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An Appraisal of Countering Violent Extremism Initiatives in Pakistan and Singapore

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ABSTRACT

Violent extremism is the most serious threat among several by-products of terrorism that are not only damaging the tolerant cultural and religious ethos of the Pakistani state and society but are also hurting its development and economy. This paper seeks to analyze the phenomena of violent extremism and the factors leading to it concerning the case studies of Pakistan and Singapore. The critical review includes a comparison of the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiatives in Pakistan and Singapore to highlight the lessons that the former can draw from the latter to fulfill the formidable challenge of CVE. Pakistan has so far achieved modest success in its fight against violent extremism, as the CVE programs are evolving from the embryonic to adolescence phase and it will stay partially successful unless done prudently. A smart and proactive CVE program built on a "whole of nation/ community approach" like the successes model of Singapore will assist Pakistan in further consolidating its gains and filling in the gaps that are currently present. Pakistan needs to go a step ahead from a "countering to preventing approach" to coping with the challenge of violent extremism.

Keywords: Countering Violent Extremism, Terrorism, Radicalization, Pakistan, Singapore.

INTRODUCTION

Approach to the Study

There is a lot of discussion about the rise of intolerance and violent extremism. Still, it lacks a thorough study on those responsible for these acts of extremism, including their motivation and how the governments i.e., (Pakistan and Singapore) have addressed the issue. For this reason, this research is organized into three parts. The definition of violent extremism and the theoretical framework are highlighted in the first section. The issue of extremist violence in Pakistan is discussed in the second portion, along with the paradigm of CVE programs that Pakistan's government has chosen. The final section of this research analyses the challenges of violent extremism in Singapore and their CVE policies and strategies to address them. This research paper aims to compare and contrast the CVE methods/ models of the two nations and determine whether Pakistan can implement and utilize Singapore's CVE model.

Indicators of Violent Extremism

Violent extremism is a complicated phenomenon, which in academic circles is defined and examined in numerous ways. In different communities, it is viewed in different ways, depending on their structures. Violent extremism is classified by the US Department of Homeland Security as, "People who advocate or engage in violent acts motivated by ideology to further political objectives" (US Department of Homeland Security, 2011: 1). The primary drivers of violent extremism are the dissemination of ideologies and narratives that are based upon exploitation of grievances, assigning blames to others, and legitimizing the use of violence against perceived offenders. Additionally, the terms "violent extremism" and "terrorism" are used synonymously. Academics and researchers deliberately perceive radicalization and radicalism

as separate from extremism and terrorism. Despite the positive and negative meanings associated with radicalization, it is important to acknowledge that radicals can still convert into extremists or terrorists, as radicalization can ultimately lead to extremism (Rana, 2010:1-2). Schmid distinguishes between radicalism and extremism as, "Radicals are typically open-minded egalitarians, while extremists are typically closed-minded supremacists" (Schmid, 2014).

The steps taken by governments and civil society organizations to limit, prevent, and ultimately address the underlying causes of violent extremism are referred to as countering violent extremism. The balance between the kinetic (hard) and non-kinetic (soft) sides of counterterrorism is provided by CVE measures, which are regarded to be essential for long-term counterterrorism and counter-extremism efforts. Any CVE policy's primary goal is to counteract extremist beliefs through academic research and policy that takes into account the local environment for extremism.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

General System Theory

General systems theory was created by German philosopher Niklas Luhmann. According to Luhmann the systems theory is "the method by which researchers apply system analysis to comprehend the structures and ways by which to reconstruct the societal system" (Luhmann, 1982: 131-138). General systems theory can be used to analyze and examine the interpersonal, inter-group, and international relations systems. The postmodern paradigm, which includes systems theory, has contributed a new viewpoint to literature by allowing us to view the state or the world from a perspective that does not only focus on humans but also the prevailing systems.

General system theory is used because it gives the researcher a theoretical framework for examining the arrangements and reconstruction of societal systems. I also aimed to use this theory for comprehending and explaining the interpersonal, inter-group, and institutional/organizational relations, to ensure the adaptability and effectiveness of the measures taken for CVE in Pakistan and Singapore.

Theory of Rationalization

Max Weber, a German academician who developed the

theory of rationalization claimed that modern society (although his focus was the Western world), is exponentially rationalized. He asserted that theoretical rationalization gives an understanding of how the world operates and/ or should operate. It necessitates the use of logic, an understanding of social settings, and the capacity to give meaning to symbolic arrangements (Ritzer, 2008: 100-107). Kalberg simplifies formal rationality by asserting that this type of rationality consists of how individuals make judgments based on "universally applied rules, regulations, and laws". According to him, Theoretical rationalization necessitates that "people be able to give sense (logically) to a world that may appear chaotic" Kalberg, 1980: 85. The theoretical rationalization is a brain-based intellectual process, whereas substantive rationality is connected to an individual's personal beliefs, and their particular set of values, and is what enables them to function in society throughout the day, particularly when they have to make decisions. Through the theory of rationalization, scholars can examine how human behavior fits into the larger context of meaning and reason. This theory would make it simple to explain the choices, decisions, and actions made for CVE in Pakistan and Singapore and to comprehend the institutions in the societies of both nations.

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: CHALLENGES AND INITIATIVES IN PAKISTAN

Background

Since its independence, Pakistan has seen different but interlinked ethnic, sectarian, and religious tensions that have occasionally descended into violence. Internal and external entities assist the majority of ethnic and religious radicalization in Pakistan by providing both a narrative and funding. However, Pakistan worked with the US in the latter's goal to counter the advancement of communism in Afghanistan which has subsequently increased the menace of violent extremism. In this regard, the effects of the 9/11 attacks on the United States; later on, Pakistan's willingness to participate in the US War on Terror as a front-line ally, and the recent rise of Taliban in Afghanistan are much more substantial than anticipated (Karamat, Muzaffar & Shah, 2019: 315- 322).

Challenges for CVE in Pakistan

Pakistan is confronted with multiple dangers including climate change, geopolitical conflicts, and domestic socio-political issues. Some of these were fueled by various factors such as socio-political grievances, economic disparities, and ideological fanaticism while others are influenced by its past interactions with regional and extra-regional powers (Khan, 2011: 1). Many people hold that economic instability, and political instability, inadequate leadership, sectarianism, conflicts between provinces, and illiteracy are important factors contributing to Pakistan's internal security issues (Safdar, 2004). Pakistan is a nation of 184 million people who represent a variety of religious, regional, and national identities. The division in Pakistan between secular and religious perspectives within the population highlights the complexity and diversity of beliefs and practices in society. However, the secular extreme does not support religious political parties and is labeled as liberals embracing Western ideals. These variations in religiosity further emphasize the need for a meticulous understanding of the relationship between religion and society.

International and Regional Dimensions: In today's globalized world, the international and regional threats that Pakistan faces have multiple facets. Pakistan is a geostrategic country in South Asia, sandwiched between India and Afghanistan, along with the strategic interests of China, the US, and the rest of the world. However, the misconceptions regarding the involvement of Pakistan in international terrorism dominate how the world views Pakistan (Gul, 2015: 7-8). Pakistan has consistently denied accusations of fueling violence and unrest, instead urging the international community to focus on foreign interventions that contribute to the turbulence. Recently, three dossiers were shared with the UN by the Pakistani government on the evidence of Indian intervention in Baluchistan, Karachi, and the newly merged tribal districts (NMDs), erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), to fuel ethnic and religious violence (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). Pakistan's societal structure is being disrupted by the revival of ethnic and religious violence by terrorist organizations and their affiliations to inimical foreign agencies which is negatively impacting the country's economy and growth. The escalating ethnic unrest provided fertile ground for hostile foreign forces to favorably affect the situation, as was the case with East

Pakistan's secession and the ethnic fights in Sindh and Baluchistan. The impacts of the problems in Yemen, Syria, and other Middle Eastern nations that are prone to sectarian violence, wherein the sectarian proxies of Iran and Arab states based on Shia-Sunni identities, are also hurting Pakistan.

Domestic Predicament: In Pakistan, several local factors contribute to radicalization and extremism. For instance, in the Zia era, sectarianism rose concurrently with the process of Islamization to foster solidarity with Saudi Arabia and the Muslim world, which caused Shia-Sunni divisions (Sial & Anjum, 2010). Madaris were urged to preach and promote the Afghan Jihad with the full assistance and financial support of the US, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States against the expansion of the Soviet Union; it had been encouraging militancy and feeding religious extremism. The students of these Madaris who participated in the war in Afghanistan later joined other terrorist organizations that committed violent crimes.

The scenario in NMDs that developed after 9/11 when the US invaded Afghanistan is another cause of contribution to radicalization and violence. The majority of the Taliban from Afghanistan, and Central Asia, as well as the leadership of AQ, escaped to NMDs. It was a major challenge for the Pakistani Army while these militants were being encountered in some military operations. Moreover, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is also a proponent of violent and extremist ideology with a radical interpretation of Islam, trying to impose its repressive version of sharia law on Pakistan (Nawaz, 2023). It poses a serious threat to Pakistani youth and has remained successful in recruiting young people from marginalized groups, particularly from NMDs.

Most of the violence in earlier decades was primarily started by Deobandi Sunni groups, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), and its lethal faction Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). Now, the two new eminent forces i.e., a hardline religio-political group that arose from Pakistan's Bareilvi Sunni dominant sect, Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP), and the local branch of ISIS, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) have taken the lead and changed the threat dimension for Pakistan. Despite being predominantly from a Deobandi background, many former LeJ foot soldiers joined the Salafi movement of ISKP and contributed to the success of ultra-sectarian ISKP in Pakistan (International Crisis Group, 2022: I-II). It has claimed responsibility for the March 4, 2022,

attack in Peshawar that targeted a Shia Mosque and killed over 60 people (Sophia & Mehsud, 2022).

Sectarian militancy by a group that was long thought of to be the moderate Barelvi sect is perhaps even more concerning. TLP has been involved in the worst agitative and violent sectarian movement since it gained notoriety in 2017. Its supporters are rallied around protests for alleged insults to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The mob lynching of a factory manager from Siri Lanka on December 3, 2021, after he was falsely accused of blasphemy is the most violent result of TLP's extremist policies so far (Shah & Hannah, 2021). TLP leader Dr. Ashraf Asif Jalali was sentenced for denigrating the daughter of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Syeda Fatima-tu-Zahra (SA); this breaks the Barelvis' tradition of sharing ritual practice with Shias (Faizan, 2020). However, a new chapter in the nation's sectarian conflict has begun with the rise of a hardline TLP faction.

Pakistan's Initiatives to Counter Violent Extremism

In the context of Pakistan, the CVE can be primarily defined as the challenging of radical narratives that militant groups propagate to promote intolerance resulting in extremism and violence. Over the past nine years, the government of Pakistan along with its Armed Forces has started numerous CVE initiatives to reconstruct and rebuild the societal systems under the general system theory, including deradicalization and rehabilitation programs, the introduction of a national narrative, Madaris reforms, policy, and legal measures.

De-Radicalization and Rehabilitation Programs for Militants:

Pakistan has developed a comprehensive CVE policy, which includes both engagement and deradicalization as well as force-based counter-radicalization. The youth rehabilitation program was implemented to provide necessary support and resources for the successful reintegration of young individuals affected by the TTP insurgency in Swat under the guidance and collaboration of the Pakistan Army. Similar nature programs were also launched in some parts of Punjab through the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in coordination with various non-governmental groups (Basit, 2015: 46-64).

Following the culmination of the 2009 military operation Rah-e-Rast against the TTP in Malakand Division, the Pakistan Army also initiated a program for jailed militants, namely, De-Radicalization and Emancipation Programs (DERP). At the Rastoon

Center, militants were treated; the Saboon Center concentrated on de-radicalizing teenagers (suicide bombers), and the Mashal Center collaborated with the militants' families going through deradicalization in coordination with an NGO, Hum Pakistan Foundation (HPF) (Rana, 2011: 6-11).

Another effort was launched in 2011 by the CTD Punjab with the assistance of the Technical and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA), which provided technical and vocational training to more than 300 former members of banned militants and sectarian groups (Noor, 2013: 16-19). Following the Rah-e-Rast and Rah-e-Nijat military operations, two additional initiatives began in the districts of Bajaur, NMD, and Tank, KPK (Zulfikar, 2012). The Bajaur Center released 47 Taliban fighters in October 2013 after the completion of a vocational training course under the Navi Sahar program (Rehabilitation & integration, 2013).

Reforms and Legislation in Pakistan:

The government of Pakistan took another set of measures, through the launching of a national narrative Paigham-e-Pakistan (PeP) in coordination with the National Counter Terrorism Authority (Nacta) and Islamic Research Institute (IRI) in January 2018 (Bukhari, 2022). PeP was a joint declaration and the decree (Fatwa) of Pakistan's leading Ulema-o-Mashaikh from all religious schools of thought against terrorism, suicide bombing, self-proclamation of Jihad, sectarianism, extremism, and charge of infidelity; more than 1800 Ulema-o-Mashaikh initially signed and endorsed it. However, the government of KP has established the Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism (CECVE), a research institute to help prevent violent activities, hatred, and violent extremism (Plan to make CECVE fully functional, 2022).

Madaris reforms had remained an important challenge for Pakistan in its fight against the menace of domestic terrorism and extremism. On August 29, 2019, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT) and a collation of five Madaris' boards, Ittehad Tanzeemat-e-Madaris Pakistan (ITMP), signed the first successful Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Consequently, the Directorate General for Religious Education (DGRE) was founded in September 2019 along with 16 regional offices (Abbasi, 2019).

Additionally, it established 10 new educational boards

for Madaris and registered more than 5000 Madaris till May 2021 (Abbasi, 2021). Earlier, the Madrassa Regulation Ordinance was passed in 2002 and an agreement between the government of Pakistan and ITMP was signed in February 2008; but both attempts failed to register Madaris and revise the curricula (Fakhr-ul-Islam, 2009). Historically, the religious factions' leading Madaris in Pakistan particularly (the collation of ITMP) remained successful in opposing the Government reformation initiatives to maintain their monopoly for exploitation of vested interests. However, the establishment of DGRE and subsequent new boards for Madaris has broken the domination of ITMP and a major chunk of Madaris has been registered with the centralized national body DGRE. There is a need to further strengthen the setup of DGRE and enhance the registration of Madaris for imparting inclusive education through the national curriculum; the orthodox syllabi of various religious denominations being taught in ITMP-affiliated Madaris also be replicated.

The Anti-Terrorist Act 1997 (ATA) was twice revised by the Pakistani government in 2014 and 2015 to give law enforcement agencies (LEAs) more authority in the fight against terrorism. Similar to that, in 2014, the Protection of Pakistan Act was passed, giving sweeping powers to LEAs (Haider, 2014). However, due to the slow-moving criminal justice system, 2014 saw the passage of the 21st Constitutional Amendment, which established the Military Courts for two years. The term of courts was extended for an additional two years in 2017 after the 28th Amendment Bill, which was met with criticism from human rights watchdogs. A major reformation in the judicial system of Pakistan is needed of the hour for ensuring free, fair, and timely trials of criminals and terrorists as well as to avoid legitimization of establishing a military court.

Legal Instrument/ Policy Measures in Pakistan: The government of Pakistan initiated policy measures specifically related to CVE and a National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) was founded in 2009 with a specialized directorate for CVE but it took another four years for the NACTA to become effective following the passage of a bill in parliament. Another step was the issuing of the National Internal Security Policy (NISP) for the period of 2014-2018, which provided a clear roadmap for the creation of the federal Rapid Response Force (RRF) and Directorate of Internal

Security (DIS), for the prevention of cyberspace abuse and modernization of the entire criminal justice system (Rumi, 2015: 7-10). To counter the risks to internal security, the government has additionally strengthened the existing policies with two more NISPs (2018-2023 & 2-22-2026).

The National Action Plan (NAP) was also a significant step toward CVE which was launched following the horrific attack of TTP on the Army Public School, in Peshawar in 2014. The All-Parties Conference (APC) reached an agreement on 20 policy issues, for hard and soft counterterrorism and counter-radicalism measures, to strengthen NACTA; taking action against hate speech, registering Madaris, and taking steps against radical ideologies (National Action Plan, 2014). However, the NAP has only partially been implemented successfully. The war against terrorism and extremism has posed new challenges for Pakistan as it faces a new phase of hybrid warfare. There is a need to revisit and strengthen the NAP and NISPs for formulating effective policy particularly the CVE strategy for addressing the challenges posed by the narratives of terrorist organizations, and homegrown extremism.

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: CHALLENGES AND INITIATIVES IN SINGAPORE

Background

Singapore is an island republic that emerged through a journey that started with British colonization and ended with independence from Malaysia and the bloody race riots of the 1960s. The unfriendly neighbors of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, experienced political and social unrest as well as economic instability from the middle of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1970s (Han, 2015). The region of Southeast Asia was confronted with a terrorist threat, as ISIS prepared to establish an "East Asia Wilayat". Extremist groups from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines gathered in the southern Philippines in 2014 after the emergence of ISIS in Southeast Asia (Rohan, 2019). However, to counter the emerging threats, the strategy used by Singapore to fight terrorism and extremism is regarded as a benchmark approach in social reconstruction following the systems theory with major modifications made through a variety of kinetic and non-kinetic measures, such as CVE programs.

CVE Challenges in Singapore

In December 2001, Singapore found a regional terrorist

organization's local affiliate and AQ partner Jemaah Islamiya (JI), which had intended to carry out numerous bombing operations in Singapore. A number of JI bomb plots intended to target foreign embassies in Singapore were prevented by Singapore's Internal Security Department (ISD). In 2001, thirteen JI members were arrested, but it wasn't until later JI arrests in September 2004 and July 2006 (Yuit, 2009) that the government was able to seriously damage the network.

The threat of terrorism persisted both within and outside of the region, particularly following ISIS's creation in 2014 and its active use of social media to spread erroneous Islamic beliefs. Some of the 1,000 ideologically dedicated ISIS members from Southeast Asia have returned from Iraq and Syria. As a result, suicide bombings happened in Surabaya, Indonesia, in May 2018, while the southern Philippines city of Marawi remained under a five-month armed occupation in 2017. Authorities in Singapore detained a woman for radicalizing an assistant who desired to marry a martyr widow and a Managing Director of a company at age of 34, who made two attempts to join ISIS in 2017 (Mokhtar, 2017).

In 2017, Singapore faced the greatest threat from terrorism in recent years. In August 2018, an engineer was detained after being radicalized by ISIS propaganda (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018). The radicalization of such people is attributed to three main sources: social media content, radical preachers online, and "influencers" who persuade others to adopt their viewpoint. Additionally, since the 1980s, religious communities in Singapore have grown more fervent and forceful, which has occasionally heightened tensions between them.

Singapore's Measures to Counter Violent Extremism

Singapore's CVE approach entails the prevention of racial and religious strife along with building social resilience. It is foremost important because, Singapore is among the countries with the greatest religious diversity in the world (Huffington Post Religion, 2014). The government of Singapore released a document in 2003, "White Paper" stating that "Inter-religious and inter-racial relations are severely harmed by terrorism if committed in the name of a faith" (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2003). This was an effort to prohibit terrorist elements from sowing discord between different communities. According to Kalberg, theoretical rationalization compels people to provide meaning to a

world that may seem chaotic; Singapore has rationally developed a complete set of CVE strategies that involve combating extremist ideology, terrorist rehabilitation and reintegration, and community participation.

Countering Extremist Ideology: Singapore's CVE approach places a strong emphasis on combating extremist ideology since terrorist ideologues routinely disseminate inaccurate and radical ideas. According to terrorist propaganda, to build or defend an Islamic state, Muslims must move to areas of conflict and engage in military jihad against Christians and Jews. Additionally, they provided false interpretations of Islamic ideas, stating that declaring infidel or killing and excluding were acceptable who disagreed with them and did not share their beliefs.

Singapore has put a lot of effort into exposing these false doctrines and preventing them from gaining hold. The government has collaborated with Muslim scholars and community leaders who are at the forefront of these efforts. A group of Muslim clerics established the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) in 2002 and volunteered their services, to offer religious counseling for terrorist captives and their families (Baharudin, 2022). RRG worked together with psychologists and counsellors offering an accurate interpretation of Islamic doctrine.

The Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) was created at the community level in partnership with a reputable Muslim NGO Pergas, the Association of Singapore Islamic Scholars, and Religious Teachers. It works under the statutory board, the Singapore Islamic Religious Council, or MUIS, that oversees matters about Muslims in Singapore (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore). The ARS was established in 2005 to provide requisite credentials and training to religious teachers and to make sure that religious instruction does not foster societal division or support extremist ideas. However, in 2017, the ARS made it necessary for all Muslim religious educators to be registered.

MUIS has also produced texts for Friday sermons at Mosques to educate worshipers on the perils of religious extremism and the value of developing religious harmony. MUIS also increased its outreach activities, offering a platform for youth through the Asatizah Youth Network (AYN), where teachers answer questions on terrorism-related issues (Mufti, 2006). MUIS announced several meetings at a designated Mosque in May 2018 to offer advice and answer

questions concerning exclusivism and armed conflict through trained Asatizah for the benefit of young people on social media.

In respect of outreach initiatives, the RRG has done more than only providing counseling to prisoners. It organizes public education efforts for both Muslims and non-Muslims and creates material that combats extreme ideologies. Additionally, it operates a Resource and Counseling Center for clarifications on extremist ideology as well as a website with material to disprove extremist doctrines. The media frequently publishes articles that encourage tolerance, religious moderation, inclusivity, and pluralism. The scholars also interact with the locals through speeches and visits to schools.

Community Engagement: In order to foster communal peace, the Community Engagement Program (CEP) was introduced by the government of Singapore in 2006. The strategy was followed by the July 2005 London bombings, which increased the risk of domestic terrorism and the ensuing spike in hate crimes against Muslims (Latif, 2011: 2). The CEP strives to unite Singaporeans from various groups and to establish response plans to assist in resolving potential intercommunal conflicts. Additionally, it strives to maintain society's strength and cohesion following a terrorist attack so that people can go about their regular lives in peace and harmony.

Following the 9/11 attacks and the JI arrests, CEP established a number of groups to make their individual communities' networks and affiliations stronger. These groups included (a) religious and ethnic organizations, (b) welfare organizations, (c) educational facilities, and (d) trade unions (Latif, 2011: 24). Another initiative was the foundation of the Inter-Racial Confidence Circle (IRCC) in 2002, as a forum to encourage interfaith dialogue and confidence-building. However, a National Steering Committee (NSC) was also set up to give general direction to IRCCs on how to strengthen communal and religious bonds through events like history trials, interfaith discussions, and numerous other festivals (Yuit 2009).

MUIS launched another program in 2006, namely The Harmony Centre to foster a broader understanding of Islam and encourage interfaith engagement. Approximately 40,000 visitors, many of whom were foreigners visited this center between 2006 and 2013 (Salleh, 2014). Another significant project, the SGSecure national

movement, was introduced in 2016 to educate, prepare, and enlist Singapore's community to help prevent and respond to terrorist attacks by practicing community vigilance, cohesion, and resilience. It "highlights the common ground to foster respect and understanding of the beliefs of others."

Reforms and Legislation in Singapore: Singapore has relied on laws to keep peaceful ties intact between the different races and religions. It has several laws in existence to restrict actions that might cause racial and religious conflict before religious-based terrorism emerged. After the passage of the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA) in 1990, the government created the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony (Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, 1990: 2020). The Act specifies that a restraining order may be issued against any religious leader whose conduct creates hate, anger, or antagonism, and would be prohibited from speaking publicly or in writing and from holding public office. The MRHA successfully restrained religious activism and disagreements that had been started since the 1980s.

Any individual whose deeds or arguments create a sense of enmity and hatred between different racial or social groups is subject to prosecution under the Sedition (Repeal) Act 2021 (Sedition Repeal Act 2021). In recent years, several offenders have been charged with crimes and found guilty of denigrating other religions. The Undesirable Publications Act forbids the dissemination, importation, or printing of materials that incite animosity, hatred, or hostility between groups based on their race or religion (Undesirable Publication Act 1967, 2020). Under this Act, a newspaper Al-Fatihin in Bahasa Indonesia was banned in 2016 for having links with ISIS. Similarly, other laws have also been used by the government to prevent foreign religious preachers from entering Singapore if they are known to foster animosity between the various religions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Pakistani government has initiated some CVE measures, yet there is a need to collate the efforts for improving the implementation process through

regular evaluation. The difficulties in implementing CVE measures must be examined by Pakistani policymakers. The policy initiatives outlined in NISPs, and NAP have not been successfully implemented by NACTA's CVE wing. NACTA has to be strengthened because it is the main organization in charge of executing the implementation of CVE programs.

Though Pakistan has gained success in establishing DGRE (an autonomous body for registration of Madaris); it should also establish an organ under DGRE coinciding with the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (established by the statutory board of Singapore's MUIS). The registration of all religious teachers in Pakistan be made mandatory under ARS and necessary qualifications and training be given to make sure that religious teachings do not promote violent or extremist ideologies. However, if any individual is found in extremist/ violent activities, his/ her registration is deemed canceled; and banned from teaching/ addressing the public or holding any government or public office.

Two new distinct extremist and ultra-sectarian forces i.e., (TLP and ISKP) have emerged as a big challenge for Pakistan along with the traditional great threat of TTP which remained successful in radicalizing and recruiting people, particularly the youth. Pakistan has to invest considerable efforts in bringing forward the volunteer group of influential religious clerics (Ulema-o-Mashaikh) to expose distorted teachings of Islam and prevent them from branding and expanding in Pakistan, on the lines of Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) working voluntarily in Singapore.

Finally, the religious decree enshrined in Paigham-e-Pakistan should be given legal protection to penalize the offenders, hence the federal and provincial governments of Pakistan should pass legislation on the fatwa sought to counter terrorism and extremism. Whereas, following the suit of the KP government, the Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism (CECVE) should also be established in all federating units of Pakistan at the earliest to help prevent violent activities, hatred, and extremism.

CONCLUSION

Pakistan, being the Muslim majority state is quite different from the religiously diverse Singapore having (14.3%) of the Muslim population (US Department of State, 2021), but the nature of

threats from terrorism and violent extremism is quite similar. Pakistan has made relatively moderate achievements in the CVE domain while it can better learn from the proactive, prudent, and successful CVE approach of Singapore since the indoctrination by terrorist and extremist organizations are the same societal challenges in both countries. On social media and other platforms, misleading and twisted interpretations of Islam continue to deceive vulnerable people, especially youth. It is equally important to educate instructors and students in Madaris, Mosques, and other educational institutions as it is to educate the wider public about radical and extremist social tendencies. Given the current challenges of CVE, efforts are needed through a "whole of nation/ community approach".

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