

Countering Radicalism: Pakistan's Pursuit of Peace and Stability

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Abstract

The global rise of radicalization has called for a deeper understanding of its complexities, particularly in Pakistan, where various extremist ideologies and groups operate. This study undertakes an inclusive examination of the factors driving radicalization in Pakistan, drawing on insights from policymakers, journalists, academics, security officials involved in countering violent extremism, and both government and non-government organizations. Through the lens of structural functionalism and critical terrorism studies, this study explores the functional needs of the state in countering radicalism in Pakistan, including the socialization of education, social control, and the role of law enforcement agencies. By employing a qualitative research approach through semi-structured and in-depth interviews, this study highlights that radicalization in Pakistan results from a complex interaction of historical, geographical, security, geopolitical, and foreign factors. Moreover, key socio-economic, political, and religious factors are identified as primary drivers, often interacting and exacerbating one another. The findings underscore the need for an all-inclusive strategy to address radicalization in Pakistan, with a focus on customized deradicalization approaches that reflect the country's unique context. The study further suggests that policymakers and practitioners must also consider the interconnectedness of these factors to effectively mitigate radicalization.

Keywords

Pakistan, South Asia, extremism, radicalization, madrassahs, terrorism

Introduction

Over the past two decades, Pakistan has been facing significant challenges due to the rise of radicalism and extremism, particularly among its youth. Addressing these issues has become paramount for national stability and security. The government's 'complex' approaches incorporate various strategies and initiatives aimed at countering

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radicalization and promoting peace within the country. Pakistan, a federal parliamentary democracy since 1973, grants its citizens fundamental rights through the Constitution of Pakistan (1973). However, the nation has endured terrorism for more than twenty years, resulting in the loss of over 83000 lives, financial damages exceeding 35 trillion Pakistani rupees (approximately \$130 billion USD), and an increase in societal violence, extremism, and intolerance (National Counter Terrorism Authority Pakistan, n.d.).

To combat extremist ideologies, Pakistan has launched several counter-narrative campaigns. These initiatives involve partnerships with religious scholars, community leaders, and media outlets to promote messages of peace and denounce violence. By providing alternative perspectives and debunking extremist propaganda, these campaigns aim to undermine the appeal of radicalism. Similarly, radicalism is also a global issue that requires extensive international cooperation and collaboration. Pakistan has actively engaged with neighboring countries and global organizations to share intelligence, best practices, and strategies for countering extremism. Including joint efforts in border security, information exchange, and capacity building have strengthened Pakistan's ability to combat radicalism (U.S. Department of State, 2024).

Moreover, Pakistan has struggled with radicalism, which is deeply rooted in its turbulent history marked by decades of political instability, religious extremism, and geopolitical influences. Following independence in 1947, the country faced challenges in establishing a stable government. According to Cohen (2004), the founder, Mr Jinnah, envisioned a secular state; however, his successors struggled to uphold this vision. Meanwhile, the Objective Resolution of 1949, which declares Pakistan an Islamic State, marked a significant shift towards a religious-political ideology (Jalal, 2014). Later, General Zia-ul-Haq, who declared martial law in the country in 1977, brought Islamist groups to the forefront. Zia's Islamization policies, including the implementation of Sharia law, created an environment conducive to radicalization among youth (Haqqani, 2005). This led to the production of Mujahideen (Islamic warriors who aim to protect Islam) in the country during the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989), which intensified extremism and established Pakistan as a hub for the anti-Soviet Mujahideen. The Soviet-Afghan war had a profound impact on Pakistan, transforming the country into a frontline state in the global fight against communism. The state of Pakistan, led by General Zia, collaborated closely with the United States and other Western powers to support the Afghan Mujahideen, a loose coalition of Islamist and nationalist groups, resisting Soviet occupation (Hoodbhoy, 2005).

Despite growing concerns over radicalization in Pakistan, there is a paucity of research that broadly examines the relationship of multiple factors associated with radicalization. Such factors drive radicalization through the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, academia, security officials, and non-governmental organizations, within the framework of structural functionalism and critical terrorism models. This limits our understanding of the functional requirements for an effective counter-radicalization strategy in Pakistan. Therefore, this study aims to explore the diversity of factors that pave the way for radicalization and the counterstrategies devised by the Pakistani state. It also seeks to investigate the effectiveness of these counterstrategies.

Research Methodology

Understanding radicalization in Pakistan requires a comprehensive approach grounded in rigorous research methodology. Existing studies on radicalization and extremism

contribute to a substantial body of literature; however, much of this work remains mainly descriptive or narrative in nature, rather than analytical. Therefore, this study uses a qualitative research design, which is well-suited for exploring complex phenomena such as radicalization. This approach enabled the collection of rich, contextual data through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with diverse stakeholders, including security experts, journalists, academics, and religious scholars. A purposive sampling technique was employed to deliberately select participants based on their relevance to the research objectives, rather than through random selection. Furthermore, a content analysis method was used to analyze the primary data collected through various interviews with government and non-governmental officials. This approach facilitated the identification of recurring themes and the exploration of the links between multiple factors that lead to radicalization in Pakistan, as well as possible steps to counter extremism. Such an approach provided a nuanced understanding of radicalization in Pakistan by integrating multiple perspectives and highlighting the complexity of this phenomenon.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the comprehensive examination of multiple factors that fuel radicalization in Pakistan. Given the continued rise of extremism globally, this topic offers a comprehensive body of knowledge on radicalization and counterstrategies. Additionally, the discussion explores the complex interplay of historical, geographical, geopolitical, and security factors, offering important guidance for policymakers aiming to develop a contemporary and effective counter-radicalization approach.

Ethical Considerations

This study involves interviews with security experts and representatives from non-governmental organizations, such as the Media and NGOs. To ensure the integrity, transparency, and ethical aspects of this research, I took measures that aimed to protect the identity of respondents. All participants received detailed information about the aims and objectives of this study. They were also informed about the methodological design and potential risks and benefits involved. Consequently, the participants gave explicit consent, and their responses were recorded with their permission.

Theoretical Framework

To analyze the complexities of radicalization and explore its driving factors, researchers have drawn on several theoretical frameworks. In this study, I have used the Critical Terrorism model by Richard Jackson (2005), which asserts that state-centric approaches primarily aim to understand terrorism rather than emphasizing the need for nuanced and critical perspectives. Jackson's argument is based on the importance of contextualizing terrorism within historical and political settings. His thesis on the state's role in countering extremism and terrorism underscores how state actions and policies contribute to shaping the understanding of root causes. Jackson's work emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach that integrates insights from various fields, such as politics, history, and social contexts. Therefore, Jackson's model offers a valuable framework that emphasizes the need to move beyond a solely state-centric approach, which often focuses on security measures and military operations.

Such approaches include addressing socio-economic grievances, promoting inclusive education, and fostering critical thinking (Jackson, 2005). To expand our discussion, I have also adopted the Human Security model by Haq (1995), which guides

the study to examine the state's equilibrium. The model is based on the idea that all societal functions are interconnected and interdependent, which is necessary for a functioning society (Haq, 1995). Haq, the former finance minister of Pakistan, provides insight into human development by emphasizing the importance of protecting people from traditional threats like violence, extremism, hunger, and poverty.

Pakistan's Encounter with Rising Militancy

During the Cold War era concerning the Soviet-Afghan conflict, Pakistan and the United States cooperated in their efforts to oppose the Soviet Union in Afghanistan by providing support to the Mujahideen (Hughes, 2008; Hilali, 2017). After the disintegration of the USSR, the post-Soviet era witnessed the rise of jihadist groups, including the Taliban, which consisted predominantly of the Pashtun tribe and was an Islamic fundamentalist group. During this period, Pakistan's engagement with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (1996-2001) contributed to the growing influence of radical ideologies (Rashid, 2010). The vulnerabilities were further increased by the large number of Afghan refugees from the Soviet-Afghan War, with about 3.4 million refugees estimated to have settled in Pakistan (Cone & Khan, 2023). Scholars have argued that the historical elements of Pakistan's regional security strategy have contributed to the persistence of militant groups, allowing them to flourish (Cohen, 2004). Additionally, successive political governments have exploited Islamist sentiments to legitimize their rule and divert attention from domestic challenges (Nasr, 2001). Therefore, the conflicts in the region created an environment that led many individuals, especially young people, to join and align with various fighting factions in Afghanistan. Their involvement exposed them to militant ideologies and combat training, which had lasting effects on Pakistan's social fabric. Additionally, with the shifting geopolitical landscape and Pakistan's alliance with the United States in the Global War on Terror, another wave of militancy emerged within the country. Groups like Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT), and many others gained prominence, carrying out devastating attacks (Abbas, 2017).

In response to rising militancy and extremism, Pakistan introduced the National Action Plan (NAP) in 2015. The Pakistan Army conducted several military operations across western Pakistan, particularly in the former Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), to counter terrorism. However, most of the NAP's actions remained inconsistently implemented as the country still faces threats of rising violent attacks from radical groups like TTP and Islamic State (IS). Along with the security issues, Pakistan has also faced challenges of widespread poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment. Pakistan's education system, on the other hand, particularly the madrassahs, has been criticized for promoting radical ideologies (Kalhoro & Cromwell, 2022). These factors have served as key drivers of radicalization, leading many individuals to join extremist groups that offer financial incentives and a sense of purpose.

The Complexities of Madrassahs

Madrassahs, also known as Islamic seminaries, have a long-standing presence in the subcontinent and experienced significant changes during the colonial period. Initially, madrassahs served as key centers for Islamic learning and social welfare. These institutions maintained a peaceful reputation, producing prominent Islamic scholars and providing free education, lodging, and food to unprivileged students. Before the inception of Pakistan in 1947, there were approximately 247 madrassahs (Khan &

Waqar, 2020). However, the onset of the Soviet-Afghan War marked a turning point, bringing a significant rise in the number of madrassahs and a shift in their objectives. In 1975, approximately 100,000 were enrolled in different madrasahs throughout Pakistan (Nasr, 2002). During General Zia-ul-Haq's regime (1978–1988), state patronage and geopolitical developments further accelerated this growth, with the number of madrassahs reaching 2,831. By 1998, this expansion had intensified, and in Punjab province alone, enrollments had surged to about 540,000 (Personal Communication, Feb. 7, 2025). Studies have further documented that between 1979 and 1989, around one thousand new madrassahs were established, financed and supported by the United States and Saudi Arabia, to train militants and mujahideen (Yoo, 2019). This era marked the growth of the militant narrative and led students toward radicalization. Additionally, after the Soviet withdrawal, the United States' rapid exit made Pakistan more susceptible to extremism and heightened internal security issues (Ibid, Personal Communication, Feb. 7, 2025).

The dynamics surrounding madrassahs changed following the 9/11 attacks and Pakistan's subsequent involvement in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). These developments resulted in increased scrutiny of madrassahs. Furthermore, considerable discourse surrounding religious seminaries emerged, as Western criticism prompted significant debate within Pakistan over the reform of its more than 37,500 madrassahs nationwide. It is observed that while these institutions continue to play an important religious, educational, and socio-political role, their overall image remains a subject of contention. Some scholars emphasize the need for madrassahs to focus on educational development and social welfare. In contrast, others associate them with the potential for breeding extremist tendencies. Despite reform efforts, progress has remained limited, primarily attributable to a lack of political will and opposition from rigid religious and political factions (Fair, 2008, 2012; Bashir & Ul-Haq, 2019). Moreover, recent counterterrorism strategies have refocused on madrassah reforms, emphasizing mapping, streamlining, and regulation. Nonetheless, the relationship between madrassahs and radicalization remains a complex and multifaceted challenge.

Madrassah Curriculum

Throughout Pakistan's history, the madrassah curriculum has significantly influenced the minds of future generations. However, the existing curriculum, known as Dars-e-Nizami, has been in use for over 500 years and needs to be enhanced to align with current educational standards. Developed by Mullah Nizamuddin Sihalwi in the 18th century, the Dars-e-Nizami syllabus has been widely adopted by traditional madrassahs, with Shia institutions being a notable exception. Unfortunately, the curriculum's outdated content and teaching methods hinder students' ability to develop critical thinking and analytical skills.

The students of madrasa rely heavily on classical commentaries and are involved in memorizing Arabic texts, primarily through rote learning, which hinders their understanding of the material's context and meaning. Scholars have criticized this traditional approach to learning for stagnating knowledge and limiting students' understanding of world affairs. Similarly, Winthrop and Graff (2010) observed that most madrassahs focus solely on rote memorization, failing to provide students with necessary vocational training or preparation for the real world. Furthermore, the curriculum has been criticized for encouraging intolerance and hostility toward differing secular and religious viewpoints (Kalhoro & Khan, 2022). The madrassah

curriculum, on one hand, emphasized extremist viewpoints, while on the other, it neglected the basic subjects of social and applied sciences.

Building on the above, there are two major issues plaguing the madrassah curriculum:

- Rigid sectarian interpretations foster hate and divisions within society.
- The misinterpretation of key concepts like Jihad, which promotes militancy over its true meaning.

To address these concerns, an inclusive curriculum reform is necessary. This reform should incorporate modern subjects, research, and comprehensive perspectives to provide students with a well-rounded education. Moreover, correcting misinterpretations of fundamental concepts like jihad is crucial to promoting peace and understanding. Thus, implementing these changes will require a strong political will and intent. Although the process may be time-consuming, the benefits of curriculum reform will ultimately extend to both students and the state, fostering a more informed, tolerant, and engaged citizenry. The revamping of the madrassah curriculum is an urgent necessity, one that holds the key to unlocking the potential of future generations and promoting societal harmony.

National International Security Policy (2014-2018)

The National International Security Policy (NISP) 2014-2018 was Pakistan's first-ever national security document, passed in 2014 by the federal cabinet. The 64-point policy document was designed to focus on the country's internal security policy. This policy underscores the necessity for a national narrative to effectively address non-traditional threats, leveraging the support of religious scholars, educational institutions, media outlets, and, most critically, intelligence agencies (NACTA, n.d.).

The NISP states that "Madrasah system cannot be excluded from the internal security parameters of the country" (NACTA, n.d.). This was mainly due to the unchecked proliferation of madrasahs running across the country. These religious seminaries were involved in shaping extremist ideologies and training individuals for violent acts, thereby impacting both national and regional security. The outdated curriculum of madrasahs not only caused alienation among the youth seeking religious education but also made them vulnerable to anti-state influences. Furthermore, women were not exempt from exposure to extremist ideologies within religious seminaries. A notable example is the 2007 Jamia Hafsa incident, where female madrasah students actively participated against the state, reflecting their degree of radicalization and extremism. The National Internal Security Policy (NISP) underscores this concern:

Social harmony and national integration of Pakistan are the prime targets of extremists, terrorists and separatists. The concept of 'radicalization' literature in madrasahs, wherein the complete rejection of other beliefs and sectarian indoctrination plays a critical role in dividing society and adding emotive fuel to existing divisions in society. Also, a large number of terrorists are either students of madrasahs, where they were brainwashed to take up arms against the state. Therefore, madrasah and mosque remain an important point of focus for any government policy to stem the spread of violent extremism in Pakistan (NACTA, 2014, p. 28).

To address the threats from madrassahs, the NISP called for the regulation of madrassahs and mosques, assigning the NACTA this responsibility. The NACTA was also charged with legal reforms and mapping for the mosques and madrassahs to ensure the country's internal security.

Terrorism Financing for Madrassahs: An Assiduous Threat

Terrorism financing continues to be a major challenge for Pakistan, as it weakens the country's overall security infrastructure and harms political stability. Despite multiple efforts to curb terror financing, Pakistan continues to face an inflow of funds to certain madrassahs, which may perpetuate violence and instability. Militant organizations often disguise themselves as charitable entities and compete for donations from unwary individuals. A notable example is The Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), which also operated under the name Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF); such militant-affiliated groups have been banned by the Government of Pakistan (NACTA, 2021; United Nations Security Council, 2005). Similarly, in its report, the NISP highlights that "There was a problem with some madrassahs, which have spread extremism. Some troublesome aspects of these madrassahs, which impinge on national and internal security, include financing from unidentified sources; publication and distribution of hate material" (NACTA, 2014, p. 28). The report recommends that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) investigate these issues, specifically examining banking transactions linked to these madrassahs to determine their funding sources and the functionality of the mosque.

Another challenge is Pakistan's porous border with Afghanistan and Iran, which facilitates the flow of illicit funds such as Hawalas or Hundi for anonymous transactions. Militant groups exploit these networks, leveraging donations from sympathizers and extortion from local businesses. The US State Department's report states that several terrorist organizations, including UN-listed groups, operated in Pakistan, raising funds through various means, including direct support, public fundraising, abuse of non-profit organizations, and criminal activities (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Therefore, funds have been transferred through both formal and informal (hawala/hundi) channels.

Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, Hussain Haqqani, emphasized that Pakistan's efforts to limit militancy within its borders have been recognized, and considerable progress has been made in reducing internal terrorism. However, efforts are still needed to counteract the use of Pakistan's soil against other countries. According to him, organizations such as the Afghan Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Jaish-e-Mohammed are reported to have maintained operational networks despite international sanctions. Furthermore, incidents like the 2008 Mumbai attacks, attributed to Lashkar-e-Taiba, are often cited as examples of transnational terrorism that have challenged Pakistan's international reputation (Zafar, 2019).

Now, with the rise of recent violent incidents, such as the attack on a mosque in Peshawar that killed at least one hundred and wounded over two hundred people, the debate on countering terrorism has resurfaced. The banned outfit has also expanded its operations in the southern parts of Baluchistan and continued attacks on the Pakistani security forces (Center for Preventive Action, 2024). The challenge of rising terrorism in Pakistan was highlighted by the Prime Minister, who noted that "since August 2021, there has been a 60% increase in militant attacks and a 500% increase in suicide bombings, resulting in the deaths of over 2,200 Pakistanis" (Congressional Research Service, 2023).

To effectively counter terrorism, Pakistan needs to focus on curbing the financing of terrorist groups. In this regard, the country has yet to take some of the conducive steps or even fully implement the already defined policies, such as the Anti-Terrorism Act (1997), the Anti-Money Laundering Act (2010), and the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (1947). The lack of coordination among institutions and fragmented frameworks poses significant challenges to the effective enforcement of these policies. Additionally, strengthening collaboration with international agencies is crucial to boost institutional capacity and resource mobilization.

Pakistan's Deradicalization Programme

The concept of radicalization or de-radicalization lacks a unified definition. The existing literature does not provide adequate references where different countries, across the globe, have adopted a singular denotation of this particular term. However, individuals who have already been influenced by radical ideologies identify deradicalization programmes as essential for rehabilitation. One of the examples is Pakistan's Deradicalization Programme, which was launched in 2009, aiming to rehabilitate former militants and prevent radicalization through a multifaceted approach. As discussed earlier, the decades of terrorism in Pakistan have severely affected the overall social fabric of the country.

To counter this menace, the government of Pakistan launched this deradicalization programme in order to rehabilitate the militants who were captured during the military operations in different parts of Pakistan. In this regard, the programme encompasses rehabilitation centers, counter-narrative campaigns, community engagement, and economic empowerment. Thus, a network of rehabilitation centers was created across the country. Most of the centers were established in the north-west parts of Pakistan, which are close to the Durand line (Pakistan-Afghanistan border).

The *Saboon* Rehabilitation Center in Swat and the Habibullah Rehabilitation Center in Peshawar are the two centers that provide psychological counseling, vocational training, and Islamic education to help individuals reintegrate into society (Khan, 2010). Furthermore, a community engagement programme was also launched that connects the locals with the military officials in order to promote awareness campaigns about discouraging extremist ideologies and promoting inter-faith harmony in the country. The *Paigham-e-Pakistan* initiative, on the other hand, aimed at fostering a counter-narrative to extremist ideologies through media outreach, social media engagement, and community events (NACTA, 2024). Additionally, community-based programmes are focused on madrassah reforms, youth empowerment, and interfaith dialogue to prevent radicalization (PIPS Report, 2020). Some of the report shows that through this programme, militant recruitment is reduced by 40%, whereas terrorist attacks are reduced by 30% (Ali, 2020).

On the other hand, the National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA) plays a critical role in Pakistan's Deradicalization efforts, particularly in the operation of rehabilitation centers. NACTA's responsibilities include coordination with law enforcement agencies, provincial governments, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of deradicalization programmes. It also develops and reviews policies related to deradicalization, ensuring alignment with national counter-terrorism strategies (NACTA, 2020). Additionally, the deradicalization programme has shown potential but still faces some significant challenges. Enhanced transparency, funding, and societal support are crucial for long-term success. Allocating sufficient

resources is equally important to strengthen the programme. Public awareness campaigns through media may promote acceptance and reintegrate deradicalized individuals.

Pakistan's Counter-Narrative on Religious Extremism

Since its inception in 1947, Pakistan has long struggled with religious extremism, which has threatened the country's stability, security, and social fabric. In recent years, however, Pakistan has made significant efforts to counter this narrative through a multifaceted approach that combines military actions, legislative measures, and social reforms. In 2014, Pakistan's military conducted Operation *Zarb-e-Azb* to combat religious extremism by targeting various terrorist groups in North Waziristan, significantly weakening their infrastructure and operational capacity at large. Then there are efforts among law enforcement agencies. These efforts have resulted in a significant decline in terrorist attacks from 2204 in 2010 to 319 in 2020 (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2025).

Moreover, the 21st Constitutional Amendment and the Pakistan Army (Amendment) Act, 2015, empowered the military courts to try terrorism cases (Constitution (Twenty-First Amendment) Act, 2015). The Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, has been amended to broaden the definition of terrorism and enhance penalties. (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2015). In the wake of the devastating Peshawar school attack in 2014, Pakistan unveiled the National Action Plan (NAP). As mentioned above, the NAP is a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy aimed at combating extremism and terrorism. The NAP represents a significant shift in Pakistan's approach to addressing the menace of terrorism, which has plagued the country for decades. The NAP comprises twenty points, broadly categorized into five main areas:

- Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism: Strengthening law enforcement agencies, establishing the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), and revamping the criminal justice system.
- Madrassahs Reforms: Registering and regulating madrassahs to prevent their exploitation by extremist groups.
- Media and Communication: Promoting counter-narratives to challenge extremist ideologies.
- International Cooperation: Enhancing regional and global cooperation to combat terrorism.

However, despite these efforts, challenges persist. Implementation of the NAP remains inconsistent, and some terrorist groups continue to operate freely (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Moreover, the judiciary's capacity to prosecute terrorism cases effectively remains limited. The presence of extremist groups in neighboring countries, such as Afghanistan, also poses a persistent threat.

Challenges and Future Directions

Pakistan's effort in countering radicalism is a composite and enduring challenge. Despite multiple efforts, several obstacles still hinder its progress. One of the significant challenges is the presence of eighty terrorist groups within its territories, such as Punjabi Taliban, ISIS-KP, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Lashkar-e-Omar, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Jaisha-ul-Adl, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, etc. (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2025). On the other hand, Pakistan's Islamic identity and the influence of religious leaders often make it difficult for the state to implement policies, which may be perceived as contradicting Islamic principles, for instance, the Blasphemy Laws, Women's Rights, Hudood

Ordinance, Education Reforms, Counter-Terrorism Laws, etc. Such policies witness impediments in their application, which clearly illustrates how Pakistan's Islamic identity and the political-religious groups' influence can produce challenges for the policy makers, seeking to implement reforms or laws. Such groups also exploit the country's porous borders, weak law enforcement, and inadequate intelligence gathering to maintain their presence. Additionally, Pakistan's complex and contradictory relationship with self-designed Islamic principles, exacerbated by the presence of radical groups, uses Islam to justify their violent actions.

Conclusion

Pakistan's effort to reduce radicalism is multi-layered and comprehensive in nature. The country has made significant strides in its effort to reduce radicalism. However, there are numerous reforms that are required for a sustainable future for the country. For example, the education sector in Pakistan requires a robust approach by making substantial changes in the existing curriculum. By focusing on education, counter-narrative, socio-economic development, deradicalization, law enforcement, and international cooperation, the country can create a more peaceful and sustainable society. While challenges remain, these initiatives reflect Pakistan's commitment to combating radicalism and fostering a brighter future for its youth.

With regards to the madrassah's role in reducing radicalism, the outdated curriculum, such as *Dars-e-Nezami*, cultivates animosity towards other schools of thought, both secular and religious. Furthermore, the madrassah education system not only glorifies violence in the name of religion, but it also neglects basic history, sciences, and other modern ways of learning. The government should address the madrassah curriculum issue by incorporating modern subjects and research, promoting inclusiveness, and correcting the misinterpretation of some of the key concepts, such as *jihad*. Furthermore, the government should also require a political will and intend to have a robust national narrative, which is crucial for sustainable success in countering extremism and terrorism. With regards to the radicalization in the country, the government of Pakistan needs to address the root cause by promoting discourse on socio-economic disparities and introducing poverty alleviation programmes such as job creation schemes and vocational training initiatives, to uplift the marginalized communities.

Pakistan's counter-narrative on religious extremism represents a significant shift in the country's approach to combating terrorism. In this regard, the country's deradicalization programme is a critical component of Pakistan's overall counter-terrorism strategy. However, while the deradicalization programme has made significant progress in rehabilitating former militants and fostering the counter-narrative campaign, it faces several challenges, such as a lack of funding, international support, corruption in the programme, and most importantly, a lack of expertise in deradicalization training. International cooperation and support are also essential in enhancing Pakistan's capabilities and addressing regional security concerns. While challenges remain, the country's progress in military action, legislative measures, and social reform demonstrates its commitment to countering extremism.

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