

The Role of Political Leadership in Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan from 2001 to 2022

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Abstract

Pakistan has been facing internal security threats from extremism, terrorism, and militancy for several decades. These challenges have led to a struggle against different extremist groups, which has severely affected the country's internal security, stability, and progress. These profoundly entrenched phenomena have led individuals and groups to embrace extremist ideologies, undermining the nation's efforts toward stability and progress. The purpose of the study is to recognize the multifaceted nature of extremism and the hard and soft approaches by the government to counter the spread of extremist narratives and ideologies. This research explores the shift from a military approach to soft measures, including deradicalization programs, counter-narrative campaigns, educational reforms, and community-based initiatives. Through extensive secondary data collection and analysis, the impact of Pakistan's soft strategy on different target groups, such as youth, former militants, and vulnerable communities, was examined. The study revealed how drivers like political, social, and religious have been associated with violent extremism and how different extremist groups use these factors as a yardstick to get involved in violence. The analyses provide the basis for a common framework for resisting extremist ideology. It revealed that critical stakeholders, including religious leaders, civil society organizations, and educational institutions, are critical in promoting counter-narratives and fostering an environment of tolerance and moderation. By drawing insights from successful international practices and models, the study provided recommendations for strengthening Pakistan's strategy in countering extremism through community resilience, capacity-building initiatives, and a comprehensive national action plan for a coordinated and sustainable approach.

Keywords: Political Leadership, Violent Extremism, Countering Terrorism, Security.

Introduction

Pakistan's struggle against terrorism and violent extremism has been a long and arduous one, posing challenges to the nation's security and stability. In the aftermath of the tragic events of 9/11 and the ensuing regional instability, the country found itself at the forefront of the global war on terror (Jones, 2015). This period compelled successive governments to implement a range of strategies aimed at safeguarding national security and promoting long-term peace. Initially, Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts were predominantly military-centric, characterized by large-scale operations such as Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Operation Rah-e-Nijat, aimed at dismantling terrorist networks and eliminating their safe havens (Ahmed, 2018). However, over time, there has been a growing recognition that a purely kinetic approach is insufficient in addressing the complex and multifaceted drivers of extremism. This realization has prompted a significant shift towards a more holistic strategy that incorporates softer measures,

acknowledging the need to address the underlying socio-economic disparities, ideological radicalization, and geopolitical complexities that fuel the spread of violent extremism (Hussain, 2019).

This transition reflects Pakistan's evolving understanding of the nature of terrorism and the imperative to adopt a multidimensional approach that not only targets the symptoms but also addresses the root causes of extremism. By exploring the evolution of Pakistan's counterterrorism policies and strategies, this study aims to provide insights into the country's quest for peace and security amidst persistent threats posed by terrorism. The paradigm shift acknowledges that sustainable peace cannot be achieved through force alone but requires a multifaceted strategy that addresses the complex interplay of factors contributing to the rise of extremism. Furthermore, Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts have been shaped by the country's unique geopolitical landscape, regional dynamics, and historic ties with various non-state actors (Rashid, 2018). The interplay between these factors has influenced the formulation and implementation of counterterrorism policies, highlighting the challenges faced by policymakers in addressing complex regional alliances and interests. By examining Pakistan's evolving counterterrorism strategies, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on effective approaches to combating terrorism and promoting sustainable peace. Through an analysis of the country's experiences, lessons can be drawn for other nations grappling with similar challenges, underscoring the importance of a holistic and context-specific approach that addresses the multidimensional drivers of extremism.

Concept of Violent Extremism

Violent extremism has emerged as a major challenge that poses a significant threat to global security and stability. It refers to the advocacy, promotion, or use of violence as a means to achieve ideological, political, or social objectives. This form of extremism can manifest in various ways, including terrorism, hate crimes, and other acts of violence motivated by extremist ideologies. At its core, violent extremism is often driven by a combination of psychological, social, and political factors. Scholars like John Horgan have highlighted the psychological underpinnings of violent extremism, such as a sense of grievance, a desire for significance, and a need for belonging (Horgan, 2005). These psychological factors can make individuals more susceptible to extremist ideologies and narratives, which offer a sense of purpose and identity. Furthermore, Moghaddam's "Staircase to Terrorism" model (Moghaddam, 2005) provides a framework for understanding the process of radicalization and the progression towards violent extremism. This model suggests that individuals climb a metaphorical staircase through a series of psychological steps driven by factors such as perceived injustice, displacement of aggression, and the influence of extremist ideologies.

Social and political factors have significantly contributed to the development of violent extremism. Marginalization, economic deprivation, and the perception of injustice can create fertile ground for extremist narratives to take root. Additionally, the availability of extremist propaganda and the influence of social networks, both online and offline, can facilitate the spread of extremist ideologies and contribute to the radicalization process. It is important to note that violent extremism is not confined to any particular religion, ideology, or geographic region. It can manifest in various forms, such as ethno-nationalist extremism, religious extremism, and ideologically motivated extremism, among others. These different forms of violent extremism may share common underlying factors but also exhibit distinct characteristics and motivations.

In Pakistan, the issue of violent extremism has been a persistent and complex challenge, exacerbated by a combination of domestic and regional factors. The country has faced a multitude of extremist groups,

including the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), sectarian organizations, and various anti-state militant outfits. The presence of these groups has posed a significant threat to national security, social cohesion, and the country's development. Pakistan's proximity to Afghanistan and the spillover effects of the protracted conflict in the region have further compounded the problem of violent extremism. Additionally, factors such as socio-economic inequalities, lack of educational opportunities, and the spread of extremist narratives through certain madrasas and online platforms have contributed to the radicalization of vulnerable segments of the population. Countering violent extremism in Pakistan has required a comprehensive approach involving military operations, law enforcement measures, deradicalization programs, and efforts to address the underlying socio-economic and political grievances that have fueled extremist ideologies. However, the challenge remains daunting, and sustained efforts from the government, civil society, and international partners are necessary to effectively combat this threat and promote a peaceful and inclusive society.

Terrorist Groups and Extremist Narrative in Pakistan

Pakistan has faced a persistent threat from various terrorist groups and militant organizations that have propagated extremist narratives over the decades. The roots of this issue can be traced back to the proliferation of religious seminaries (madrasas) in the country, some of which have been accused of promoting intolerance and radical ideologies. Additionally, the state's historical policy of supporting certain militant groups as proxies in regional conflicts, such as the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union and the Kashmir issue with India, has contributed to the normalization of extremist narratives within segments of Pakistani society. One of the most formidable terrorist threats has been posed by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an umbrella organization of various militant groups that emerged in 2007. The TTP follows a hardline interpretation of Islam and has been responsible for numerous attacks against Pakistani security forces, civilians, and government institutions. Their extremist narrative revolves around opposing the Pakistani state, which they perceive as un-Islamic and a puppet of Western powers, as well as enforcing their rigid interpretation of Sharia law.

Another prominent group, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), was founded in the late 1980s with the initial objective of opposing Indian rule in Kashmir. Over time, LeT has extended its operations across Pakistan and beyond, engaging in attacks against Indian and Western targets. Their extremist narrative is rooted in anti-Western and anti-Indian sentiments, as well as a distorted interpretation of jihad and the desire to establish an Islamic caliphate. Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which emerged in the 1990s, shares a similar agenda to LeT, seeking to liberate Kashmir from Indian control through violent means. JeM has carried out numerous attacks in India and has been designated as a terrorist organization by several countries and international organizations. Their extremist narrative is based on a radical interpretation of Islam, a rejection of secular governance, and the pursuit of an Islamic state. These terrorist groups have exploited various grievances within Pakistani society, including socio-economic disparities, political marginalization, and perceived injustices, to recruit individuals and propagate their extremist narratives. They have also capitalized on the state's support for certain militant groups in the past, portraying themselves as legitimate actors in regional conflicts.

Pakistan has taken various measures to counter these extremist narratives and terrorist groups, including military operations, reforming the educational curriculum, and promoting a more moderate interpretation of Islam. The National Action Plan, introduced in 2014, aimed to crack down on terrorist financing, regulate madrasas, and curb hate speech and extremist narratives. However, the deep-rooted nature of

these narratives, the presence of safe havens for terrorist groups, and the continued influence of extremist ideologies within certain segments of society pose significant challenges. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that combines kinetic operations against terrorist groups with efforts to address the underlying socio-economic and political grievances that fuel extremism. Furthermore, regional and international cooperation is crucial in disrupting the transnational networks of these terrorist organizations and cutting off their sources of funding and support.

Drivers of Violent Extremism in Pakistan

Violent extremism in Pakistan is driven by an interplay of socio-economic, political, ideological, and security-related factors. This involves push and pull factors, which create conditions conducive to radicalization and extremism. The prevalence of violent extremism creates an environment of fear and insecurity, hindering the implementation of CVE initiatives and undermining public trust in the government's ability to address the root causes of extremism. Rana and Bukhari (2007) highlight how marginalized groups' perceived discrimination fuels resentment, making them susceptible to extremist narratives offering empowerment through violence.

Additionally, socio-economic disparities and lack of opportunities can leave individuals disillusioned, making them susceptible to extremist narratives that promise a better future and a sense of purpose, particularly among disenfranchised youth. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education and healthcare perpetuate grievances and fuel resentment, making individuals susceptible to extremist narratives. Addressing these socio-economic factors requires sustained investments in economic development, social welfare programs, and job creation initiatives. Pakistan's religious seminaries (madrassas) propagating rigid ideologies have contributed to extremism's spread (Rana & Bukhari, 2007). The indoctrination of students with these ideologies facilitates their recruitment by militant groups. Ideological extremism, propagated by radical clerics and militant groups, continues to exert influence over vulnerable populations in Pakistan. Islamist extremism and sectarianism fuel sectarian violence and inter-community tensions, perpetuating cycles of radicalization and conflict. Challenging extremist ideologies and promoting moderate interpretations of Islam is essential for countering violent extremism, but it requires confronting entrenched narratives and sensitivities within society. Weak governance, corruption, and impunity undermine the rule of law and exacerbate security challenges in Pakistan. Ineffective law enforcement, lack of accountability, and governance failures contribute to a culture of impunity, allowing extremist groups to operate with impunity and undermine state authority. Strengthening governance institutions, improving transparency and accountability, and enhancing the rule of law are essential for creating an enabling environment for CVE efforts. Regional dynamics further complicate CVE efforts in Pakistan, particularly given the country's complex relationships with neighboring Afghanistan and India. Cross-border terrorism, militant sanctuaries, and proxy conflicts exacerbate instability in the region, undermining regional cooperation on counterterrorism and CVE initiatives. Addressing regional security challenges requires diplomatic engagement, confidence-building measures, and cooperation with neighboring countries to disrupt terrorist networks and mitigate transnational threats.

While push factors create conditions for radicalization and extremism, pull factors actively draw individuals towards extremism. Extremist groups craft narratives resonating with grievances, offering a sense of purpose and adventure, exploiting feelings of disenfranchisement (Sarwar & Abbas, 2016). They portray violence as a means to address injustices and restore dignity. Social networks' influence is crucial, as individuals associated with extremist ideologues are more likely to embrace such beliefs (Abbas &

Fatima, 2018). The normalization of extremist narratives within social circles creates a powerful pull factor. Extremist groups target those seeking belonging and identity, offering camaraderie, brotherhood, and a shared cause (Sarwar & Abbas, 2016). This promise appeals to marginalized youth's need for acceptance and significance. The proliferation of extremist propaganda, including through social media, amplifies these narratives, reinforcing extremism's appeal and normalizing violence. In response, various regimes in Pakistan have implemented strategies to counter violent extremism, including military operations against militant groups, efforts to regulate madrassas, and initiatives to promote socioeconomic development and counter extremist narratives. However, these approaches have often been criticized for their lack of cohesion and long-term vision, as well as their failure to address the underlying root causes effectively.

Pervez Musharraf Government Counterterrorism Approach (2001-2007)

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the Musharraf government in Pakistan found itself at a critical juncture, trying to tackle countering terrorism while balancing regional dynamics and domestic pressures. A combination of military operations, peace negotiations, and reluctant cooperation with the United States strategy of drone strikes marked Musharraf's counterterrorism approach during this period. Initially, Pakistan aligned itself as a frontline ally in the global war on terror, deploying troops to the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in 2003. The Pakistan army launched Operation Al-Mizan, aiming to root out militants from the region. However, this military offensive faced challenges as the local discourse and historical context were not fully understood, leading to unanticipated losses and resistance (Javaid, 2011).

Recognizing the limitations of a purely military approach, the Musharraf government shifted towards a peace process strategy. In 2004, the military operations were halted, and an agreement was reached with Nek Muhammad Wazir, a prominent mujahedeen leader in South Waziristan. This move drew criticism from the United States, which viewed such negotiations as emboldening militant groups and potentially threatening NATO forces in Afghanistan (Shuja, 2009). The peace process, however, proved short-lived as Nek Muhammad Wazir was killed in a U.S. drone strike, causing the agreement to unravel. This incident exacerbated tensions between Pakistan and the United States, with then-U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice condemning Musharraf's strategy and threatening to cut financial aid (Fair, 2014). In the wake of Nek Muhammad's death, Baitullah Mehsud emerged as the leader of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), escalating the conflict between the Pakistan army and the militant group. A series of peace deals and ceasefires followed, but they were frequently breached, leading to a resurgence of suicide bombings and violence (Abbas, 2008).

Musharraf's approach was further complicated by the United States' insistence on drone strikes in FATA, which drew criticism for causing civilian casualties and fueling resentment among local populations. While Musharraf acknowledged the need to support the U.S. strategy, he also sought to reform madrassas and ban specific militant organizations within Pakistan (Riedel, 2008). Critics argued that Musharraf's strategy failed to prevent the expansion of militant organizations, as the TTP gained a foothold in various agencies of FATA and garnered support from Afghan militants during the peace process periods (Khattaq & Mushtaq, 2015). Successive military operations were launched by the Pakistan army to regain control, but the oscillation between military offensives and peace negotiations created an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability (Rashid, 2012). Ultimately, Musharraf's counterterrorism approach during this period was characterized by a lack of cohesion and consistency. The combination of military operations,

peace negotiations, and reluctant cooperation with U.S. drone strikes proved ineffective in curbing the threat of terrorism. The failure to address the root causes and prevent the spread of militant ideologies limited the overall success of Musharraf's strategy, leaving a complex legacy that subsequent governments would inherit (Haqqani, 2013).

Asif Ali Zardari Government Counterterrorism Strategy (2008-2013)

After the resignation of Pervez Musharraf in 2008, the newly elected Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government, led by Asif Ali Zardari, faced a complicated security situation. The country was confronted with a persistent terrorist threat, worsened by the consequences of the Afghan conflict and the presence of violent groups within its borders. The Zardari administration carried on implementing military operations against militant groups in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) while also trying to initiate peace talks and discussions. "The Zardari government continued the policy of using military force against the militants, but it also sought to engage them in peace negotiations" (Khan, 2012). However, Zardari's government faced immense challenges in formulating a coherent counterterrorism strategy. Recognizing the failures of Musharraf's approach, the PPP administration sought to emphasize both military operations and socio-economic development in combating terrorism. However, navigating the complex terrain of Pakistan's tribal areas and managing relationships with the United States remained central to their efforts. "The Zardari government's counterterrorism efforts were hampered by a lack of coordination among various agencies, inadequate resources, and the complexity of the challenge" (Abbas, 2014). In line with their campaign promises, the PPP government initiated dialogue processes with various militant factions, aiming to address grievances and integrate marginalized communities into the nation. This approach led to the signing of several peace agreements with militant groups in the tribal regions, mirroring Musharraf's earlier attempts at reconciliation.

Simultaneously, the Zardari administration continued military operations against militant strongholds, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Swat Valley. These offensives, such as Operation Rah-e-Rast and Operation Rah-e-Nijat, aimed to eliminate insurgent sanctuaries and restore government control over volatile regions. However, like Musharraf's tenure, Zardari's government faced criticism for its perceived inability to tackle the root causes of extremism effectively. Despite efforts to address socio-economic disparities and improve governance in the tribal areas, progress was slow, and militant groups continued to exploit grievances to recruit new members. Furthermore, the United States' drone strike campaign persisted during Zardari's presidency, further complicating Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy. While publicly condemning civilian casualties and violations of sovereignty, the government tacitly cooperated with American efforts to target high-value terrorist operatives. The PPP government's counterterrorism strategy, characterized by a combination of military operations, peace negotiations, and cooperation with the United States, faced challenges and criticisms similar to those of its predecessor. The inability to achieve lasting peace and effectively address the underlying drivers of extremism deepened the enduring complexities of Pakistan's fight against terrorism.

Nawaz Sharif Counterterrorism Strategy (2013-2017)

Following the 2013 general elections, Nawaz Sharif and his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) assumed power, inheriting significant security challenges, including terrorism and extremism. The Sharif administration's approach to counterterrorism encompassed a mix of military operations, peace negotiations, and efforts to address socio-economic grievances. "The PML-N government's

counterterrorism policy was marked by a combination of kinetic operations, peace talks, and measures aimed at addressing the root causes of extremism" (Yusuf, 2016). In continuation of previous policies, the Sharif government pursued military offensives against militant strongholds in various regions, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). Operations such as Zarb-e-Azb aimed to eliminate insurgent sanctuaries and restore government control over volatile areas. These offensives demonstrated a commitment to confronting militant groups directly and restoring stability in affected regions. "Operation Zarb-e-Azb was a major military offensive launched in June 2014 to dislodge militant groups from North Waziristan Agency, a long-standing stronghold of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Additionally, the Sharif administration sought to engage in peace talks with certain militant factions, echoing previous efforts to reconcile with militants. However, the success of these negotiations remained limited, with some agreements failing to materialize or being violated by militant groups. "The government formed a committee to hold direct talks with the TTP, offering them a chance to lay down arms and join the political mainstream. However, the peace process collapsed after the TTP's attack on Karachi's Jinnah International Airport in 2014" (Khan, 2014).

The government emphasized socio-economic development and governance reforms as integral components of its counterterrorism strategy. Initiatives aimed at addressing poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education and healthcare in marginalized communities were seen as crucial in addressing the root causes of extremism and reducing support for militant groups. "The government's National Internal Security Policy recognized the need to address socio-economic grievances and improve governance in areas affected by militancy. However, the effectiveness of Sharif's counterterrorism efforts was hindered by various challenges. The continued spillover of violence from neighboring Afghanistan, internal political instability, and tensions with the military establishment complicated efforts to achieve sustainable security outcomes. Moreover, the persistence of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal regions further fueled anti-American sentiment and strained relations between the two countries. The government's reluctance to target certain militant groups, such as the Haqqani Network and Lashkar-e-Taiba, due to their perceived strategic value undermined the overall effectiveness of its counterterrorism approach (Jaspal, 2015). Despite these challenges, the Sharif government's counterterrorism efforts marked a continuation of previous strategies, with a focus on military operations, peace negotiations, and socio-economic development. While progress was made in certain areas, the enduring complexities of the security landscape underscored the need for comprehensive and sustained efforts to combat terrorism and extremism in Pakistan effectively.

Imran Khan Government Counterterrorism Strategy (2018-2022)

Following the conclusion of Nawaz Sharif's tenure, Pakistan experienced a transition of power, leading to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, led by Imran Khan, assuming office after the 2018 general elections. Imran Khan's administration inherited the ongoing challenge of terrorism and extremism in Pakistan and implemented a series of counterterrorism measures and reforms aimed at addressing these issues. Imran Khan's government prioritized a multifaceted approach to counterterrorism, incorporating both military operations and socio-economic reforms. One of the key initiatives introduced by the PTI government was the National Action Plan (NAP), a comprehensive strategy aimed at combating terrorism and extremism through coordinated efforts across various sectors. Under NAP, the government intensified military operations against militant groups, particularly in the tribal regions and other areas affected by terrorism. Operations such as Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad aimed to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries and

disrupt their networks. Additionally, the government focused on enhancing intelligence-sharing and coordination among law enforcement agencies to improve the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts. In parallel, the PTI administration prioritized socio-economic development and governance reforms as essential components of its counterterrorism strategy. Initiatives were launched to address the root causes of extremism, including poverty, lack of education, and unemployment, particularly in marginalized communities vulnerable to radicalization. These efforts aimed to create opportunities for socio-economic empowerment and promote social cohesion. Moreover, the government emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in combating terrorism. Diplomatic efforts were made to engage neighboring countries, particularly Afghanistan, in joint efforts to address cross-border terrorism and disrupt terrorist networks operating in the region.

Furthermore, the PTI government sought to strengthen counterterrorism legislation and institutional frameworks to enhance the country's capacity to prevent and respond to terrorist threats. Measures were introduced to improve border security, enhance counterterrorism financing measures, and streamline legal procedures for prosecuting terrorism-related cases. Overall, Imran Khan's administration's counterterrorism measures and reforms aimed to address the complex and evolving challenges posed by terrorism and extremism in Pakistan. By adopting a comprehensive approach that combines military operations with socio-economic development and regional cooperation, the government sought to effectively combat terrorism and promote peace and stability in the country.

CVE Strategy in Pakistan

The Pakistani government has recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to counter violent extremism (CVE) and has taken several initiatives in this regard. In 2014, the government launched the National Action Plan (NAP) as a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorism and extremism. Under the NAP, various measures were proposed, including countering extremist narratives through strategic communication campaigns, promoting moderate voices, and reforming educational curricula to remove hate material. Efforts have been made to regulate religious seminaries (madrasas) and bring them under a uniform education system, ensuring that these institutions do not promote extremist ideologies. The government has aimed to curb hate speech and the dissemination of extremist literature through legal measures and increased monitoring. The government has recognized the importance of engaging with local communities, civil society organizations, and religious leaders to understand local dynamics and develop context-specific strategies for CVE. Initiatives have been taken to address socio-economic grievances, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities, which can contribute to the spread of extremist ideologies. The Pakistani military has conducted several operations, including Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad, to dismantle and disrupt terrorist networks and their safe havens. Pakistan has sought to enhance regional and international cooperation to counter the transnational threat of terrorism and extremism, including intelligence sharing and joint operations.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in the implementation and effectiveness of CVE programmes in Pakistan. The deep-rooted nature of extremist ideologies, the presence of safe havens for terrorist groups, and the continued influence of certain militant groups pose significant obstacles. There have been concerns over the lack of concrete action against some extremist organizations, such as the Rah-e-Haq Party, which has gained political representation in certain areas despite its alleged links to sectarian militant groups. To address these challenges, Pakistan needs to adopt a more comprehensive and consistent approach, ensuring that CVE efforts are not undermined by political considerations or selective targeting of certain groups.

Sustained efforts are required to address the root causes of extremism, including social, economic, and political grievances, while also promoting a more moderate and inclusive interpretation of Islam. Additionally, the government needs to strengthen its capacity for monitoring and evaluation of CVE programmes, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and that initiatives are tailored to local contexts and needs. Collaboration with civil society organizations, community leaders, and religious scholars is crucial in developing and implementing effective CVE strategies. Overall, while Pakistan has taken significant steps in countering violent extremism, sustained commitment, comprehensive strategies, and consistent implementation are essential to achieve long-term success in this endeavor.

Recommendations

- The government of Pakistan should implement comprehensive deradicalization and disengagement programs that focus on rehabilitating individuals who have been radicalized or involved in extremist activities. These programs should involve psychological counseling, vocational training, and reintegration support to facilitate their transition back into mainstream society.
- The government and religious leaders can undertake comprehensive reforms of the educational system, including madrasas, to eliminate hate-based curricula and promote critical thinking, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Integrate peace education, interfaith dialogue, and civic values into the curricula to foster a more inclusive and pluralistic society.
- The government should ensure the provision of security and equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their ethnic, religious, or socio-economic backgrounds. Eliminate discriminatory practices and address the deprivation of marginalized communities, which can fuel resentment and create a breeding ground for extremist ideologies.
- The government should enhance regional and international cooperation in intelligence sharing, joint operations, and capacity-building efforts to disrupt transnational terrorist networks, dismantle their financing sources, and address the cross-border dimensions of extremism.
- Community leaders, religious scholars, and the private sector should collaborate in developing and implementing CVE strategies. This collaborative effort can enhance the credibility and effectiveness of CVE initiatives and also foster peace-building efforts and conflict resolution mechanisms to address long-standing disputes, social tensions, and political grievances that extremist groups exploit for recruitment and legitimacy.

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