorts are more ubiquitous than building the National identity in all hue and colours (Javaid & Chawla, 2021).

### **Secularization of Clergy**

In the quest to secularize the Indian society, The British Empire mutilated the Islamic laws, religious seminars and the Persian language with British laws. The missionary schools were established in the nook and corner of society. The English language was given precedence over Persian and Arabic (Ali, 2011). The policy of secularization of Indian society secluded the religious Ulemas who considered themselves as custodian of Islam. Nevertheless, the religious Ulemas possessed unimpeachable authority in the religious domain. This dichotomy proved disastrous for the social fabric and concomitant dissipation of a broad social base. Notwithstanding, extended the ineluctable authority to religious

ideologues to interpret the religious texts in their partisan theological frames. Religious clerics turned into an obscurantist’s group that as Stephen Humphreys puts it “Makes the society Islamic” (Humphreys, 1988).

**Drivers of Violent Extremism in Pakistan**

The drivers of militancy and violent extremism can be attributed and evaluated at three levels; the macro level, the meso level and the micro level. The macro level drivers are associated with fragile socio-economic opportunities, socio-political marginalization, unresolved conflicts and mutilation of human rights. The meso level drivers related to ethno-religious ambiguities, affiliation and exploitation of ethnicity. While, the individual motivations and predilections come into the domain of micro level. However, the macro, meso and micro drivers of extremism have been taken from the literature review of (Khan A. , 2013), (Iqbal K. , 2013), (Basit, 2015), (Yaseen & Muzaffar, 2018) (Mirahmadi, Zia, Farooq, & Lamb, 2015). According to Dr Zubair Iqbal Ghauri, the drivers of radicalism are diverse such as injustice, education, experience, traditions. There are plethoras of causes that lead to radicalization of society. (Ghauri, 2022)

The drivers of Violent Extremism are diverse and disparate and can be categorized into three levels; Macro, Meso and Micro. The Macro level propellers are associated with the broader social perspective. Meso level drivers are related to identity dichotomy and exploit the group behaviour on the basis of identity. (Schmid, 2013). The drivers that work at Micro level are invariable push and pull factors, insinuating the individual into the quagmire of radicalism; it indicates the socialization to violence and cognitive susceptibility of Individual towards violence (Allan, Glazzard, Jesperson, Reddy-Tumu, & Winterbotham, 2015). The violent extremism has rendered the socio-economic fabric of Pakistan in a bleak and murky situation and became the stupendous menace for Pakistan. Since 9/11, VE has afflicted Pakistan socially, economically and psychologically and taken a toll of precious human lives including military and civilians (Qadeem, 2018).

Macro-level drivers reflect the shaky macroeconomic and security environment. The political instability, poor Governance and uneven polarization of society with high level political and security terror, infringement of human rights, perceived or real group grievances, shackled religious freedom and least compliance of International law are the triggers that leads towards Macro –level violent Extremism (Ijaz, Ahmad, & Jamshed, 2022).

**Table 2**  
**Macro level factors**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Elements/ Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Actors/Sector/ Institutions</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
Lack of socio-economic opportunities	Political equilibrium and economic prosperity	Primary: Government Secondary: International institutions, civil society	1. stable macroeconomic environment 2. Eradication of Poverty, merit & Adoption of Modernization 3. Rural development initiatives & Agricultural advancement 4. Uphold merit and fiduciary accountability 5. Social inclusion and development of Human Capital
Socio-Political discrimination and marginalization	Coping the horizontal inequalities and accommodation	Primary: Government Secondary: Civil Society, Media	1. redressal of grievances ( Perceived or actual) 2. Good Governance 3. Autonomy to Provinces 4. Creation of sound Narratives 5. Respect of culture and lingual identity
Prolonged disputed conflicts	Enforcement of National Action Plan (NAP) and reintegration	Primary: Government, Civil Society Secondary: Army	1. Application of soft approaches ( Dialogue) 2. Kinetic & hard Means (Military operations) 3. Pardon and general amnesty

			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Disengagement from active warfare</li> <li>5. Transformation in ideology and cognitive thinking</li> <li>6. Effective conflict management intervention</li> </ol>
Human rights infringements and travesty of rule of law	Robust Criminal Justice System and voice for rights	Primary: Government, Civil Society & Judiciary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improvement in justice system ( De-politicization of Judiciary</li> <li>2. Honour the human rights and social activists</li> <li>3. Promotion of liberal citizenship education including gender equality, revival of democracy and active involvement of civil societies</li> </ol>

Source: (Ejaz, Ahmed, & Jamshed, 2022).

The conflicts of perennial nature cannot be settled through the traditional security approaches because these disputes are not among state armies rather among the communal groups (Gawerc, 2006). The political and security environments warrant both security and pacific approaches. The hard measures comprise military operations and coercive diplomatic endeavours following the framework of National Action Plan and National internal Security Policy (2018-2023). The responsible actors including Government, Civil society, Media, Army and international institutions should come forward and join hands with each other to combat the horrendous giant of violent extremism. However, the strategies mentioned in the table 1 need to be implemented in letter and spirit.

Meso-level indicators or pull factors are associated with group influences. The counter violence is a social process and crisis of identity is the key factors in motivating the individuals into joining the violent groups (Schmid, 2013).

**Table 3**  
**Meso-Level Drivers in Pakistan**

<b>Drivers/ Factors</b>	<b>Elements / Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Actors/ Sector/Institutions</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
Religious Motivation	Strategic Checks and Reformation	Primary: Government , Civil Society	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reforms in Education sector, Madrassa reforms</li> <li>2. Choke the conduits of the foreign funding</li> <li>3. Secularization of society</li> <li>4. Promotion of religious dialogue and modernization</li> </ol>
Ethnic Motivation	New social Contract	Primary: Government , Civil Society	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supremacy of law</li> <li>2. Addressing the group grievance</li> <li>3. Cultural diffusion and acceptance of regional identity</li> <li>4. Deconstruct the negative narrative</li> <li>5. Autonomy to state institutions to combat terrorist elements</li> </ol>

Source: (Ejaz, Ahmed, & Jamshed, 2022)

The wrangling for religious recognition and sectarian identity is the horrific indicators of violent extremism. Furthermore, the state-civil coordination, choking of terrorist financing, madrassa reforms, making of new narratives, secularization, moderation of thinking and modernization are vital to reform the minds and win the hearts of militants. The ethnic identities flourish due to repression and retrogressive measures adopted by state. The making of new social contract with dispensation of justice, robust rule of law, fair narrative and setting right the horizontal inequalities in socio-political and economic domains help in reducing the militant’s activism.

**Table 3**  
**Micro level Drivers in Pakistan**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Elements/ Action</b>	<b>Responsible actors/Sectors/Institution</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
Cognitive bias and scarcity of information	Cognitive uplift	Primary: Academics, Civil society Secondary: Media, Government	1. Media interaction, 2. International links, 3. pragmatic thinking, 4. enlightened education 5. Reading habits( Involvement of Social media)
Socialization/ Approval of Violence	Culture of Peace and amity	Primary: Government, Civil society	1. Democratic environment 2. Culture of Peace, 3. Security at individual level 4. Psychological and social motivation
Identity	Addressing the self esteem and social status	Primary: Government, Civil society Secondary: Academics, Media	1. Cultural fusion and National coordination 2. Positive Governance 3. Recreational regimen 4. Broad based dialogue 5. Combating extremist's narrative and Jihadi Literature
Clash with values	Understanding of social values	Primary: Academics, Civil Societies , Media	1. Benevolence of education, 2. Balanced religious institutions 3. Mass media activism 4. Community participation 5. Well placed artistic literature

Source: (Ejaz, Ahmed, & Jamshed, 2022)

According to survey, only 9% Pakistani Citizens studied extra-curricular books, that flagrantly reflects the absence of culture of reading and comprehension of empirical knowledge (Shaikh, 2019). The cognitive susceptibility, cultural deviation, injustice, and hobnob with violent elements have made the people an easy prey of the extremists. The pluralistic society exhibits the tolerance, cultural identity, psycho-social equilibrium and mass media dynamism to combat the disintegration, political fragility and misplaced narrative of militants. This psycho-social approach tends to prioritize enhancing self-esteem as the first step, followed by the incorporation of social aspects, such as mentoring and family reintegration, and then finally educational or vocational training (Kanagaretnam & Brown, 2005).

It is revealed through empirical study that poverty, deprivation, lack of socio-economic opportunities, unemployment, horizontal inequalities, political marginalization, polarization in society, perennial and unresolved communal conflicts and infringement of human rights are the macro-level drivers leading to violent extremism. The politicized wrangling on the front of religious and ethnic identities with each other and with the state reflects the drivers at meso level. It becomes evident through study that prone to direct and structural violence, cognitive confusion, misplaced group identity, obscurantist disposition and conflict with social values due to incomplete socialization are the micro-level factors. Pakistan adopted both hard and soft measures but all efforts went in vain because violent extremism is still insuperable threat (Mirahmadi, Zia, Farooq, & Lamb, 2015), (Johnston, Madonell, Burbridge, & Patton, 2016).

### **Strategic communication and preventing violent extremism**

We reside in a communication and digital age, where hate discourse cannot be tackled exclusively through blocking hate contents but require holistic approach, encompassing methodology focusing on drivers of pressure and friction inside social order.

Strategic communication set forth information that appeal and influence views groups. Influence does not denote interdicting the hard power or emphasizing on enemy but countering the narrative of extremism and discourse of hate. Strategic communication has the prowess to effect change and transformation. Strategic communication affects and appeals the views groups (Tatham, 2009). Strategic Communication is meant to use in military context as information and messages transmitted with the objective of signaling and explaining the intent to foes and allies as well (Cornish, Lindley-French, & Yorke, 2011).

The theoretical perspective of strategic communication talks about four salient elements. The first element affirms that informing, influencing and persuading are principal features, secondly, clear objectives reinforce the persuasion process, thirdly, trust building avoids information hackle and builds coordination and deconfliction. The fourth element narrates that actions Communicate, it implies that what one says, unmistakably matters (Paul, 2011). The idea of influence lies at the center of Strategic communication paradigm. Notwithstanding, organizations or individuals possess four tools in order to alter the behaviour: Physical force (Coercion), Patronage, Purchase and persuasion. However, the process of persuasion should be persistent and underscore the acceptance of Ideas. Undoubtedly, persuasion is the soul of strategic Communication (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Ruler, Vercic, & Sriamesh, 2007). In terms of counter-radicalization strategy, the intended audience is not mere those who are vulnerable to radicalization but the government. Therefore, strategic communication must be pivotal concern of government and whole of Government Unifier (Brownlow, 2013). Profound understanding of Counter Radicalization Strategies among its proponents allow for prompt and agreeable responses to a target audience (Cornish, Lindley-French, & Yorke, 2011).

Strategic communication wields certain strategies one can adapt to deal with terrorism attacks. The first one is **persuasive strategy** that attracts public emotions and societal values. It often comprises of a choosy part of information that one want to present to the public. When presenting it, it is not unusual to talk in a language that is not neutral. Furthermore, a persuasive strategy consists of persuasive messages calling for the need to act by highlighting the situation that is at stake. Another one is power dubbed as **Power strategy**, which is perceived as coercive technique due to employment of coercive manner to accede to the proposals. This type of strategy is useful when there would be potential resistance to change (Werder, 2014).

### **Countering Narrative against Violent Extremism**

All militants groups have an ideology: composing of well-articulated ideals that can lend legitimacy to religio-Political and social beliefs and violent actions. Extremists craft narratives to propagate their ideology. Narrative can be dubbed as strategic messages to indoctrinate the specific ideology into the minds of adherents. These strategic messages help in persuading young and fledgling minds to follow suit of terrorist's acts to further the aims of any radical group. Therefore, in order to counter the militant's narrative, there would be dire need to devise the counter Narrative (Eerten, Doosje, Konijn, de Graaf, & de Goede, 2017). Government should have clear communication strategy to explain their actions on the indigenous and international fronts. Furthermore, stimulate the civil society and networks working at grassroots level to organize campaigns and tests its efficacy (Doosje & Van Eerten, 2017).

Counter-Narrative to combat violent extremism also comes under criticism for oblivious of the structural factors that can be called as "enablers" such as abysmal poverty, rampant unemployment, socio-economic inequalities, and poor Governance. All these factors contribute in the predicament of Government to tackle the menace of extremism (Rosand & winterbotham, 2019). The prolonged fight of Pakistan against Terrorism forced the policy makers and strategists to come up with softer approach against the hard core militants. Therefore, in the context of protracted warfare, counter-narrative was built up by the collaborative struggles of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the council of

Islamic ideology, Pakistan. The comprehensive document was called as Paigham-e-Pakistan (HEC collaborates with CII for 'Paigham-e-Pakistan', 2018).

Paigham-e-Pakistan has wielded the inimitable feature as it got the unanimous approval of religious clerics in Pakistan. The evidence was taken from the revered sources of Quran and Hadith to refute the ideology of violent extremism and terrorism. It is undeniable truth that terrorism is critically complex and multipronged in nature (Khan M. S., July 13,2016).

### **Deconstructing the Narratives of Terrorist organizations**

Terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida and ISIS have narratives to widespread their message of their own choice. The Narratives explicate the ways and means of the organization's view point with respect to other world. For instance, the Al-Qaeda and ISIS devised their narrative that was fundamentally against the West. They emphasized upon the unity of Ummah, anchored upon the principles of Salafi-Jihad, considered to be most consecrated face of Islam (Zimmerman, 2017). Both organizations lend their ideologies from revisionist ideologues such as Ibn Taimiyyah's and Sayid Qutib. Al-Qaeda has been dubbed as vanguard of true Islam by its adherents (Makki & Khan, 2019).

Al-Qaida tactfully shaped their propaganda with religious underpinnings and provided specific compact unison narrative for its devotees (Schmid A. P., 2014). Likewise, ISIS also employed the rhetoric to secure broader religious based support. In order to widespread their narrative; they designed Dabiq and Rumiya magazines. Moreover, for reaching out the vulnerable individuals of western countries, they published these magazines in English Language (Capece, 2018). These magazines presented the distorted and self-interpreted notions of Islamic theology to led astray the aberrant minds and manipulate them into believing their misleading ideology of Jihad and fighting on the side of ISIL (Mahood & Rane, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

Government and the civil society are the main actors to combat with Religious extremism. The solutions are ranging from short term to long term focus. The implementation of National Action Plan is the short term while resuscitation and revival of fragile economy is the critical and long term focus. Notwithstanding, The construction and widespread of Violent Extremism took almost 30 to 40 years to flourish in our society, therefore, the deconstruction of violent narrative may take years to recede from society. The research endeavour is an attempt to craft the contextual model given the security and social milieu of Pakistan. There is a dire need to usher into political, economic and educational reforms and take indomitable decisions to prevent prospective potent threats. However, the non-kinetic responses of Pakistan to combat violent extremism have supported the state's Kinetic responses. This led to considerable dwindling of horrific terrorist incidents. According to multiple independent research sources, the terrorism incidents receded to the figure of nearly 2,000 in 2009 to lesser than 319 in 2020 (Afzal, 2021). The state requires persisting in her endeavour combating against Violent Extremism and sustaining its non-kinetic intervention rigorously. The rehabilitation centers in erstwhile FATA, Swat, Balochistan and South Punjab must be reinvigorated with all logistical, economic and strategic support. There is a dire need to build a counter narrative to dispel the ideological vibes of militant's narrative. We need to go beyond "Paigham-e-Pakistan" by buttressing robust and pragmatic scholastic debate on the document. The national narrative vis-à-vis extremism and militancy, exhibited through military, judicial and administrative measures is not sufficed in terms of countervailing the ideological undercurrents of the challenge. The National narrative must equip counter narrative to wipe out the theological distortions and misrepresentation chalked out by militants. The religious clerics should be involved and motivated to render their invaluable role in crafting the counter narrative to foil the militant ideology (Marath, 2019). Profound literature and expert opinion highlight the predominant

significance of Counter narrative, however, it should be shaped in the backdrop of heterogeneous contextual actuality of social milieus, security environment and targeted diverse audience, which it aims to influence and rehashed (Makki & Khan, 2019).

### **Recommendations**

Pakistan is facing worst form of extremism and terrorism. The state should do robust efforts to establish harmony among different sectarian, ethnic and cultural patches of society which can guarantee a strong patriotic bond.

The prison system should be reformed. The segregation of hard-core militants and low cadre criminals should be done to avoid radicalization. The education-based approach should be introduced in Jails. The prison inmates should be encouraged to study and access newspapers and television just to enlarge their vision and toleration in their behaviour. It has become indispensable for Pakistan in the current fragile security environment and spate of terrorist activities to devise a nationwide de-radicalization programme.

The role of media is very crucial not only as de-sensitizer of social environment but as a part of executing structure as well. Violent Extremism is redoubtable menace to the peace and security of Pakistan. However, better Governance system, socio-economic uplift of community and political pluralism will definitely help in counter violent extremism in society. The better education policy, National youth Policy and effective counter-terrorism policy is the best elixir to end extremism. The engagement of community and building its resilience against threat of extremism can be effective in disrupting terrorist plots and their recruitment quest. The Government should convene annual conferences and symposiums to build counter narrative against militancy and violent prevailing in society. This practice will also help in building counter violent Extremism Models.

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