

## Religious Extremism and Online Radicalization in Pakistan: How to Counter the Trend?

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### Abstract

*In the present media age, the phenomenon of violent extremism is one of the major challenges confronting Pakistan's internal and external security. Cyber radicalization and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) has become a daunting task around the globe because of the changing nature of conflicts. This study explores the literature on online radicalization, extremism, its trends and challenges with special reference to Pakistan. The study investigates how social media helps militant groups in spreading hate and radical thoughts to propagate extremist ideologies. The study also probes the measures adopted by Pakistan to counter cyber extremism and radicalization. The study concludes that due to the fact that terrorist organizations are a constant driver of violent extremism and are linked to hostile foreign agencies, Pakistan faces significant social and economic losses as a result. Therefore, there is a need for an effective policy to counter radical ideas disseminated through the Internet.*

### Keywords

online radicalization, web terrorism, hate speech, Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).

### Introduction

The world of the Internet has significantly impacted human social interactions at every level. As consumers, people utilize the Internet to search for information, manage their businesses, and connect with friends and other like-minded people. Likewise, extremists use the Internet in a similar way, and experts view the Internet as a highly

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useful tool for radical groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to disseminate their ideology and enlist supporters from around the globe.<sup>1</sup> These groups are successful in their cause because they connect to “like-minded” people “. . . in echo chambers and cloaked websites, and address particularly marginalized individuals of a society, with specific strategies for recruitment.”<sup>2</sup>

There is no specific form of extremism, violence and radicalization. It can appear in a variety of forms and be state-sponsored, religious, political, ideological, ethno-linguistic, and even ecological in nature. The focus of this article is to observe online-radicalized forms of terrorism and extremism, as recent research has shown that in the past five years 78% of terrorist organizations and networks in the world were linked with the al-Qaeda and its allies who came from autonomous home-grown networks.<sup>3</sup>

In Pakistan, the dominant media is television, with the Internet and social media only making up “approximately 2%” of extremist proselytization. Nevertheless, extremist networks are certainly using social media effectively to recruit new adherents, focusing on the growth of social media usage in Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> Globally the picture is different, with women being some of the most targeted groups. For example, a Scottish-Muslim woman, Aqsa Mahmood, was radicalized online and joined ISIS fighters in Syria.<sup>5</sup> “The Internet’s role thus seems to be one of the decision-shaping, which, in association with offline factors, can be associated to decision-making” for political violence.<sup>6</sup>

For the purposes of this article, “online” is defined as “human communication, exchanging information and connectivity via: emails, websites, peer to peer networks, bit torrents, Internet Relay Chat (IRC),

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<sup>1</sup> James Piazza and Ahmet Guler, “The Online Caliphate: Internet Usage and ISIS Support in the Arab World,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* (May 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2019.1606801>.

<sup>2</sup> Özen Odag, Anne Leiser, and Klaus Boehnke, “Reviewing the Role of the Internet in Radicalization Processes,” *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 21 (2019): 261–300.

<sup>3</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Kiran Hassan, “Social Media, Media Freedom and Pakistan’s War on Terror,” *The Round Table* 107, no. 2 (2018): 1–14.

<sup>5</sup> Leah Windsor, “The Language of Radicalization: Female Internet Recruitment to Participation in ISIS Activities,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 3 (2020): 506–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1385457>.

<sup>6</sup> Ghayda Hassan et al., “Exposure to Extremist Online Content Could Lead to Violent Radicalization: A Systematic Review of Empirical Evidence,” *International Journal of Developmental Science* 12, no. 7 (2018): 1–18.

Voice Over I.P. (VoIP), social networking sites and online forums.”<sup>7</sup> This is the most complex form of radicalization, and the term “radicalization” is usually employed by law enforcement and security agencies.<sup>8</sup> Researchers have argued that using this term only exacerbates the misperception in the improvement of counter-extremist efforts, with debates about the process of radicalization raising more questions than providing a clear definition.<sup>9</sup> Radicalization can include several behavioural attributes and be characterized from multiple points of view. In this article, “violent extremism” is characterized as: any behaviour that allows, looks for, advances or legitimizes the utilization of violence of any sort in assistance of specific faiths.<sup>10</sup>

Groups associated with online radicalization and extremism typically seek the following objectives:

1. Enrollment/recruitment
2. Information Propaganda through advertising or publicity
3. Raising Funds for specific goals
4. Intellectual Information
5. Communication.<sup>11</sup>

The aim of this article, therefore, is to investigate the current trends of online radicalization, extremism and how these trends can be countered. It will also seek to outline the trends and challenges as well as the counter-strategies to overcome this issue.

It is important to note that online radicalization is not the only contributory factor that leads to terrorism or violence. Physical communication patterns and other interpersonal communication channels are also important and crucial to help map the propagation of radicalism. However, due to the speed and accessibility of the Internet,

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<sup>7</sup> Bruce McFarlane, “Online Violent Redicalisation (OVer): Challenges Facing Law Enforcement Agencies and Policy Stakeholders,” [groundsmart-mail.com/documents/online-violent-redicalisation.html](http://groundsmart-mail.com/documents/online-violent-redicalisation.html).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Lindsay Clutterbuck, “An Overview of Violent Jihad in the UK: Radicalisation and the State Response,” in *Understanding Violent Radicalisation: Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe*, ed. Magnus Ranstorp (London: Routledge, 2010), 144–68.

<sup>10</sup> Crown Prosecution Service, “Violent Extremism and Related Criminal Offences,” 2010, [http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/violent\\_extremism.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/violent_extremism.html).

<sup>11</sup> Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006).

online communication is an important facilitator of enhancing the radicalization process.

### **Rationale and Objectives**

Criminal organizations and radicals take advantage of the simple access to an expansive cross-segment of the population to register, prepare, and encourage their victims to commit violence. The Internet also furnishes radicals with a fruitful ground for deployment and greater chances to communicate with individuals who might not generally be reachable by traditional means.

Utilizing a combination of traditional sites, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as other online administrations, radicals communicate their perspectives to and speak with newcomers to prepare them for violent activities. They do so by posting materials intended to incite violence. For example, they might use instructive recordings about how to develop explosives and use weapons, recordings of effective assaults, addresses embracing radical perspectives, and messages supporting and further reassuring assaults and demonstrations of brutality. A group might utilize Facebook to trade private messages and data to arrange attacks and encourage users to “like” pages in order to demonstrate their support. Likewise, they might use online message boards, chat rooms, and dating sites to meet and collaborate with each other and spread their messages. This article, therefore, seeks to answer how the Internet and other online sources are being utilized to promote radicalization and extremism; how a radicalized ideology leads to violence; and how online radicalization and extremism can be countered, both generally and in Pakistan.

### **Literature Review and Analysis**

Jones and Smith have found that in its unique shape, the term “radicalization” appeared in scholarly writing as a general method to depict an individual or group turn to more radical political issues.<sup>12</sup> While some oppose this view, it has recently risen in significance with the propagation of domestically established religious-based violence after the 9/11 attacks in the United States. Therefore, the term “radicalization” has evolved to generally reflect the way people are linked to offensive and brutal developments.

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<sup>12</sup> David Martin Jones, “Paris Attacks: Is Radicalisation Really the Problem?” *The Telegraph*, November 16, 2015, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11997784/Paris-attacks-is-radicalisation-really-the-problem.html>.

Michael uncovered that the Internet contributed significantly to the dissemination and identification of these issues. It is critical to acknowledge that the utilization of the Internet by non-state actors is not remarkable and did not begin with the development of global *jihād*. For example, neo-Nazi groups in the United States realized the potential for communication through the Internet since its inception in 1983. His study advised that such communication only served to energize the open discussion of ideas, pool assets, and make a “virtual arranged group,” and that radicalization was not understood as central to the use of the Internet at that time.

Brachman and Levine contended that the Internet progressively started to rouse messages of radicalism when groups began to call for lone assaults, giving members a platform through which to receive their prompts.<sup>13</sup> Availability bested ideological specialists, gathering elements that sustained radicalization and meant that enlistment could now be reflected on the Internet.

Arun Kundnani explained that the utilization of radicalism as a negative term by experts should be seen through the attempt of Western governments to bring down the “main drivers” of fear-based oppression.<sup>14</sup> Venhaus verified that most studies additionally put fluctuating degrees of significance on the part of personality and propose that an identity crisis and the ensuing control of this by radicals constitute frequently the initial phases of the radicalization procedure.<sup>15</sup> The part of initiative figures and publicity additionally appear in numerous radicalization hypotheses, with the authenticity of the former having a noteworthy effect upon the adequacy of the latter.

With an end goal to better comprehend the impact of the Internet and media on radicalization, some researchers have concentrated more on how radicalism is seen by standard groups of viewers and the way it is affected by the current medium. Hoskins, Awan, and O’Loughlin attempted to explain the procedure of radicalization and expressed that it was altered to portray the new media setting in its specific features.<sup>16</sup> Another report compiled by O’Loughlin, Boudeau, and Hoskins further

<sup>13</sup> Brian Levin, “Cyberhate: A Legal and Historical Analysis of Extremists’ Use of Computer Networks in America,” *American Behavioural Scientist* 45, no. 6 (2011): 958–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002764202045006004>.

<sup>14</sup> Omar Ashour, “Online De-Radicalization? Countering Violent Extremist Narratives: Message, Messenger and Media Strategy,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4, no. 6 (2012): 15–19.

<sup>15</sup> John M. “Matt” Venhaus, “Why Youth Join al-Qaeda,” United States Institute of Peace, May 2010, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2010/05/why-youth-join-al-qaeda>.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Hoskins, Akil Awan, and Ben O’Loughlin, *Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New Media Ecology* (London: Routledge, 2011).

distinguishes the lack of reliable sketches of radicalized people and showed that the great part of the prevailing press adds to an expanding unclearness of what constitutes radicalization. This, as per the authors, “adds to a feeling of an industrious yet diffused and underspecified risk, a condition of ‘hyper security.’”<sup>17</sup>

Marc Sageman has given an important hypothesis by utilizing informal community examinations to contend that al-Qaeda is a system united by (and intensely dependent upon) individual connections.<sup>18</sup> He puts some accentuation on the part of philosophy and holds that the Internet is the contributory factor in the worldwide militant movement and its development. He argues that association, friendship and family relationship coordinate to recruit the radicals by the senior leadership.<sup>19</sup>

As indicated by Torok, the web is the “most huge” of these new institutions, and takes into account the “social occasion and planning” of people defenseless against radicalization.<sup>20</sup> Such foundations, she contends, utilize “talk and arranged power relations with a specific end goal to standardize considerations and practices.”<sup>21</sup> This system of energy works inside the online condition and is utilized by fanatics to “recruit and radicalize.”<sup>22</sup>

Gill, Horgan, and Deckert concluded, after reviewing research on the radicalization of 119 lone extremists, that 35% of them utilized the Internet communications to coordinate with the radical campaigner while the remaining 46% used the Internet for instructional motives as identified in the attacks by their efforts.<sup>23</sup> This study reveals that the Internet plays a contributory role for radicals to achieve their goals. It was instrumental for them whether used before or after an attack.

Neumann holds the view that the Internet gives a stage to similarly invested people to fabricate a system and conceivably transform their

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<sup>17</sup> Ben O’Loughlin, Carole Boudeau, and Andrew Hoskins, “Distancing the Extraordinary: Audience Understandings of Discourses of ‘Radicalization,’” *Continuum* 25, no. 2 (2011): 153–64.

<sup>18</sup> Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Robyn Torok, “Developing an Explanatory Model for the Process of Online Radicalisation and Terrorism,” *Security Informatics* 2, no. 6 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1186/2190-8532-2-6>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Paul Gill, John Horgan, and Paige Deckert, “Bombing alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists,” *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 59, no. 2 (2014): 425–35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.12312>.

fear-based oppressive goals into the realism.<sup>24</sup> For online radical recruiters, it is like to offer a pool of latent individuals who can take the advantage of fewer hazards than there would be associated with moving toward a person in reality.

In his study of militant organizations, Zelin revealed that in contrast to their Arabic counterparts, the militants who spoke English were less active suggesting the development of online action.<sup>25</sup> His investigation that only depended on the quantitative research of militant movements uncovered a huge diminishment in significant militant discussions during 2009 and 2013. He credits this to various elements, incorporating an expansion in the utilization of online networking and government takedowns of well-known gatherings.

As indicated by Weimann, while online chat rooms and forums have turned out to be less dependent on secret key security, in the present condition, radicals are looking more towards allowed access and open online networking stages to engender their messages and enlist individuals.<sup>26</sup>

Klausen observes that this utilization of web-based social networking has made an online platform for radical extremists which is more accessible to the general population.<sup>27</sup> The impact of the revolutionary technology of the Internet has been the most pronounced in recent memory, as its rise has brought about major changes in the world of communications. With so many changes in the numbers, it is hard to tell how many of these locations are there, including millions of websites. The number of webpages indexed by the search engine Google reached one trillion by mid-2008.<sup>28</sup> However, as its own chief executive put it, "It only captures a miniscule percentage of what is currently online."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Neumann, "Countering Online Radicalization in America," National Security Program, Homeland Security Project, Bipartisan Policy Center, December 2012, <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BPC-Online-Radicalization-Report.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Aaron Zelin, *The State of Global Jihad Online: A Qualitative, Quantitative, and Cross-Lingual Analysis* (Washington, DC: New American Foundation, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Gabriel Weimann, *New Terrorism and New Media* (Washington, DC: Commons Lab of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2014), [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/STIP\\_140501\\_new\\_terrorism\\_F.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/STIP_140501_new_terrorism_F.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Jytte Klausen, "Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 1 (2015): 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2014.974948>.

<sup>28</sup> Jesse Alpert and Nissan Hajaj, "We Knew the Web was Big," *Official Google Blog*, July 25, 2008, <https://googleblog.blogspot.com/2008/07/we-knew-web-was-big.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Eric Schmidt, "Speech to Association of National Advertisers Annual Conference,"

## The Utilization of the Internet as a Domain for Terrorist Activities

The Internet provides a similar gateway and capacity for activists and fanatics to influence many remnants of society: to teach, to cooperate and to persuade. There is a lot of radical material currently available online, and this number is growing every day.

Search Term	Number of Results
“How to make a bomb”	1,830,000
“Salafi publications”	46,200
“Beheading video”	257,000

**Table 1: Google searches for critical keywords<sup>30</sup>**

## British Government’s Response to Online Radicalization

The British government has been working hard to deal with extremists using the Internet. In July 2006, the British government openly cracked down on online radicalization as an advanced platform for radicalization.<sup>31</sup>

The CTIRU (Counter-Terrorist Internet Referral Unit) created and introduced new developments to evaluate online material/content to increase the viability of police reaction to unauthorized material. From 2010–2012, the CTIRU handled a total of about 3100 cases, of which 410 (13.2%) materials were taken down. From July to September 2012, there were a total of 341 referrals, 232 (68%) of which were conducted through Directgov.<sup>32</sup> Sites that are most frequently taken down are BlogSpot, Twitter, Facebook, and Blogger.<sup>33</sup>

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October 8, 2005, cited in Tim Stevens and Peter R. Neumann, “Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action” (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2009), [https://cst.org.uk/docs/countering\\_online\\_radicalisation1.pdf](https://cst.org.uk/docs/countering_online_radicalisation1.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> RAND Europe (based on web results for selected search terms).

<sup>31</sup> “CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism” (2011), UK Home Office.

<sup>32</sup> Directgov was the British government’s digital service and provided a single point of access to public sector information. The site was replaced by the new Gov.uk website on October 17, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> RAND Europe, interviews with CTIRU, September 2012.



## The European Union (EU) Approach to Radicalization

The EU's general strategy on extremism was formalized in its 2002 "Combat Psychological War Framework Decision." Beginning in 2005, the EC (European Commission) began a review of the Internet's radicalization.<sup>34</sup> By disrupting the use of militants on the Internet, disruption of institutional exercises became the main strategy. In addition, the Council of Europe supported a data portal called "Inspection Network" that strengthened the participation and distribution of tasks by careful attention to and assessment of the Internet resources.<sup>35</sup> In 2010, the EU financed a "clean-up project" aimed at initiating cooperation and exchange between government organizations and society to explore how to reduce the radical use of the Internet. This resulted in a common-standard plan and a chart of prescriptive procedures that could be envisaged in order to reduce the exploitation of the Internet by extremists.<sup>36</sup> RAN (Radicalisation Awareness Network) is a system of the EU's Home Affairs Bureau that aims to support and promote the distribution of information among front-line staff, especially those who are in danger. The main and front-line leaders include experts, instructors, police, and officials of non-governmental organizations.<sup>37</sup>

The EU has noted that, in order to cope with the radicalization on the Internet, its goals could only be achieved by taking on its roots. The main task is to start from the ground, so the best strategy should be to develop a more planned approach at the national level. The European Union also stressed that in order to formulate strategies at the national level, data sharing should be encouraged.

## Pakistan's Initiatives against Radicalization

The following initiatives have been taken by Pakistan to counter radicalization:

- i. **De-Radicalization programmes**
  - a) Programmes in Swat for de-radicalization

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<sup>34</sup> Johnny Ryan, *Countering Militant Islamist Radicalization on the Internet: A User Driven Approach to Recover the Web* (Dublin: Institute of International and European Affairs, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> "Council Conclusions on Cooperation to Combat Terrorist Use of the Internet ('Check the Web')," Council of the European Union, 8457/3/07 REV 3, 29 May 2007, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st08/st08457-re03.en07.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> "The Clean IT project," <http://www.cleanitproject.eu>.

<sup>37</sup> Radicalization Awareness Network, "Proposed Policy Recommendations for the High Level," 2012.

- b) Programmes in Punjab
- ii. **Countering Radicalization**
  - a) Reforms in religious schools (*madrasahs*)
  - b) National and International Security Policy 2014
  - c) National Action Plan 2014
  - d) Counter Terrorism Actions
  - e) Pakistan Protection Act 2014.

### **Pakistan's Plan against Radicalization**

Pakistan's first de-radicalization programme began in September 2009, with Pakistani forces fighting the Taliban in the Swat valley. Although many perpetrators were arrested in the operation, even more young men were recruited to become suicide bombers. Already aware of the need to come up with a radical recovery plan, the Pakistani army also changed four school structures in Swat to focus on countering the process of radicalization.<sup>38</sup>

The citizens of Swat were given an opportunity to re-establish their self-esteem to ensure that they would not return to extremism. To date, 2,500 Taliban attackers have been reformed.<sup>39</sup> These activities are under the De-Radicalization and Emancipation Programmes (DREPs) and include Sabaoon (for boys aged 12–18), Rastoon (for 19–25 year olds), and Mishal (for militants' family members). The programme's general administration and oversight are in the hands of Pakistani military; as far as possible, the umbrella group of social and non-governmental organizations is respected as close as possible and the Hum Pakistani Foundation (HPF) is engaged in various focused exercises. About 200 activists have been reformed in Sabaoon since 2009, while Ralstoon has reformed 1196 radicals.<sup>40</sup>

### **Punjab Liberation Initiative**

In 2011, another anti-radicalization project was launched by the police anti-terrorism unit and Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) in the eastern part of Punjab. Punjab's de-

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<sup>38</sup> Hassan Abbas, "The Roots of Radicalization in Pakistan," *South Asia Journal* no. 9 (2013), <http://southasiajournal.net/the-roots-of-radicalization-in-pakistan/>.

<sup>39</sup> Muhammad Amir Rana, "Swat De-radicalization Model: Prospects for Rehabilitating," *Conflict and Peace Studies* 4, no. 2 (2011): 5–13.

<sup>40</sup> Shehzad H. Qazi, "A War without Bombs: Civil Society Initiatives against Radicalization in Pakistan," *Policy Brief* no. 60 (February 2013), [https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2013\\_Policy-Brief\\_A-War-without-Bombs.pdf](https://www.ispu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2013_Policy-Brief_A-War-without-Bombs.pdf).

radicalization programme was halted by the Punjab government in 2012 due to a shortage of reserves. About 1,300 radicals recovered until the end of the programme. The Punjab recovery plans focused on *Lashkar-i Taibah*, *Jaish-i Muhammad*, and anti-Shiite activists such as *Lashkar-i Jhangvī* and *Sipāh-i Şahābah* (SSP).<sup>41</sup>

The programme relies on three aspects: reaction, recovery, and rehabilitation. It also has three modules: Psychological Assessment, Religious Rehabilitation, and Professional Preparation. Three groups of about 311 members concluded their preparations.<sup>42</sup>

These programmes have been helpful to counter radicalization. However, they are not enough. The murder of 132 schoolchildren in Peshawar on December 16, 2014 was a sober reminder that radicalism remains an existential threat to Pakistan. To overcome extremism, Pakistan should develop a nationwide anti-violent extremism strategy that works against radicalization in all parts of the country. That strategy should be individual-centered and based on the use of technology.

In a diverse society like Pakistan, radicalism is a multi-level issue. In view of the multifaceted extension and scope of this issue, Pakistan needs to alter its current approach that focuses on group tactics. The joint reaction of state and society is important to establish an area that will persuade individuals to renounce offensive ideologies. Pakistan's ongoing limited and center-to-center disarmament may gradually lose its viability because territories that directly fight Pakistani armed forces are not reached through broader methods employed at the national level.

### **The Challenges of Radicalization**

Following are some of the most challenging aspects of Pakistan's current counter-radicalism projects:

#### ***Hostile Social Environment***

In Pakistan, there is little or no focus on de-radicalization at the individual level, where individuals are encouraged to return to a normal life. As project members leave and reintegrate into the general public,

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<sup>41</sup> Zil-e-Huma Rafique and Mughees Ahmed, "De-Radicalization and Rehabilitation Efforts: Analysis of Anti-terrorism Activities in Pakistan," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2013): 115–24.

<sup>42</sup> Saba Noor, "From Radicalization to De-Radicalization: The Case of Pakistan," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 5, no. 8 (2013): 16–19.

their renewed radicalization seems imminent. Additionally, a fragmented administrative structure, financial conflicts, and a lack of political will provide a perfect breeding ground for renewed radicalization. Finally, most of the burden of de-radicalization is placed on provincial governments, without significant help from the central government. Without changing these variables, eliminating radicalism in Pakistan will be a daunting task.

### ***Narrow Resource Base***

Given the size and scope of the problem and the need to fund anti-radicalization projects in the long term, proper funding remains a serious problem. The provision of adequate assets is, therefore, a necessity in order to develop each of these projects at the national level.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation***

Opposition to radicalism and extremism is an ongoing process. Although it is claimed that the short-term programmes are successful, in reality the true results of a national de-radicalization programme can only be realized after 10–15 years. Therefore, presently it is difficult to assess which procedures have a credible impact on people. These programmes must be adequately monitored, with more accurate data provided as to the degree of their success and failure, so that the proper alterations and updates can be done over time.

### ***Civilian Control of Counter-Radicalization Programmes***

In order to translate the ongoing confrontation in Pakistan into a far-reaching plan at the national level, the monitoring of the programme should be handled by non-military personnel. There is a need for basic tactics of confrontation in the supervision of non-military personnel.

### ***How to Counter the Trend?***

Any technology deployed to deal with online radicalization must anticipate that it will need to change over time to meet different circumstances. With this in mind, the following steps should be taken:

- Curbing the creators of radical materials and creating a less-fruitful environment for radical information. The proposed usage of withdrawals combined with prosecution is an outdated method and suggests that even withdrawn material will eventually be distributed.
- A specification that enables online communities to be self-mentoring

and empowered. The Internet user groups should be setup to make them more viable in “managing” their online communities.

- Reducing the interest in extremist information. More consideration should be given to media education as a way to enhance protection from radical information.
- Giving due consideration to hateful comments.
- Advocating positive information and proposing grass-roots initiatives to provide seed money to online activities to discourage radical information.

It is also important that all members of the community be involved, including the Internet organizations and customers, as opposed to relying solely on the government.

### ***National Counter-Radicalization Policy***

Combating radicalization is a long process and requires a wide view at the strategic level. Pakistan’s approach should include three main areas: steering arrangements (*madrasah* and government-funded training frameworks), national youth strategies, and a complete anti-terrorism strategy. This arrangement should clearly articulate its goals and work hard to accomplish them. For example, youth should be provided with positive educational and employment alternatives. This will prevent more young people from falling prey to radicalization.

### ***Community Engagement and Resilience***

To fully overcome extremism, Pakistan needs to promote a holistic approach that centers on the reality of terrorism (through dynamic means) and its ideal (non-active means). As a result, a joint reaction of state and society is needed. It should aim at causing individuals to renounce the radical beliefs. Such an arrangement would allow the general public various opportunities to participate, talk about, and develop a joint response to online radicalism.

The common view of Pakistani society is that the responsibility for eliminating radicalism exclusively rests with the government. Despite this, joint efforts of the government and local communities have developed into an essential part of the contemporary compromise structure. Pakistan should organize teams to this end and promote collective participation to make the environment inhospitable to extremists.

### ***Faith-Based Networks and Moderate Religious Scholars***

Religious experts and frameworks in Pakistan have an incredible impact on society. It is fundamental to expand the voice of Pakistani scholars against radicals. The masses of Pakistan rely on religious beliefs in their daily lives and, as a result, religious experts are also prominent in political and social circles.

The government of Pakistan can use the religious system to guide religious researchers to work against extremism and promote more tolerant teachings. These scholars must have proper security, as the lack of security may have disastrous consequences. For example, in October 2010, the Pakistani Taliban killed Dr. Mohamed Farouk, the vice-chancellor of Swat Islamic University. He spent much of his career fighting against terrorism. Additionally, in 2007, the Taliban killed the famous religious scholar Maulānā Ḥasan Jān in Peshawar. In order to attract religious scholars to this cause, the government has an obligation to give them and their families a sense of protection, so that they could be free to work without fear.

### ***Public-Private Partnership***

At present, there is already a public-private body represented by the Pakistan People's Foundation and the Pakistani Armed Forces to handle the de-radicalization strategy, but it should be further upgraded in order to include more partners.

### ***Annual Summits and Symposiums***

In 2010, the government of Pakistan held a conference on radicalization. The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad has also explored ways to integrate youth by providing resources and experts from around the world. Unfortunately, there are no such meetings of a similar nature to solve the online radicalization issue. Such gatherings and symposia should be organized annually to bring together the activities and technologies to form the best ways of sharing the fruits and ways of reducing radical thinking. These efforts must assess existing technologies and methods against online radicalism and review the efforts made in this area.

### **Conclusion**

The pace of contemporary radicalization and extremism is staggering. Activists and extremists are able to flexibly change their tactics to stay ahead of monitoring and counter-radicalization efforts. Pakistan,

therefore, must develop a comprehensive and flexible strategy to combat online radicalism. The current online radicalization strategy deployed in Pakistan is not enough to eliminate these ideologies, leading to the alarming situation in Pakistan and the need for an organized policy to achieve the country's goal of opposing radicalism. With the proper funding, strategy, and professional management, Pakistan can defeat radicalism and extremism and achieve maximum results.

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