Countering Youth Radicalization and Violent Extremism in South Asia

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in South Asia

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Stiftung

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Introduction

Dr. Nishchal N. Pandey

Director, Centre for South Asian Studies, Kathmandu

This is a compilation of two very important conferences conducted by COSATT on the twin subjects of 'Preventing Terrorism and Violent Extremism in South Asia' held on April 3-4, 2017 in Colombo and 'Countering Youth Radicalization in South Asia' on Feb. 27-28, 2017 in Kathmandu. It hardly needs to be underscored that these issues are of critical importance to the region and to the whole world, increasingly so, as we witness violent acts of terror being perpetuated by young fanatics in the pretext of religion, social exclusion, ethnicity and economic depravity.

South Asia is a very young region. Key policy interventions is required in the immediate future, by specifically targeting the younger generation. Teeming millions come out of schools and colleges each year looking for jobs, a desire to attain higher education and find respectable livelihoods which often is not offered by the state leading to frustration and disappointment. This in turn, is used by radical elements of all shades to misguide the youth into making these 'angry and hungry' young people into potential terrorists of the future. Overwhelming majority of radicalized youth are found to have a strong sense of being discriminated against and are alienated from the larger society. Violent extremism therefore has such an intricate link with education system, good governance, employment opportunities, equal access to state services and overall social and religious harmony.

On January 2016, the Secretary General of the United Nations presented a plan of action for Preventing Violent Extremism, which *inter alia*, identified the importance of strategies of preventing radicalization into violent extremism to complement security-oriented counter-terrorist approaches. He specifically identified youth, as a critical global resource that had to be protected against the evil pull of various extremist ideologies.

While at the global level, there needs to be more resource and attention put into the pool, at the regional level in South Asia, a concerted action of all the eight member states is required. Experience sharing with the Observers of SAARC is also beneficial. These are issues that cannot be handled by a single state alone. Unfortunately, the current state of affairs in the region wherein the SAARC Summit has been postponed, relations between the two largest member states

are at a low and very little being done to prepare a workable action plan to collectively fight against this menace, one is left with more questions than answers.

Consortium of South Asian Think-Tanks (COSATT) is a network of some of the prominent think-tanks of the region. It brings in both track-I and track-II representation at its conferences that are held around the region. Later, we also bring out publications such as this to disseminate to the wider public, our findings and recommendations.

I would like to specifically thank the Political Dialogue Asia Programme of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) for its continuous support to this noble initiative. We would like to welcome Mr. Christian Echle who has recently taken

over as Head of this Programme in Singapore. I would also like to thank Institute of National Security Studies of Sri Lanka (INSSSL) for partnering with us in holding the conference in April this year. I will be failing in my duty if I do not thank two chief guests of the two conferences Eng. Karunasena Hettiarachchi and Ambassador Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada. I am also grateful for the support of Ms. Megha Sarmah, Research Officer of the KAS-Singapore, Mr. Mahesh Raj Bhatta and Dipika Dhakal of CSAS, Kathmandu for their help in holding these two events and in bringing out this publication.

I hope this report will be useful to policy makers, think-tanks, academics, researchers and students across South Asia.

Address

Eng. Karunasena Hettiarachchi

Secretary, Ministry of Defence of Sri Lanka

I believe that the topic of this conference is of extreme importance in the current global context as the subjects of violent extremism and terrorism have been a concern for the international community in recent times.

Following up on the first ever event of the Institute of National Security Studies which was notably also in collaboration with COSATT and held in Colombo last August, I am happy that INSS has once again in a short time organized this regional conference, by bringing together all the South Asian nations to Colombo, to discuss a timely topic relevant to the Ministry of Defence.

Extremism is the common factor creating instability in the South Asian region and this has led to South Asia having one of the highest annual number of deaths caused by terrorism worldwide.

Therefore, this subject poses a continuing threat to our region and the fabric of our society. Sri Lanka in particular, emerged from the ravages of the civil war with a vast amount of experience on the terrorism-prevention front.

In fact, Sri Lanka is the only country that has successfully defeated a terrorist outfit. This is a great achievement for our valiant military and speaks to the strength of our tri-forces.

It is for this reason that I believe, our nation has a crucial role to play in contributing to the prevention of terrorism. The Sri Lankan experience must be shared and learned from. It is in this capacity that INSS can play a pivotal role.

Following the end of the conflict, Sri Lanka has continued its efforts internationally in the progressive development of the legal framework for the prevention and suppression of terrorism.

In addition, our nation has domestically implemented the Prevention of Terrorism Act to curb the financing of terrorist activity. With regards to countering violent extremism in the present context as well as keeping in mind possible future uprisings, the Government of Sri Lanka has implemented a process of reconciliation that furthers this aim.

The trend of violent extremism in the

country was built on the foundation of the Tamil insurgency that resulted in over 25 years of the civil war.

This has been further strengthened by the fact that the region of South Asia already holds an established arms market and technology that has allowed terrorist groups such as the LTTE to tap into these resources and thrive in the past.

Equally, socio-economic and human security issues plague the South Asian region and need to be given priority by governments.

Such issues of poverty, ethnic frustrations, lack of education and unemployment, especially among the youth, can result in radicalization and lead to violent extremism.

This is one of the reasons that our President Maithripala Sirisena declared 2017 as the year of Alleviation of Poverty.

The President also stated that "Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country, where Theravada Buddhism is practiced. There are solutions in Buddhist teachings to most of the problems faced by the people in this world."

Similarly, "those who follow other religions like Hinduism, Islam and Christianity too can find answers to these problems by these great religious philosophies." By promoting the equality of religion, the fanatical ideology that inspires religious extremists can be discredited.

Moving forward, South Asia needs to implement a strategy of collective security to deal with this surge of violent extremism and terrorism.

Such a result requires our concerted efforts and the necessary political will. Forums such as COSATT and their facilitation by INSS are therefore integral as they allow for regional cooperation in sharing information, intelligence and best practices of security.

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Countering Youth Radicalization in South Asia

Maj. Gen. (retd.) Dipankar Banerjee

Member, Forum for Strategic Initiatives, New Delhi.

What a great pleasure to see that COSATT has evolved in to a genuine and effective Track II Dialogue process, collectively addressing issues of common concern in all of South Asia. When we started, a decade ago, we were not sure if we could sustain this effort.

South Asia today is poised for change and there are many positive things. There is democratic system of governance in all states of South Asia today. There are no overt conflicts of major concern, though there are security challenges in many areas. There is a clear indication of economic development and growth in all countries of SAARC and the real possibility of a better life for 1.7 billion people or one fourth of humanity. It is possible to move in this positive direction collectively today, if we together make a real bold effort.

Yet, there are many potential shocks ahead. Globally, there is instability, intolerance, violence and conflict. Much of West Asia is in flames. A hot war can break out in either Northeast Asia or over the South China Sea. Possibilities of climate change and ecological destruction, scarcity of water and food all threaten the foundations of human existence. According to predictions, global economic growth is likely to slow down affecting all our nations.

But more important challenge facing South Asia today is the rapid growth of radical tendencies. Combined with terrorist violence this continues to be the major threat to peace and prosperity not just in South Asia, but the world.

First, What is radicalism?

The word 'Radical' originates from the Latin word "roots". The idea is that change must come from the roots, from the foundations of society. Therefore, radicalism is an urge to change from the roots.

In political science, the term radicalism is the belief that society needs to be changed, and that these changes are only possible through revolutionary and violent means.

Hence definitions are many: left radicalism, right radicalism and now religious radicalism. In South Asia the challenge is "youth radicalism", mixed with terrorism that aims NOT to build and lead to positive change, but to

violence and destruction. All of South Asia is hugely youth dominated. Some 50 per cent of all population is below the age of 25 years. Radicalism is in all of South Asia and it pervades in all of our institutions; educational, political, religious and it expresses through terrorism and violence.

I will restrict myself to very briefly address the challenges of youth radicalism in South Asia and recommend broad counter measures that we need to undertake urgently. Let me identify the broad characteristics.

First, inadequate education or the wrong type of education – where 'I alone am right' and all others are wrong. The single path approach. No permission to dissent, accept alternate views, pursue alternate methods, discuss alternate means of achieving a common goal.

Second, is the influence of religion and sometime culture also. 'I alone have the right path, the only solution'. Hence must have my way and so must all others. Often led by religious heads, appealing to fundamental urges. 'My demands or that of my communities are the only demands that must have priority for resolution and have to be addressed'.

Finally, is the involvement of the State itself. Using the powers of the State to suppress dissent, encourage narrow mindedness, limit alternate thinking and then through use of state force to promote organizations especially among the youth to resort to violence.

Much of the problems in South Asia originated in recent years from the first Afghan War from 1979. Muslim youth from around the world were mobilized to fight a proxy war against the Soviet Union. To serve the cause of super power great game, it radicalized the largest religious group of the world and particularly its youth, from the Philippines to Morocco and all countries in between. They gathered in the North West Frontier region of Pakistan.

Today, radicalism is firmly linked to terrorism on a global scale. In South Asia today, Pakistan and Afghanistan see most such violent acts, inflicting dozens of death and violent destruction almost on an industrial scale almost every day. But, let us not under estimate its potential elsewhere. With Al Qaeda and the ISIS attempting to extend its influence, it threatens to spread to the rest of South Asia as well.

Why the youth, you might ask. Perhaps because the youth are impatient for change. For them the demands are real time and it cannot wait. Perhaps they have the energy to demand change. Or, perhaps they are the most easy group to influence and indoctrinate.

How do we Counter it and remove terrorism from its ambit?

Let me suggest three steps we need to urgently take:-

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First, to change dramatically our school system and the way we train young minds. This must be done not through preaching exclusion or hatred of others, but through inclusion and openness, of toleration and alternate ways of thinking and living. A major reform is required in all nations in our region.

Second, to systematically and firmly eliminate violence in society. By no means easy. But, the central theme must be to seek alternate routes to resolve issues, settle problems and eliminate militancy that is often sustained by forces within a state.

Thirdly, provide alternate livelihoods, inculcate sports and outdoor activities and provide alternate avenues for physical exuberance. In the west and in their inner cities, such youth violence seems to have been reduced through effective community mobilization. Only when we do this together, within communities and across national boundaries in consultation with each other and in a spirit of mutual cooperation, will success be possible.

Countering Youth Radicalization in South Asia:
A Sri Lankan Perspective

Asanga Abeyagoonasekera

Director General,
Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka (INSSSL), Colombo.

President Sirisena is a great example and one of the only leaders in the world who has forgiven his own killer - a suicide bomber Sivaraja Jenivan who came to assassinate him in 2005.

The following is a quote from Jenivan: *"if there were a leader such as President Sirisena 50 years ago, the national issue in the country and destruction caused to the country would have never taken place". You are the only leader in the country accepted by all communities and loves all communities in an equal manner. I pray to God that you become the real Father of the Nation by resolving the national issue and the issues of political prisoners,"* Sivaraja Jenivan

Sri Lanka thus is a very good example to the entire world to study and reflect especially on this subject as we have experienced the radicalization of LTTE youth as well as the radicalization of Southern JVP extremist youth. During University days this author established the Sri Lanka Youth Peace Movement with few Sri Lankan university students in Australia with the objective of raising funds against the LTTE to assist wounded Sri Lankan soldiers. This could be seen as a youth attempting to take revenge for a personal loss. However, with time and listening to different perspectives, the only wise option is to forgive, this was a process to broaden this authors perspective. In Sri Lanka most of the suicide attackers were youth and they had personal grievances, which led them to become radicalized. Today's radicalized terrorist was yesterday's youth whose helpless search for acceptance, identity or opportunity and who had we approached positively could have built a counter narrative.

Youth Radicalization is not a new phenomenon to Sri Lanka. With a prolonged ethnic conflict for nearly three decades, the country have experienced religious as well as political radicalization in all its manifestations. It was the radicalization of Tamil Youth that rewrote the history of Sri Lanka adding a crucial chapter to the global history of terrorism. A significant aspect of the LTTE was the introduction of youth to the suicide bombing culture. Radicalized Tamil youth were not driven by religious belief but directly by a political cause. The dream of a separate

geographical homeland called Eelam was created by LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and every single fighter, especially young children was ready to die for this cause by means of a cyanide capsule.

This paper will examine youth radicalization and countering it from a Sri Lankan perspective by looking into The LTTE Black Tigers; JVP and Youth Radicalization; The Sri Lankan Rehabilitation Program for De-Radicalization; Role of civil society in counter radicalization and de-radicalization; and the importance of Global Dignity for youth.

The LTTE Black Tigers

According to R. Narayana Swamy, "The members do what the leadership says. Theirs is not to ask why, theirs is to do and die. Matters little what the directive from the leadership is; the leader is always right, he is God, he alone knows what is good for the Tamil community. If the leader orders to kill, it will be carried out – without any question."

On 5th July 1987 the first suicide attack was launched by Vallipuram Vasanthan (also known as Captain Miller) by ramming a truck packed with explosives into a military camp north of Sri Lanka. Captain Miller was born in 1966.The son of a bank manager, this 21 year old became the first LTTE Black Tiger Suicide Bomber.

The Black Tiger Brigade operated directly under the command of the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabakaran and Intelligence Chief Pottu Amman. Evidence in the past has shown that Black Tiger carders were handpicked by Velupillai Prabakaran. Most carders were youth from families who have been severely affected by military operation of the government or opposition groups. Thenmozihi Rajaratnam aka Dhanu -- the garland-carrying woman suicide bomber that killed former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi -- is the prime example. Her family was subjected to severe harassments by the Indian peacekeeping forces in Sri Lanka. Dhanu was born in 1974 and was 17 years old when she died.

It is said that LTTE had implemented compulsory military training for all people over the age of 15 in areas under LTTE control in the Vanni region. It had also established a Leopard Brigade (Sirasu Puli), made up of children. By early 1984, the nucleus of the LTTE Baby Brigade was formed.

The feature that attracts young minds to the LTTE was the glamour and the perceived respect it was paid by society. These Baby brigades were used as 'body guards' and not for suicide missions. In 1998, Sri Lanka's Directorate of Military Intelligence estimated that 60 percent of LTTE fighters were below the age of 18 and that a third of all LTTE recruits were women.

The LTTE leadership developed the mastery of indoctrinating the masses, especially the youth. LTTE leaders groomed and motivated their members to sacrifice themselves in suicide attacks and to sacrifice the wellbeing of one's own kith and kin in the pursuit of a violent radical ideology. Radicalization was the tool used to engage and sustain its membership. Therefore a multifaceted rehabilitation program was necessary to engage the surrendered and apprehended detainees' hearts and minds to facilitate de-radicalization.

JVP and Youth Radicalization

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), a communist and Marxist–Leninist party in Sri Lanka was founded in 1965 with the aim of providing a leading force for a socialist revolution in the country.

Radicalization of the Sri Lankan youth in the early 1970s was not limited to the northern Tamils. The majority southern Sinhalese youth, too, were radicalized by Marxist ideologies and took up arms against the government at the time in an unsuccessful countrywide armed resistance. Like the LTTE, the JVP flourished among the underprivileged and marginalized youth. The JVP managed to establish a strong support base at the grassroots level and in universities.

The Sri Lankan Rehabilitation Program for De- Radicalization

The countries rehabilitation of radica-

lized youth dates back to the post insurrection period in the south in 1971, 1987 and 1989. After the Civil war ended in 2009 the rehabilitation process was aimed at reintegrating the former LTTE leaders, members, and collaborators into the community. During the process, beneficiaries within the Protective Accommodation and Rehabilitation Centers (PARCS) were supported to engage in a range of activities and through these activities reconnect to all aspects of life, including familial, social, cultural, and religious. The beneficiaries were supported to shift their thinking away from the narrow and hate-filled ideology targeted towards the Sinhalese, Muslims, national and international figures that opposed the LTTE agenda. Upon reflection on their actions and experiences, the former terrorists and insurgents found new meaning in their lives. They were transformed into champions of peace with values of moderation, toleration, and co-existence replacing hate, anger, and the mono-ethnic single narrative.

It is therefore clear that rather than adopting a retributive justice model, Sri Lanka has always embraced a restorative justice model by drawing on the countries rich heritage of moderation, toleration and coexistence.

Role of civil society in counter radicalization and de-radicalization

The threat of IS and Al Qaeda-directed attacks persist, the dominant threat is by self-radicalized homegrown cells and

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individuals. The strategy is to create a multinational, multi-pronged, multiagency, and a multi-jurisdictional framework to fight upstream counter radicalization and downstream de-radicalization.

The role of civil society in counter-radicalization and de-radicalization is essential in this process. Civil society and governments can work in partnership to prevent radicalization by tackling economic, social and political drivers. When governments set the policy framework, providing funding, and addressing structural issues, but communities also need to play their part for the overall approach to be successful.

Civil society has a role to play to counter-messages of radicalization and often it will be more effective when they come from communities rather than governments. It is important to create a space for dialogue and discussion among youth and is part of the process of taking on divisive narratives and creating an inclusive society that listens and responds to the needs and concerns of the citizens. Civil society can spot the signs of vulnerability and work up stream to protect individuals from radicalization, through improved parenting, neighbourhood support, and community resilience (Role of civil society in counter-radicalization and de-radicalization, ISD). Civil society can play a role in the de-radicalization process. Some community organisations and individuals could contribute immensely to this process. Policies and

strategies should include civil society and given a top priority.

Global Dignity for youth

This author was invited by His Royal Highness, The Crown Prince of Norway to speak on the same subject at the Oslo Nobel Peace center last year. His work on Global Dignity, a program that instills values of dignity to school children which is operational in 60 nations is admirable. Understanding dignity and respecting different ethno-religious groups is essential at a very young age especially at a time when the world order is threatened by different ideologies. Unfortunately, Sri Lankan Education Ministry has yet to introduce this important program to the school curriculum. Our President recognized the importance of this global initiative and sent his best wishes for the 10th Anniversary of this program. To quote from the President's message, "My country is trying to recover from the three decade long brutal conflict that left deep scars on our social fabric. In 2015, when I was elected President I promised my people to introduce genuine reconciliation. It is important to learn at school level to respect other ethnic and religious groups, especially at a time like this with the rise of violent non-state actors disturbing the global order."

At Nobel Peace Center this author mentioned that individuals can also be radicalized to do good to the society when injustice is evident. In Sri Lanka, if you take the late leader Vijaya

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Kumaranathunga, was assassinated by radical southern extremist was also called a radical. In 1982, Vijaya along with Ossie Abeyagoonasekera was given a label as radical Naxalites by the then President Jayawardena who put them behind jail for trying to overthrow his government which managed to extend power from a practice of referendum instead of elections.

It's sometimes the state that makes the nation's youth radicalized and has to be clearly responsible. South Asia has weak institutions with serious issues of political and other forms of corruption. Sri Lanka is 95th in CPI index and many other South Asian states around similar index value. Weak states has more propensity to encourage and build a conducive environment for youth to radicalize. The youth frustration due to high poverty rates in South Asia and governments failing to provide basic

necessary living conditions is another serious issue. Economic factors also should not be ignored. The root cause has to be understood and addressed by the state at the early stage.

Sri Lanka has learned with its bitter experience from the past and our policy makers should take this subject into serious consideration.

Conclusion

Thus, finding collaborative approaches to counter youth radicalization is essential. South Asian nations should work together to find solutions as one community in order to counter youth radicalization in South Asia. The key to the issue at hand is to go upstream and deal with deeper issues and assist our youth to identify a moderate counter narrative; than to only manage the symptoms of this problem.

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Radicalisation without Borders : Understanding the Threat of Youth Radicalisation in Cyberspace

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Abstract

What is cyber-radicalisation? How does cyber-radicalisation take place online? Why are the youth uniquely targeted in cyber-radicalisation? These are some of the pivotal questions in the current discourse of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). Technological innovations and advancement have allowed extremist groups to use the Internet for spreading their radical thought. Offline radicalisation therefore goes in tandem with radicalisation online. This paper aims to examine the meaning of radicalisation, cyber radicalisation and proffers some definitions. It further goes to examine using various sources what makes the youth especially susceptible to radicalisation especially cyber radicalisation. Finally, the paper puts forward some policy recommendations on how this challenge can be countered.

Introduction

As the spread of Internet increases globally, terrorist and extremist groups have also found it expedient to use the Internet for spreading their radical thoughts. Many terms have emerged over the years including Online Radicalisation, Internet Radicalisation and Cyber Radicalisation - for the purpose of this paper 'Cyber Radicalisation' will be used. The youth are not the only target audience for radicalisation through cyberspace, however internationally young people have increasingly become the most important target for radical groups trying to spread their message through the Internet. The idea that radicalisaiton can only be done through personal contact, conversation and by other traditional means has changed with the spread of Internet.

The Internet allows a recruiter to establish communication with a potential recruit through a website or social media, inundate the mailboxes of potential recruits with propaganda material and once they have been radicalised send them instructions on how to carry out attacks. In short, the Internet has become a repository of information, a medium of instruction and an ideological soapbox all in one. A study conducted by the United Nations

Organisation on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has recognized the threat of the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes creates both challenges and opportunities in the fight against terrorism (UNODC, 2012). It is therefore critical to understand how the youth are being targeted for radicalisation through the Internet and what measures states can adopt.

Defining Radicalisation

Radicalisation refers primarily to the process of indoctrination that often accompanies the transformation of recruits into individuals determined to act with violence based on extremist ideologies (UNODC, 2012). Alex P. Schmid defines radicalisation as an individual or collective (group) process whereby, usually in a situation of political polarisation, normal practices of dialogue, compromise and tolerance between political actors and groups with diverging interests are abandoned by one or both sides in a conflict dyad in favor of a growing commitment to engage in confrontational tactics of conflict-waging. These can include either (i) the use of (non-violent) pressure and coercion, (ii) various forms of political violence other than terrorism or (iii) acts of violent extremism in the form of terrorism and war crimes (Schmid, 2016).

Defining Cyber Radicalisation

At present there is no uniform definition on what we understand by Cyber Radicalisaiton however many definitions and explanations have been offered. In 2015, President Obama stated that terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State use the internet and social media to recruit young Muslims to by radicalizing their views: "The high quality videos, the online magazines, the use of social media, terrorist Twitter accounts – it's all designed to target today's young people online, in cyberspace," (as cited in Hoffman and Schweitzer, 2015, p. 1).

In broad terms, the term Cyber Radicalisation denotes the use of 21st century technological tools and cyberspace in order to promote radicalisation among the Internet users especially the youth. The Internet provides an advantage to terrorist and extremist groups as they are able to reach an incalculably vast audience in various corners of the world and spread their message with ease. Therefore, the use of the Internet for radicalisation has opened new avenues for such groups which did not exist earlier.

Medium

Radicalisation in cyberspace is conducted through all the means available in the Internet however, in the recent past social media has emerged as a more powerful means. The so called Islamic State or ISIS has been known for making extensive use of social media for their recruitment and propaganda (Byers and Mooney 2017). As social networking

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sites are user-based and allow a rapid flow of Information it acts a force multiplier in the radicalisation process. Byers and Mooney (2017) have argued that the presence of individuals who are part of the 'Internet generation' allows groups such as ISIS to adroitly exploit social media. The same could be argued for groups in the South Asian region as well as demonstrated by Ansar ul Islam in Bangladesh. For the purpose of this paper the use of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube will be analysed.

Facebook

Facebook which was founded in 2004 has 1.86 billion monthly active users in 2017 which has seen a 17 percent increase year over year ("Top 20 Facebook statistics", 2017). Though it was intended to connect people with each other, now it is also used by terrorists to share operational and tactical information, such as manuals for making explosives and other knowhow. Facebook works as a gateway to extremist sites and other online radical contents by disseminating links through Facebook groups and pages. As Facebook is the most popular social networking site and many young people are prolific users, it provides a ready ground for radicalisation. Research has shown that social media has emerged as the primary means through which ISIS conducts its recruitment (Byers and Mooney 2017). It can be surmised that within Social Media platforms Facebook appears more prominently in this regard

largely due to its reach. Facebook also offers options for secret groups which allow members to share thought and ideas without being monitored by the counter-terrorism units. The vast numbers of users in South Asian countries accessing Facebook makes the region particularly vulnerable. For instance, a recent report has highlighted that Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh has the second largest concentration of active Facebook users among large cities in the world. In a span of 30 days, 22 million people have used Facebook (Ovi 2017). In the same report, New Delhi was ranked as sixth.

Twitter

Approximately 50,000-70,000 Twitter accounts support self-proclaimed ISIS, each with an average of one thousand followers ("Social media and youth radicalization in digital age", n.d.). According to a study by the Center for Middle East Policy published in March 2015, the success of the terrorist group on social networks is dominated by a hyperactive 500-2000 accounts that tweet intensively ("Social media and youth radicalization in digital age", n.d.). As of February, 2016, it has suspended 125,000 accounts for threatening or promoting terrorist acts ("Twitter suspends accounts", 2016). Groups such as ISIS however are engaged in a cat and mouse game of constantly opening new Twitter accounts (Byers and Mooney 2017). Moreover, as Byers and Mooney (2017) have argued ISIS has also made an adroit

use of hashtags in Twitter to further reinforce their message. In the context of South Asia the Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and their local affiliates have maintained an extensive presence on Twitter. Whilst the usage of Twitter is lower than Facebook in the South Asian context, it has continued to attract extremist organisations as a medium of choice.

YouTube

According to statistics provided by YouTube, 300 hours of videos are uploaded to the site every minute ("YouTube Statistics", n.d.). Al Qaeda's most prominent media arm, *the As-Sahab Institute for Media Productions*, releases more than 58 videos every six days according to the Intel Centre ("Analysis: Cyber Extremists, radicalization", 2013). *Shariah4* network cross-post many of the same videos, The 2011 uprisings in the Arab world produced a proliferation of new channels with similarly themed content: *Shariah4Tunisia, Sharia4Egypt,* and *Sharia4Yemen.* So YouTube has become a popular media to propagate extremist narratives in a more interactive and effective way. It can be argued that the ability to post videos on YouTube makes it a particularly attractive channel within the existing social media platforms.

Why the youth are targeted?

It is traditionally believed that of all the different age groups, the youth are the most susceptible to online and non-online radicalisation, including through the process of self-radicalisation. Since the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011, 5,000 foreign fighters have travelled from Western Europe to fight in Syria and Iraq (Bakker, E., & Singleton, M., 2016). This figure includes girls as young as 15 who have left to marry ISIS fighters. The Internet allows the youth the space to air their grievances and seek answers. It has also been observed in the case of South Asian countries that young people also seek answers to their questions about religious issues throught the Internet medium. Hence, the Internet and particularly social media has emerged as a place for asking questions and seeking answers.

American and French anthropologist and a leading Oxford University academic, Scott Atran has said Extremist Organizations offer the same kind of "revolutionary pull" as had occurred during the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and the rise of Nazi Germany. His research shows three quarters of those who join ISIS as foreign fighters were encouraged to do so by friends and peers. Further, 20 per cent were recruited to ISIS by family members (Withnall, A. 2007). The recruiters are well aware that youth are the main users of internet especially networking sites. In order to radicalise them, approaching them online is the best method to be taken. There is also recognition by the extremist organisations that the youth are the most

impressionable segment of the population and also seeking a sense of adventure. Unemployment, lack of opportunity and other frustrations and grievances against society among the youth are also exploited by extremist organisations. The following graphic shows the process of Youth Radicalisation in a snapshot:
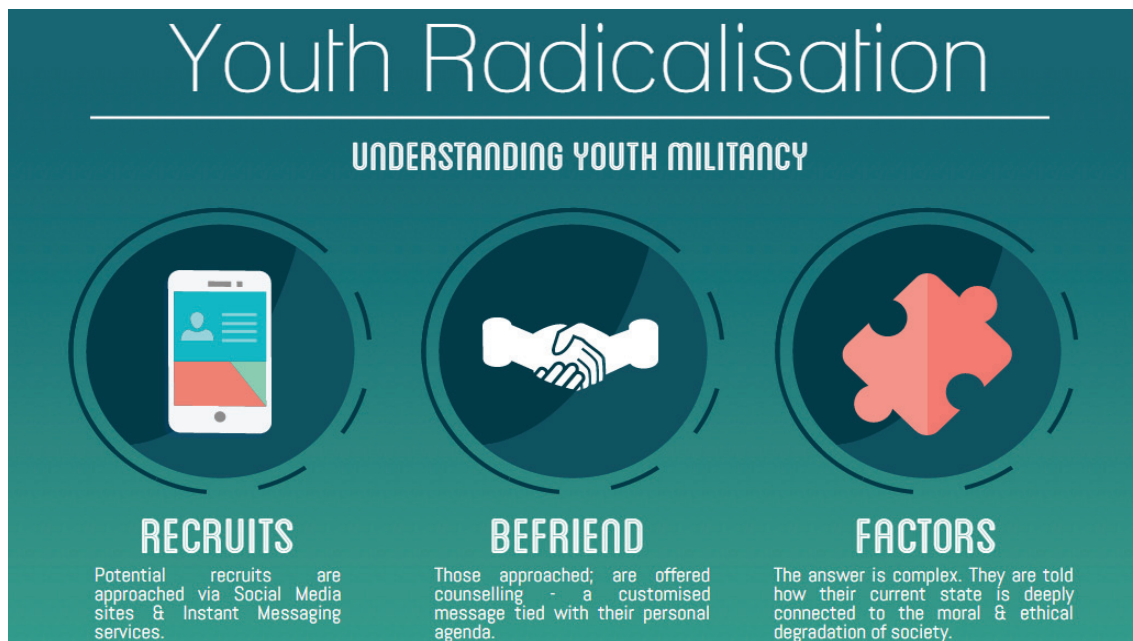
Policy Recommendations

In order to stem the tide of radicalisation in cyberspace, states have generally resorted to traditional means of surveillance and cessation. Closing websites or blocking access have proved to be inadequate in countering radicalisation online. It is important to note that the extremist and terrorist groups are very proactive and imaginative in their use of Internet and social media and therefore the authorities need to counter them also in an imaginative and proactive manner. However, radicalisation online is also closely related to radicalisation 'offline'.

Hence, the following recommendations may be considered:

• Proper democratic space must be ensured in all spheres of the society so that the people with different thoughts can share their opinions and views without fear. As they get proper space to voice their grievances, they will be discouraged to move to alternative radical means.

• Effective awareness programs need to be initiated aimed at the youth who are potentially vulnerable.

• Effective monitoring mechanisms should be initiated by the government

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that will check the contents shared online. But at the same time, it should be ensured that the accessibility of internet-users is not harmed.

- Governments need to formulate strong policies for Counter Radicalisation and De-radicalisation where the aspect of radicalisation through the Internet should be an important consideration.

- All law enforcement organisations need to understand the latest communication tools and be positioned to identify and prevent terror attacks.

- More research should be conducted on the relationship between the misuse of the Internet and social media by violent extremists and the factors that drive individuals towards violent extremism. States in South Asia need to pay particular attention. Governments can partner with research networks such as Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks (COSATT) in this regard.

Conclusion

The efficiency of the terrorists to identify, indoctrinate, recruit and utilise youths for political violence has been both organised and widespread. They have also displayed great sensitivity in setting out their message to the youth and creativity in exploiting the various technological mediums in reaching out to them. It is therefore critical for the states in South Asia to understand and

identify why the youth are being radicalised. There needs to be a pragmatic assessment of the situation which will enable governments to take appropriate actions. States which do not suffer from regular acts of terrorism should also view the problem critically. The fight against extremism and terrorism is ultimately an ideological battle. In this battle cyberspace has emerged as the new battleground. Winning the war in the cyber realm will be as important as winning the war in the real world.

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Rising Youth Issues in Bhutan

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Youth scenario

Bhutan has a very young population. More than half the population of the country is below the age of 25 years, as per the UNICEF, Bhutan. Young people in Bhutan live in a world different from their parents and the way they interact among themselves, with their families and society is different. With development and modernization young people in Bhutan are increasingly exposed to outside world than ever. Unlike their parents the younger generation have access to Internet and social media, and free speech.

In Bhutan too social media has driven the youths onto different platform. With the freedom of expression and easy accessibility to any social media application, younger generation are using it to raise their voice, fight for rights, criticize wrong doings and expose corruption in the society. But since every coin has its own flip side, social media also carries enormous drawbacks, which often possesses inconceivable threat to the people and society.

Social media and youth voices

Bhutan has remained in absolute isolation till 1960s, and Internet and television in Bhutan were opened only in 1999. Activities on Internet were limited to messaging on platforms like Hi-5 and Yahoo mails till early 2000, however, with the arrival of mobile cellular networks since 2004, the number of Internet users has increased from 500 in 2000 to more than 254998 and even more by 2015. The cellular networks in Bhutan have around 560,000 subscribers as of 2015. Common social media applications used in Bhutan includes Twitter, Facebook, Instragam and Wechat.

Post democracy, social media has become a prominent platform for youth to make friends, connect with outside world, and mostly significantly raise voices to force changes. If it is a platform to express their feelings and connect with friends, it is also a platform of addiction and abuse. If social media could force change in society and expose wrong doings, it also provides space to waste time and get victimized.

One of the much-debated issues was on "Tobacco Control Act" when it was implemented in 2011; a young monk called Sonam Tshering was arrested and prisoned to three-year non-viable jail term. He was caught smuggling tobacco worth USD 2. Post his arrest the issue was intensely debated on social media and also covered national and international newspapers. The forum on Facebook that was set by youths to raise concerns against the 'Tobacco Act' helped the youth to force government to make necessary changes. It started as a debate and allowed people to come out and openly discuss and express dissatisfaction with the Act. Around 4,000 people took part, whereby making the government aware about how dissatisfaction was going around the nation. The issue was raised at the parliament and later received necessary amendments in the Act.

One of the phenomenal outcomes of social media was creation of critical pages on social media during 2013 parliamentary election, such as Bhutanese forum, Bhutconomics. The pages were created by younger generation to criticize, expose and disseminate information on corrupt practices by high-level politicians and wrong doings by government officials. Some of these profiles still exists and continue to post critical voices. Another example of the remarkable forces of social media could be the Bangladesh-Bhutan-Nepal-India BBIN motor vehicle agreement. The debate and critical

comments on social media "Facebook" has enormously contributed in forcing members of National Council of Bhutan to conduct a thorough study before tabling the agreement for ratification at the house in winter session of 2016. The National Council later rejected the agreement, although National Assembly endorsed it after two-time voting.

However, like every coin, the social media has its own flip side, the drawbacks of social media were perhaps one that not even the founders of social media might have dreamt of. In March 2016, the police in Bhutan released a press statement about how a 19-year old girl has been raped and strangulated to death by her Facebook friend. When the police arrested the 23-year old suspect a week after the incident, it was found that he has lured the victim using fake Facebook account, and called her to meet him alone. On their first meeting he took her life.

This was indeed a clear reminder not just for younger generation but also for the government about the emerging threats of social media. The government must come up with social media protection measures to refrain younger generation from falling victim to such people. In another case, a young man has cheated couple of people promising US Visa. He also used a fake account on Facebook. In Bhutan too there are issues where some of the youth jobseekers have fallen prey to illegal employment agents abroad, whom they met on social media. Social

media has led youths to fall prey to online scammers who promise attractive yet false promise and also send younger people into wrong direction. Consuming fake news is another rising challenge worldwide that has greater risk on younger people. Illegal sharing of MMS videos on social media was inspired by easy access to social media applications.

Youth and Unemployment

The high youth population of Bhutan has resulted in increasing youth unemployment. Youth unemployment in Bhutan is mostly concentrated among the educated, and it is one of the growing concerns of the country that is emerging out of least developed country to a middle-income country within five years.

The last unemployment rate produced during the first parliamentary elected government stood at 2.1 percent in 2012. The overall unemployment figure stood at 6,904 during the tenure of the previous government, as reported by Kuensel daily newspaper. According to the Labour force survey report 2015, the unemployment figure stands at 8,660, an increase of 1,756. Urban unemployment in 2012 was recorded at 3,241 (3.5 percent) while in 2015 it stood at 6,232, an increase by 92 percent. The youth (15-24 years) unemployment in 2012 was recorded at 3,475 percent and in 2015 it increased to 4,504, an increase by 30 percent.

Every year, thousands of young university graduates enter the job market, which is already cramped with shortage of jobs. In 2013, when the People's Democratic Party's (PDP) government came into power, it pledged 100 percent employment. However, almost four years into the ruling the government is yet to fulfill its ambitious pledge. The government also pledged to send some 30,000 youth jobseekers to overseas but it is yet to send less than 20 percent of its pledged number.

Both social media users and opposition party have constantly criticized the PDP government for the failure of job creation and also failure to send targeted youths overseas. The high unemployment rate of youth can be partly attributed to the limited relevance of education and skills development to the needs of the labor market.

Youth and crime

It is no doubt that modernization and exposure to the world have reformed Bhutan into a beautiful nation that looks mysterious with modern touch, but it has also compelled venerable youths to commit unimaginable crimes. In a society where even speaking out one harsh word against elderlies, parents and teachers were considered a sin, is today faced with long list of stab cases, murder, vandalism and rape cases. Availability of cheap alcohol all across the country is also one factor contributing to youth crimes, as per the study by National Statistics Bureau

(NSB). This could be additional factor apart from unemployment and rural-urban migration and lack of financial support.

A study by National Statistic Bureau in 2015 revealed that 40 percent of the crimes among young people in Bhutan were committed under the influence of alcohol, and 12 percent under the influence of controlled substances. It thus indicates that abuse of alcohol and illicit drugs were the main triggers for criminal deviancy among young people. The study report revealed that Bhutan's total recorded crime has increased by over 100 percent from 1986 to 2013. In 2013, the RBP recorded 2,925 crimes against 1,243 crimes in 1986. Until 2008, the reported crime has remained relatively stable with an average of 1,672 crimes per year. However, there was a sudden rise in the reported crime beginning 2009, reaching a record high of around 3,500 cases in 2010. The study revealed that registered crime increased by age until the age of 19, a small drop at the age of 20 and 21 was recorded. Crime, again, increased from age 22 to 24.

Crimes committed by young people less than 24 years mostly involve offences against a person, against property and miscellaneous offences. It was reported that commercial crime, fraud, corruption and related offences and the offences against state and public order were relatively less, stated the NSB report. Crimes committed by youths were often attributed to as a cause of breakdown of family, unemployment, poverty and social environment.

Youth and Drugs

Traditionally Bhutanese have a habit of chewing areca nut (Doma-Pani) and drinking locally brewed alcohol. Children as young as 9 or 10 years would be seen chewing in some pockets of the country, if not older than 15 or 18 years. Both the substances were found to have enormous health risk and have caused death due to alcohol liver cancer and mouth cancer often related to chewing Doma. However, since both were deeply ingrained in the country's century old tradition, any restriction against the two remains a challenge.

But with globalization, younger generations are found using and smuggling drugs including marijuana, pharmaceutical drugs, psychotropic substances, heroin and intake of nitrazepam tablets.

Apart from youth crimes, the increasing number of younger people using drugs was also seen as a major concern. A 'National Baseline Assessment (NBA) on drugs and controlled substance use (2009)' carried out by the Bhutan Narcotics Control Agency (BNCA) and UNODC stated that the mean age at the onset of alcohol use was 16 years in 14 districts of the country, where surveys were carried out. A school specific survey carried out in 60 schools as part of the NBA also revealed some of the drug use trends among students. The

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study raised the need of establishing specialized benches in the courts that are youth-friendly and conducive for them to express their views without any apprehension and nervousness.

In 2009, United Nations office on drugs and crime's (UNODC) study on Drug Use Situation and Responses in Schools and Communities in Phuentsholing town stated that while alcohol is commonly used in Bhutan, there are indications that drug use is on the rise particularly in the capital city of Thimphu. Bhutan's porous borders with India and its geographical proximity to areas which exhibit significant drug use and injecting drug use, such as Nepal, the northern part of west Bengal and the north-eastern states of India render it vulnerable to drug use due to potential drug trafficking and movement of drug users across borders, the assessment report stated. However, the UNODC's officials recommended various solutions and told in an interview with Kuensel in 2015 that Bhutan could address the growing drug addiction and abuse issues by putting in place stringent "preventive" measures.

Kuensel reported, UNODC officials citing that although there are several drug preventive programme currently being following in Bhutan, they do not have evidence-based effect. Bhutan also needs to carry out timely study to assess the impact these programmes were making and improve them accordingly.

According to office of Bhutan Narcotics Control Agency, preventing drugs in the country is challenging due to easy accessibility of pharmaceutical drugs from across the border. The number of drug addiction and trafficking was growing, which was alarming for a small country. As per their record, in 2014 alone, police arrested 950 people in connection with drugs, of which 58 percent were youth. There was a 30 percent increase in cases involving possession of controlled substances, and a 10 percent increase in its illegal transaction last year. There are 284 drug traffickers serving their sentences today, while 382 others are abusers.

The Bhutan Nacrotics Control Authority in collaboration with the UNODC is currently conducting a National drug use survey to determine drug use patterns in the country. The study is also expected to assess the extent, pattern and profile of people who use drugs.

Like any youth problem, drug issue is also attribute to unemployment, broken families and rural-urban migration. Unless the government comes up with solutions to rural-urban migration, whereby boosting livelihood opportunities for rural population that would ultimately reduce the unemployment burden, it would be difficult to tackle the rising youth issues in the country.

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Countering Violent Extremism in Afghanistan

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Religious extremism is not a new phenomenon in Afghanistan. It can be traced back to the Afghan-Anglos wars of 1839, 1879 and 1919, the growth in opposition against the Soviet Union and its supported People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan in the 1970s and 80s, the emergence of the Taliban regime in 1996 and the rise of the insurgency post-2001. Many had hoped that the post-2001 period of democratization commenced by the international community would spell the end of religious extremism in the country but instead it gave flight to terrorism and violent extremism.

Who are the violent extremist groups operating in Afghanistan?

- The insurgency is a combination of Afghan anti-government-elements that are comprised of the Taliban leadership and its foot-soldiers and members of the Haqqani Network, they constitute the local 'violent extremist groups' active in Afghanistan. Hizb-e-Islami led by Gulbudin Hekmatyar was amongst these groups until 2016 when they signed a peace agreement with the Afghan government, which is currently under implementation.

- President Ashraf Ghani in a conference in November 2016 stated that there were 30 local, regional and international terrorist organizations operating in Afghanistan. This includes the presence of foreign violent extremist groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP), Al-Qaida, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Tyaba to mention a few.

- ISIL-KP announced the group's formation in January 2015 and appointed former Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan militant Hafiz Saeed Khan as its leader, with former Afghan Taliban commander Abdul Rauf Aliza appointed as deputy leader. Aliza was killed in a U.S. drone strike in February 2015, while Hafiz Saeed was killed in a U.S. airstrike in July 2016. Its current leader is unknown but Several Afghan security officials believe a former Afghan Taliban commander, Abdul Haseeb Logari, has replaced him.

- US officials believe ISIL-KP currently has only 700 fighters, but

Afghan officials estimate it has around 1,500, with twice as many auxiliary helpers and up to 8,000 less active supporters.

Who are the target groups for recruitment?

Local insurgents are involved in violent attacks against the state, its local supporters and international allies operating inside the country. However, there are also 'non-violent-extremist groups' in Afghanistan such as Jamiat-e-Eslah, Hizb-u-Tahrir and Hizb-e-Islami's political wing. These groups, though not directly linked to violent attacks, are known to play a key role in facilitating the radicalization and recruitment of young uneducated rural men, though some such as Jamiat-e-Eslah also target women and has a strong women's wing, into violent groups. The main target of these groups' recruitment strategy is young Afghan men and this presents an extremely worrisome scenario as this demographic constitute the bulk of the 15 million male population,[1] out of the country's 29.2 million total population.[2]

Research has indicated that youth are targeted for recruitment from universities, *madrassas*, knowing-someone who is already in the insurgency and social media platforms which often target those youth who reside in urban areas.

Studies completed by DROPS, such as its research paper on "Afghan Women and CVE: What are their roles, challenges and opportunities in CVE?" published in the report 'A Man's World? Exploring the Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism'[3] discovered that the household (family unit) is a primary target by violent extremists for recruitment.

DROPS research[4] showed that the Taliban often follow a 'traditionalist' method that works with, and through, family unit. Moreover, they play on family ties and legacy of older relative who may have been apart of the jihad to facilitate their recruitment. The study found that while non-violent extremists groups rely on a mixture of shared grievances relevant to all Afghans like for example corruption, or concerns shared by the global Muslim community, focusing on the individual, in contrast, extremists groups like the Taliban invoke the whole family for recruitment.

This research also found that within the household, mothers have also become a prime target of the Taliban's narrative. The Taliban use narratives that target both the mothers of insurgents and that of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). These messages appeal to the mother's emotions, the narratives are powerful, emotional, patriotic and ideologically appealing. Messages attempt to convince others to encourage their sons to join the insurgency and call on mothers of insurgents to be proud of their son's sacrifice.[5]

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How has the post-2001 period marking Afghanistan's transition from conflict to peace led to the flight in violent extremism in the country?

Bad governance, nepotism, corruption on part of the Afghan government and international community, lack of rule of law, widespread poverty, rising civilian casualties, ill treatment of locals by foreign forces and regional proxy wars playing out within Afghanistan have combined to erode efforts to build democracy and led to the emergence of violent extremist groups in Afghanistan, making it a hub for both local and international terrorist groups.

In almost all protracted conflicts, push and pull factors exist which tend to drive the most vulnerable groups towards violence. While, these drivers exists in some form in all contexts affected by extremism and terrorism, in countries like Afghanistan they are more pronounced as there are numerous variables at play which reinforce, and often worsen the cycle of conflict specifically when conditions tend to worsen deteriorate and improvements in good governance remain slow and ad hoc. In Afghanistan, push factors, more than pull factors, are considered the predominant drivers of radicalization and recruitment into the insurgency however on the ground the actual processes represent a combination of both. This means, for instance, that recruitment can be a result of socioeconomic drivers (push factors),

facilitated by issues of honor and legacy (pull factors) and fueled by political grievances (push factors). Conceivably, the complex nature and inter-relationship between push and pull drivers can be inferred as one of the reasons why recruitment and radicalization are not considered synonymous in the Afghan context, or necessarily linear; radicalization could take place before, during or after recruitment or it could never occur at all.

There are currently few indications of widespread radicalization across Afghan society compared to the past decades of conflict (prior to 2001). These indicators include, but are not limited to growing radical views amongst students in universities across Afghanistan,[6] socio-economic factors, marginalization of different groups, corruption, weak rule of law, poor governance, and steady rise in civilian casualties.[7]

The on-going conflict has exacerbated the effects of bad-governance, poverty, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to health care, the illicit economy and environmental degradation on Afghans' health.

Many in Afghanistan argue that the most significant wave of recruitment by the insurgency took place only in the early part of the international intervention, 2003 - 2006, and then decreased towards the latter half. However, this trend picked up again in the latter parts of the international intervention as socio-

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economic conditions, political and security conditions worsened with each passing year. Currently, 10 percent of the population is under the control of the Taliban and another 20 percent is contested between the insurgency and the government. Last year, the government lost an additional 5 percent of its territory to the Taliban and civilian casualties hit an all time high with a total of 3,498 civilians killed and 7,920 wounded due to increase in ISIS attacks, air raids, and fighting between Afghan security forces and armed groups especially in populated areas. These have remained "the leading cause of civilian casualties" for the past two years since NATO's combat mission ended in 2014.

The decline in security in the latter parts of NATO's combat mission created the conditions for the emergence of new spoilers such as ISIL-KP. However it was only after the withdrawal of international forces in 2014, that ISIS started its terrorist operations. The presence of IS in eastern Afghanistan, specifically in Nangarhar, Kunar, Nurstan provinces or farther south into Ghazni, has opened a new chapter in the Afghan conflict, exploiting the already fragmented insurgency, recruiting former Taliban members [particularly those that divided from the Taliban after the announcement of Mullah Omar's death and the debacle around the appointment of the new leadership] most worrisome of all the creation of new push and pull drivers based on

salafism, sectarianism, and ethnic divisions.

Efforts being taken to countering violent extremism

At the State level:

President Ashraf Ghani has made the development of a National CVE Policy a priority of his Government. The National Security Advisor's office has been working with a UK based consultancy organization to develop the CVE policy. The idea behind this policy is to develop one national policy, which will be adopted by all ministries who will then shape the policy to meet its ministries workings and have it implemented at the sub-national level through the IDLG which can reach the district and villages. So far the policy has not been developed and has passed its deadline for completion. The lack of knowledge on CVE within the government combined with the absence of coordination between different government entities and civil society organizations working on CVE has delayed the development of this strategy. The policy was to be completed by March 2017, taking into consideration the delays, but it has not yet been finalized.

Civil Society Organization level:

Non-governmental and other civil society organizations (CSOs) have played a critical role in encouraging governments and multilateral institutions such as the United Nations

to calibrate their response to terrorism by working to be effective against those who mean harm without eroding human rights and the rule of law.

Some of the most visible counter-terrorism-related capacity-building assistance being undertaken by CSOs relates to strengthening respect for human rights, the rule of law and on promoting democratic accountability.

CSOs have long helped to give voice to marginalized and vulnerable peoples, including victims of terrorism, and provide a constructive outlet for the redress of grievances. They have played important roles in activism, education, research, and oversight. They also play critical roles in ensuring that counterterrorism measures (CTMs) respect human rights and the rule of law, and help generate awareness of a range of other Strategy-related issues.

International Non-governmental Organization level:

The World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE) has done fieldwork in 35 cities and villages across 15 provinces in Afghanistan with community activists, religious leaders, and tribal elders, WORDE researchers have explored how Afghan civil society has created innovative strategies to push back against extremism. Their research explores best practices, and ultimately, avenues through which the US and the international community can best

enhance indigenous efforts of both faith-based and non-faith based local Afghan organizations.[8]

USIP conducts and support research being done in the area of CVE. It has also created a CVE working group which works on finding a definition lodged in the local context for CVE, compiling research on CVE under one umbrella and finding donors for CSO research initiatives.

Media level:

Media platforms function as a major medium of communication as well as a tool for social and political mobilization. The recent expansion of access to the internet and modern communication technologies has provided Afghan's population with a new 'virtual space' to express their views and communicate and connect with one another and the rest of the world.

Afghan government uses TV Networks, mobile messaging, and other social media platforms to increase support for the Afghan Forces and develop an alternative narrative on violent extremism aimed at raising the awareness of the public on who terrorists are, what are their terrorist activities, how they target and recruitment and how their activities impact the society.

CSO's also utilize media as one of their main platforms in their CVE programs such a radio programs targeting grievances that led to recruitment or

sympathy for the insurgency and religious literacy programs aimed at interpreting Sharia Law and having religious clerics critique the justifications posed by the insurgency in support of their actions.

The usage of media by government and non-government entities is crucial since the usage of the media, specifically the social media, by extremist groups has both increased and have proven effective in promoting their ideology and activities. Taliban even specifically established a 'media committee'[9] to oversee and coordinate its online information campaign through several websites, twitter and Facebook accounts, and YouTube channels.

Local Research Community level:

There are several local research organization's that have begun conducting research into CVE indicators, push and pull factors, and prevention efforts.

However, while some research has been produced on the drivers of recruitment and radicalization, it remains very nascent, broad lacking empirical basis. Thus, while it is important to acknowledge, these indicators are (a) too broad and overarching which means (b) they lack any real-time localized basis and (c) fail to take into consideration the multivariable processes (mix of push and pull actors) involved in radicalization and recruitment.

The dearth of evidence based-research also means that policymakers and practitioners alike are still unable to explain the trends we see today in the growth of violent extremists groups, explanations for why some sites and mechanisms for recruitment are more influential than others, what the localized and micro-level push and pull drivers are, how they are actually utilized for recruitment, what the rates of attrition are and what factors are driving recruits out.

Hence, in the absence of a holistic understanding of these facets practitioners, state, non-state, regional and international actors involved in countering-violent-extremism in Afghanistan will fail to curb the rise of violent extremism and terrorism.

Conclusion

Policymakers and practitioners currently involved in implementing CVE in Afghanistan have indicated that strong evidence-base programming is necessary to improve the development and implementation of effective CVE policies and programs. The existing literature on CVE suggests that more research is needed to better drive policy and programming design, specifically research that investigates the processes of radicalization in local contexts.

Very little has been done to understand the drivers of radicalization to violent extremism in order to design and

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implement development programs accordingly in the Afghan context. Additionally, Afghanistan does not even have a national strategy on CVE yet and the country is not a member of the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF) while India and Pakistan are. The GCTF is an informal, a-political, multilateral counterterrorism (CT) platform that promotes a strategic long-term approach to counter terrorism and the violent extremist ideologies, it holds regular meetings focused on producing framework documents (good practices and memoranda) and the necessary materials and tools for policy-makers and practitioners to develop CT civilian capabilities, national strategies, action plans and training modules.

In light of the current security, political and economic situation in Afghanistan, efforts must be made in the following areas:

1) More field research is needed to further understand recruitment dynamics in order to better design and implement development programming.

2) The need for further data collection to inform programming regarding developing effective methods to produce counter-narratives, i.e., radio, TV, social media, town hall meetings, mullahs and mosques, mentees, and educating mothers as agents of change.

3) CVE programs should be designed to integrate research findings and data collection to quickly respond to constant changing circumstances in each community.

4) Any findings resulting from research conducted on CVE indicators should be utilized as part of the objective to shape debate (government, civil society, media, international community) in countering extremism for that community or nationally.

5) The current efforts to teach skills and provide vocational training equipping youth to gain legitimate employment assumes that the Afghan market is capable of absorption when it is not. Thus, there must be a fundamental change in government structure to facilitate markets conducive to growth and effective employment opportunities.

6) All civil society actors face challenges in getting access to government information because they are often viewed as highly sensitive to national security matters. Thus under the Information Law, the government must ensure CSO's access to information required to help them develop their activities towards CVE.

7) Engagement by the UN with civil society organizations on softer issues, such as education and improving governance or monitoring human rights, is quite significant. However, UN engagement with CSOs on harder security issues has been less fruitful

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and needs to be addressed and facilitated.

8) Capacity-building programs on CVE needs to be carried out to build, and or, hone the knowledge base of government, CSOs and other practitioners working in the field of CVE.

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International Engagement in Countering Youth Radicalisation: Sri Lanka's Untapped Opportunities

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1. Introduction

According to the Commonwealth Secretariat, the world's youth population is at an "all-time high", with 1.8 billion[1] people between the ages of 15 and 29. South Asia alone accounts for 26% of this global youth,[2] with 22%[3] of Sri Lanka's own population being between the ages of 15 and 29.

This burgeoning population of young people is potentially fertile ground for the sowing of radical ideologies. A study conducted by PAI,[1] a Washington-based advocacy group, indicates a strong correlation between countries with rapidly increasing youth populations and countries prone to civil conflicts. Similarly, the "youth bulge" theory[2] holds that rapidly growing youth populations result in large groups of unemployed and frustrated young people who are susceptible to radicalisation. Partly in recognition of these trends, the United Nations (UN) Security Council in 2015 adopted its first resolution on the issue of youth radicalisation: Resolution "Youth, Peace and Security 2250."[3]

Sri Lanka has dealt with youth radicalisation throughout its post-independence history, and relied on regional and global engagement to counter such radicalisation. This paper argues that there are untapped international opportunities for Sri Lanka to counter a resurgence of youth radicalisation, and that Sri Lanka can play a larger role in shaping counter radicalisation efforts both regionally and globally. The paper begins by providing an overview of the types of radicalisation in Sri Lanka, explaining the country's engagement to counter radicalisation, and highlighting gaps in its counter radicalisation efforts. It then considers opportunities to expand engagement to address this issue, at regional and global levels.

II. Major Types and History of Youth Radicalisation in Sri Lanka

Radicalisation, as aptly defined by the European Union[7] (EU), is the process by

which a person comes to adopt extreme political, social or religious ideas and aspirations that inspire violence or acts of terror. Relying on a typology of radicalisation developed by the Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence,[8] it is possible to map the various types of radicalisation involving youth in post-independence Sri Lanka. The types listed below are not meant to be exhaustive; they are meant to illustrate different examples of radicalisation in Sri Lanka.

1. Left-wing radicalisation; the JVP (1960s-1980s)

The emergence of youth radicalisation in post-independence Sri Lanka can be traced back to the establishment of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in the late 1960s. The JVP was a Marxist-Leninist group composed primarily of rural Sinhalese youth who had become frustrated with the government's failure to provide them avenues for employment and upward social mobility. These grievances provided fertile ground for radicalisation along Marxist-Leninist lines, particularly given the regional and global contexts of the Cold War. The JVP first attempted to seize power from the government in 1971, an insurrection that was suppressed using military force. This was followed by a second attempt in the late 1980s. The JVP's second insurrection, also suppressed by military force, was launched largely in response to the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987[9] and left up to 60,000 people dead.[10] The JVP has since

reformed, and is now a major electoral party in Sri Lankan politics.

2. Right-wing radicalisation; the LTTE (1976-2009)

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an ethno-nationalist separatist group, waged war against the Sri Lankan government to carve out an independent state in the North and East of the country for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority. The group engaged in recruiting and radicalising children and youth. It was reported by UNICEF that over 6,000 child soldiers[11] were recruited by the LTTE between 2003 and 2008. Additionally, following the end of the civil war in 2009, official sources indicate that over 500 youth[12] from the LTTE entered the government-supported rehabilitation programme.

3. Politico-religious radicalisation; the Bodu Bala Sena (2012-present)

The Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), a hardline Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist group, is active in spreading politico-religious extremism. It has attracted the support of young Buddhist monks[13] and its leader is said to be a product of youth radicalisation.[14] The recent radicalisation of Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka has been linked[15] to the radicalisation of youth in the late 1960s (which led to the emergence of the JVP).

Research has suggested a number of reasons for the rise of the BBS, including the perceived erasure of distinct cultural

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identities under globalisation.[16] Others have argued that the BBS arose in the wake of the defeat of the LTTE,[17] which eliminated the primary 'other' (Tamil Sri Lankans) in Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. The resulting vacuum was filled with the 'otherness' or imagined threat of hitherto ignored minority groups, especially Muslim Sri Lankans.

The BBS has been accused of inciting violence against Muslim Sri Lankans,[18] including by vandalising mosques, and Muslim houses and businesses. BBS-instigated riots along the southwestern coast of Sri Lanka in 2014 were noted as the worst[19] ethno-religious violence the country has experienced in the recent past.

III. Sri Lanka's Engagement to Counter Youth Radicalisation

Having provided an overview of the kinds of youth radicalisation in post-independence Sri Lanka, this article considers below how Sri Lanka has engaged the international community to help counter such youth radicalisation. International engagement so far has broadly taken two forms: *practical* engagement (development of rehabili-tation programmes) and *normative* engagement (adoption of international normative frameworks to promote de-radicalisation).

1. Practical Engagement

After the military defeat of the LTTE in 2009, the Sri Lankan government had custody of approximately 12,000 LTTE cadres,[20] including over 500 youth.[21] To de-radicalise and reintegrate this group into society, Sri Lanka reviewed and adopted[22] elements of rehabilitation and de-radicalisation programmes of various countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Sri Lanka's efforts largely focused on Singapore's rehabilitation model,[23] which involves psychologists and religious counsellors as well as programmes like skills development and education. Sri Lanka adapted Singapore's model to suit its local fabric, the consequence of which was the "6+1 Rehabilitation Model."[24]

The 6+1 model includes six programmes:[25] education, vocational training, spiritual growth, recreational activities, psycho-social counselling, and exposure to society, culture and family. The '+1' component includes preparing the wider community to accept and assist in aftercare, to prevent re-radicalisation and marginalisation.

There have been attempts to measure the success of Sri Lanka's 6+1 model. Researchers, including psychologists from the University of Maryland, used two control groups[26] to assess changes in attitudes and opinions; one group was exposed to the 6+1 model for nine months, and the other group was not. An analysis of the two control groups signified that over time the group exposed to the 6+1 model changed their attitude[27] towards armed violence, while the other group did not. The researchers

concluded[28] that this finding provides preliminary evidence for the success of the programme – although it does not indicate whether the effect of the programme will last in the long term. While the number of youth de-radicalised through the programme is currently unavailable, official government statistics indicate that over 11,000 participants of the programmes[29] were reintegrated into society.

While this model is not without its flaws and critics, it is nevertheless an important example of Sri Lanka's attempts to engage with the international community to counter radicalisation.

2. *Normative Engagement*

In a normative engagement, Sri Lanka has sought to counter youth radicalisation by ratifying the Optional Protocol[30] to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In ratifying the Optional Protocol, Sri Lanka issued a 'Declaration'[31] that: "(a) there is no compulsory, forced or coerced recruitment into the national armed forces; (b) recruitment is solely on a voluntary basis; (c) the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into national armed forces is 18 years."

Such normative engagement laid, or at least supported, an international framework within which the government raised awareness of the LTTE's recruitment of child soldiers. Subsequently, organisations such as Human Rights Watch[32] and Amnesty International[33] highlighted the LTTE's recruitment of child soldiers. The radicalisation of children and youth by the LTTE became a symbol of the LTTE's continued militarisation during the ceasefire agreement of 2002, and contributed to demonstrating the LTTE's disregard for international law in its treatment of children and youth.

3. Gaps in Engagement Efforts

While Sri Lanka's efforts to counter youth radicalisation have been largely commendable, they have been narrowly related to tackling youth radicalised by the LTTE. The government is yet to engage globally to counter youth radicalisation driven by other groups and ideologies, and establish counter radicalisation programmes that adapt quickly to emerging trends in radicalisation.

By contrast, other countries have updated their counter radicalisation programmes to maintain their overall effectiveness. In March 2017, Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, Teo Chee Hean, pointed to new global contexts[34] which underscore Singapore's intolerance for divisive or exclusivist speech – such as the rise of far-right politicians in Europe and anti-immigration policies. Further-more, a study on 'Preventing and Countering Youth Radicalisation in the EU'[35] recommended radicalisation should be "analysed as a dynamic process in specific contexts in which violence is embedded."

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Therefore, notwithstanding the success of its 6+1 model, Sri Lanka needs to do more to ensure that its counter radicalisation programme remains dynamic and up-to-date, and comprehensive in terms of addressing various kinds of youth radicalisation. Such opportunities are many and varied, but can be broadly classified within the categories of *regional* engagement and *global* engagement.

IV. Opportunities for Regional Engagement

Regionally, Sri Lanka identifies simultaneously as a state of South Asia, the Bay of Bengal region, and the Indian Ocean region. A country's regional links increase its vulnerability to radicalisation, but also provide opportunities for engagement and cooperation to counter such radicalisation.

Sri Lanka's regional engagement could be broadened to include all of the following areas: (1) regional frameworks to define and holistically address contemporary radicalisation, (2) trilateral and bilateral agreements to facilitate targeted counter radicalisation programmes, and (3) networks of practitioners to help implement the frameworks and agreements.

1. Regional Frameworks

Regional frameworks are valuable in establishing a shared understanding of radicalisation, including its driving factors and contemporary forms. The EU, for example, has a definition for

radicalisation[36] and clearly identifies the types of radicalisation that it views as a threat and will work towards eliminating. By contrast, regional associations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) are yet to define radicalisation, or to identify the drivers and types of radicalisation that exist in member states.

Member states of SAARC adopted the "SAARC Regional Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism,"[37] which entered into force in 1988. Additionally, BIMSTEC member states have already signed[38] a "Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking" in 2009, and have worked towards signing[39] a "Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters." However, neither of these two regional conventions addresses youth radicalisation or radicalisation in general.

In March 2017, member states of IORA took the important step of adopting a "Declaration on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism"[40] at the IORA Leaders' Summit in Jakarta. The Declaration highlights the "importance of parents, teachers, community leaders, and civil society in countering and preventing youth radicalization," and sets out ways in which IORA member states can work

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to counter radicalisation in general. Nevertheless, the IORA Declaration stops short of defining radicalisation (including youth radicalisation) or identifying its types.

Sri Lanka could take a leading role in building regional frameworks for SAARC and BIMSTEC, and in transforming the IORA Declaration into a binding agreement, to further a common but dynamic understanding of radicalisation that can support national counter radicalisation policies. Frameworks for cooperation in countering youth radicalisation or radicalisation in general should be developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. They should include a definition of radicalisation, the regional drivers of radicalisation, and the types of radicalisation that are prevalent or could emerge in the region.

The regional framework could also include a legal framework to combat the drivers (and not only the symptoms) of radicalisation. A legal framework would help to guide the formulation of national legislation on radicalisation. Countries have already begun to develop national laws to counter radicalisation without such a regional framework. Examples include Singapore's Undesirable Publications Act,[41] which prohibits publications linked to groups like ISIS,[42] and Sri Lanka's subsidiary legislation[43] sanctioned by the Attorney General's Department, which targets the rehabilitation and reintegration of LTTE combatants.

Finally, the regional framework should include criteria for measuring the success of counter radicalisation efforts. States are familiar with implementing counter radicalisation policies. However, they are yet to focus on measuring the success of implemented counter-radicalisation policies. Mechanisms such as 'randomised controlled trials'[44] can help evaluate and improve the success of counter radicalisation programmes.

In short, regional frameworks would help ensure the coherence of counter radicalisation policies and efforts across countries in the region, while ensuring legislation protects fundamental freedoms and open societies.

2. Trilateral and Bilateral Agreements

Trilateral and bilateral agreements offer additional opportunities to counter youth radicalisation. Given that these agreements involve fewer states, they tend to be easier to negotiate than multilateral agreements, and offer an avenue for targeted and strategic collaboration in counter radicalisation. In 2016, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines agreed[45] to establish a hotline to combat piracy and kidnappings and coordinated patrols in waters of common interest. Sri Lanka would benefit from a similar agreement with Myanmar and/or Thailand to counter youth radicalisation, since all three countries face similar issues[46] relating to Buddhist extremism.

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Sri Lanka's regional neighbours are already strengthening regional cooperation at the bilateral level to address the threat of radicalisation. India and the Maldives are developing[47] a "Cross-border Counter Terrorism Mechanism" to counter radicalisation and inhibit citizens from joining terrorist organisations. This is an arrangement that Sri Lanka should consider joining, especially given its location between India and the Maldives.

3. Networks of Practitioners

The regional organisations to which Sri Lanka belongs lack sufficient networks for sharing intelligence, knowledge, and best practices. Developing effective networks for practitioners is essential to successfully implementing frameworks and agreements.

The Declaration on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism,[48] which IORA member states adopted in 2017, recognises, in principle, the need for states to "collaborate to successfully rehabilitate, de-radicalise, and reintegrate radicalized individuals to bolster social cohesion." An example of how this is being done elsewhere, in practice, is the "Radicalisation Awareness Network"[49] (RAN) established by the European Commission. The RAN connects practitioners who work at the grassroots level on radicalisation. In particular, working groups allow practitioners to share their knowledge and experiences,

and review each other's work related to countering radicalisation.

Sri Lanka could advocate the establishment of regional networks, similar to RAN, for practitioners and policymakers within IORA, SAARC and BIMSTEC, to advance the outcomes of regional agreements and conferences, and implement normative frameworks to counter youth radicalisation.

V. Opportunities for Global Engagement

While Sri Lanka's regional engagement could focus on countering radicalisation at a macro level, it can increase its global engagement to help counter radicalisation at a micro level – within its local communities. This would be useful in addressing domestic aspects of radicalisation, resulting in stronger local resistance to the process of radicalisation. Such global engagement could span four different areas; national policy, educational reform, language reform, and urban planning.

1. National Counter Radicalisation Policy

Sri Lanka lacks a national policy or action plan that focuses on countering radicalisation. In 2014, it launched a National Youth Policy.[50] However, that policy does not address radicalisation or extremism. By contrast, countries such as Norway[51] and Denmark[52] have established action plans related to countering youth radicalisation, and Indonesia has issued a blueprint[53] for de-

radicalisation. Sri Lanka could study the plans of such countries, and expand its own youth policy to include counter radicalisation, or develop a counter radicalisation policy that has provisions for countering youth radicalisation. A national policy is essential to providing a framework for sectoral action plans (for example, education, religion, and justice), creating public awareness of the issue, and signifying political will to tackle the issue.

A national counter radicalisation policy requires input from multiple stakeholders, as well as inter-ministry and inter-agency coordination. Clear 'ownership' of the policy is vital to effectively implementing such a multi-pronged policy. In Norway, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security is the main body responsible for coordinating[54] the action plan, including for overseeing other ministries' specific responsibilities under the action plan. Sri Lanka should similarly assign ownership of the counter radicalisation policy to a single government entity. This could be, for example, the National Security Council,[55] which is an executive body operating under the Ministry of Defence.

2. Educational Reform

It is vital for counter radicalisation efforts to include educational initiatives to stem youth radicalisation. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Commission on Countering Violent Extremism[56] has urged the international community to forge a new

global partnership[57] around education reform. This partnership calls[58] for advancing tolerance, respect for religious diversity, and resilience to extremist narratives. In Sri Lanka, this may require concerted action to integrate students of different ethnicities and religions in schools and classrooms, and develop textbooks that foster the thinking and perspectives necessary to counter radicalisation.

Students in Sri Lanka attend schools segregated by language,[59] and to a lesser extent, by religion as well. This prevents youth of different ethno-religious backgrounds from learning and engaging with one another. Furthermore, research indicates[60] that textbooks in Sri Lanka reinforce ethno-religious divides, and could potentially mobilise youth to participate in establishing exclusive ethno-centric versions of nationalism. This indicates that Sri Lanka needs to bear in mind the relative impact and value of various models of education and school textbooks in counter-radicalisation.

Scholars at the American University in Cairo have argued that the liberal arts model of higher education is better suited to counter[61] the one-dimensional thinking of radicalisation than 'STEM' education. This is supported by a sociological study released by the University of Oxford titled "Engineers of Jihad,"[62] which highlighted the over-representation of engineers in violent radical Islamist movements. The liberal arts system by no means excludes

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'STEM' subjects, and indeed requires the study of the 'hard' sciences. However, it also requires exposure to different views in subjects such as history, philosophy and poetry, and is said to cultivate lateral thinking[63] and the ability to appreciate diverse perspectives on a variety of issues.

Asia's policymakers have already begun to value the liberal arts education model. In 2011, Singapore established Yale-NUS College – Asia's first liberal arts college – in partnership with Yale University. Sri Lanka should also work with other countries to establish an educational model that fosters the very type of thinking that radicalisation rejects.

Policymakers in Europe and Asia have also collaborated to develop common history textbooks that present shared narratives. This is expected to foster long-term cohesion and harmony in the region, which would contribute to countering youth susceptibility to radicalisation. In 2006, France and Germany[64] released a common history textbook developed by historians and five teachers from each country. Similarly, in 2014, it was reported that ASEAN educationalists and historians[65] have met to explore the possibility of developing a common history textbook for its member states. This initiative is expected to enhance regional relations, which in turn would help ASEAN coalesce into a single market.

A common regional history textbook may not be an immediate priority for Sri Lanka. However, Sri Lanka could engage with countries in Europe and Asia to learn how to develop national textbooks in a way that contributes to reducing youth susceptibility to radicalisation.

3. Language Reform

A national policy to counter youth radicalisation must also tackle issues around language, which have contributed significantly to radicalisation in Sri Lanka. The Official Language Act of 1956, which established Sinhala as the only official language of Sri Lanka, led to Tamil-speaking citizens being marginalised by the state (the percentage of Tamils in the public service decreased from 30% in 1956 to 5% in 1970)[66] and facilitated extremist ideologies that led to the LTTE and its violence. The Sri Lankan government has more recently taken measures to address language issues. In 1987, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution[67] made Tamil an official language, and in 2007 public sector employees were mandated to achieve proficiency[68] in Tamil and Sinhala within five years of being hired.

However, these efforts have not yet translated into significant 'on the ground' improvements. The Economist reported[69] that in 2015-16, approximately 60% of those in the public sector who passed the language exam did so with the lowest possible pass mark, and national identity cards became bilingual[70] only in 2014. Sri Lanka could learn from the experiences of countries that have successfully reformed their

language policy in a manner that more effectively counters radicalisation. Singapore, for instance, established English as a 'neutral' language for commerce and public administration,[71] while still maintaining four official languages and Malay as the national language.[72] In 2016, 73.2% of Singaporeans[73] were literate in at least two languages, which was an increase from 56% in 2000.[74]

Singapore has been able to implement its language policy without undermining other cultural identities such as native languages or religion. Government surveys have revealed that even though more people are speaking English at home, and can read and write in more than one language, the proportion of those speaking Mandarin and Tamil and the proportion of people of different religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism) has remained stable.[75] Given that both Singapore and Sri Lanka have multiple ethnicities and religions, it is in Sri Lanka's interest to learn from Singapore in undoing language barriers[76] responsible for stirring radicalisation. Building multiple links between linguistic communities improves communication and has long term implications for social cohesion that can prevent radicalisation.

4. Urban Planning

The potential impact of urban planning in countering radicalisation is yet to be realised, and in Sri Lanka, yet to be acknowledged. Urban planning is

another key to the social cohesion that is vital to countering youth radicalisation. In 2016, the Brookings Institution published an article that explained the role of "third places" in strengthening social cohesion.[77] The sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined the term "third places,"[78] to refer to places where people spend time between home ('first' place) and work ('second' place). Third places are locations for exchanging ideas, social enjoyment, and building relationships.

Planning cities to provide accessible physical spaces for such interaction could reduce the tendency for youth to seek virtual spaces in their place. The threat of self-radicalisation through virtual platforms is supported by evidence, including a 2008 study conducted by two researchers[79] at Dublin City University. That study analysed the demographics of those who support video content on YouTube that promoted religious violence among Muslims, and concluded that a majority of them were below 35 years of age who resided *outside* the Middle East and North Africa.

Urban planners abroad are already renovating metropolitan neighbour-hoods to increase social cohesion. As an experiment, a park in Washington D.C. was renovated[80] to allow office workers to reserve tables and chairs to meet or socialise, and in Maryland, the concept of an 'Outbox' was developed to provide a covered workplace outdoors.[81] The concept involves a glass-enclosed space in a downtown location, containing wall-

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less vestibules equipped with Wi-Fi and seating, available for people to use throughout the day.

The world's urban population is expected to increase by 66% by 2050, and Asia is home to 53% of that global urban population.[82] It is vital that urban planning in Asia advances social cohesion, and thereby helps to maintain peace and security and build sustainable cities. Sri Lanka must seek to engage with other countries to plan its own (rapidly evolving) urbanisation in this manner.

VI. Concluding Recommendations – Seizing the Opportunities

This paper has provided an overview of the types of youth radicalisation in Sri Lanka, the measures already taken and the opportunities for both regional and global engagement in countering youth radicalisation. These opportunities for policymakers are summarised below.

1. Policy Recommendations for Regional Engagement

Sri Lanka should:
1. Encourage regional organisations like IORA to adopt multilateral **normative frameworks** which establish a shared understanding of youth radicalisation, including of its new forms and factors and of acceptable counter-radicalisation legislation and policies.

2. Enter into bilateral and trilateral **implementing agreements** with neighbouring countries, to deliver the specific and intended outcomes of a national counter radicalisation policy and of multilateral normative frameworks.

3. Build active **networks of practitioners** in the region, to enhance intelligence-sharing, institutional knowledge, and best practices on counter radicalisation.

2. Policy Recommendations for Global Engagement

Sri Lanka could:
1. Establish a **national counter radicalisation policy** that directly addresses youth radicalisation and is coordinated by a single government agency.

2. Forge **international educational partnerships** that cultivate in local students the learning and creative processes that can counter radicalisation or extremist ideologies.

3. Study and adapt the **language policies** of other countries, to help dismantle linguistic barriers that can stir radicalisation.

4. Plan cities in partnership with other countries with highly advanced **urban planning**, to promote organic opportunities for social cohesion.

The list of policy recommendations shows that the scope for international engagement is vast, diverse, and untapped. Sri Lanka should view its past crises and its possibly looming issues of youth radicalisation as an opportunity to

rapidly build cooperative arrangements with regional neighbours and other partner countries: in short, as a call to take a leading, proactive role in counter radicalisation.

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Views does not necessarily represent the position of any other institution or individual with which the author is affiliated.

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De-radicalization of Youth in Pakistan: A Challenge!

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Abstract

The challenge of de-radicalization of youth in Pakistan is essentially a human security task and requires long-term commitment by national security managers. There is critical need to frame counter-terrorism policy as mind game and invest in youth for the sustainable and peaceful future of the country. The ultimate aim should be to wean away youth capital from falling into the trap of highly polarized groupings that misuse and misinterpret Islam creating violence within and beyond national frontiers.

Introduction

In similar words, de-radicalization refers to a process to free from radical ideas, goals, or elements: relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something, advocating thorough or complete political or social reform. It also implies an alteration of radical political and social behavior, norms and ideas. This paper is divided into three inter-related scholarly concerns vis-à-vis a situation of youth radicalization impasse´ in Pakistan.

The first part deals with the genesis of the youth's violent behavior in the country. Second part dwells into the state's response and ongoing de-radicalization policy. Final part looks into the possible ways and means to address the challenge of youth radicalization on sustainable footing in Pakistan.

Genesis of Youth Radicalization in Pakistan

It is multi-dimensional in its origins, aims, actions, and scope. This mode of behavior is embraced by action oriented minority professing a rigid world view.

Pakistan is one of the few countries in the world experiencing a youth bulge so it must cash on it positively than the other way around. Analysts point out gaps in the various state policies adopted from time to time. The state is guilty of turning a blind eye towards the issue of radicalization of youth in the society and instituting half-baked measures to address this issue on sustainable grounds. There is dire need to invest in the youth of the country through sound economic, social and development initiative. Failure to do so will be an opportunity lost to reap the benefits of demographic dividend, thereby

aggravating the socio-economic development challenges of the country. A comprehensive youth de-radicalization campaign should be an essential element of counter-terrorism strategy. There is need to forge pro-active 'state-society partnership' at the ideological, educational, social and cultural level. Here, political will complemented with the expertise/ capacity and financial/technological resources to rein in radical elements cannot be overlooked. Additionally, the role of external environment/actors is critical to note.

According to the United Nations Population Division estimates, Pakistan would overtake Brazil and Indonesia by 2050 to rank fourth in the world population, almost doubling to 335 million from its current 180 million.[1] The youth bulge of Pakistan's population between ages 15-24 is estimated at 36 million, while a staggeringly high number of 58 million individuals are below the age of 15. Together, these statistics are nearly 60 per cent of Pakistan's total population. This demographic trajectory allows young Pakistanis to be swayed towards radicalization. The challenge is to make positive capital investments into this youth bulge and convert this as critical mass of national power and a huge capital asset. On other hand, if this 'youth bulge' is not capitalized through sustainable investments of educational, political, social, economic nature, it can turn into 'human liability' entailing

instability and fragmented future of the country. Published datas suggest that more than eighty percent of 'suicide attacks' carried within Pakistan are done by the male 'youth' and this trend continues to surge upward.

To begin with, youth radicalization is neither monolithic in nature nor sporadic in occurrence. It is a mixed bag of everything: 'anti-west', 'anti-Jew', 'anti-India', 'anti-capitalism', 'anti-democracy', 'sectarian', 'ethnic' and 'anti-nation state'. There is no water-tight compartmentalization between the internal and external dynamics of this phenomenon. It has political, economic, social, cultural, religious connotations resulting in chaos and adding to the pessimism all around. This is not a product of one day, month or year but has history to it. Multiple variables ranging from state shortsightedness, political and economic instability, hostile neighborhood and lack of investment in 'human and social capital have contributed to this phenomenon.

History cannot be ignored here. That is, role of state in fermenting religious extremism and violence within and beyond the national frontiers. That is, one must contextualize the issue of youth radicalization as an end product of skewed strategic thinking (real and perceived) that defined security as 'physical' and ignored the 'human development' of the people. Following the former Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan backed by

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USA, Saudi Arabia, and others became a launching pad, recruiting zone of 'Mujahedeen' fighting the 'Godless Soviets' in Afghanistan. This role set in motion mushrooming of religious seminaries, flow of refugees, supply of illegal weapons, upsurge of sectarianism, and promoted narrow and orthodox world view. For instance, in 1971 there were only 900 *Madaris* in Pakistan but by the end of the Zia era, there were as many as 8,000 registered and as many as 25,000 unregistered *Madaris*. Parallel to this, General Zia's Islamization project' that impacted public education, political set up, institutional framework, financial system, legal imperatives - created voids and fissures within state and society. General Zia professed that:

"**Pakistan, which was created in the name of Islam, will continue to survive only if it sticks to Islam. That is why I consider the introduction of (the) Islamic system as an essential prerequisite for the country.**"[2]

Ideally locating and solving all gaps within state and society through religious (that is Islamic) lens should have resulted in dialogue, debate and tolerance at all levels. State should have acted as 'public servant' facilitating human and social development along with military advancement. However, facts narrate an opposite trend. Pakistani youth became an easy prey for the radicalized religious sectarian and ethnic groupings working within and beyond Pakistan. Some of whom would fight at the tail end of the Afghan

resistance against the Soviets; others would provide the core element of the Taliban; still others would go on to fight the Indian Army in Kashmir; some would make terrorism a way of life in Pakistan, and eventually they would hold Pakistan hostage.[3]

The decade of 1980s is a major watershed in consolidating the religious right and enhances their influence on social norms in the country. Zia played a major role in transforming Pakistan's political and social culture. He brought in religion into both the state and society. In case of the former, the General brought changes in the economic and legal system of the country through the introduction of his controversial "Nizam-e-Islam (system of Islam)."[4] It was during this decade that conservative religious forces began to engulf the society and market puritanical Islam.

It was also during this era that the military establishment used media to propagate incompetence of the political parties and actors. There was a constant reference to corruption of politicians on the basis of which four governments were sacked. The propaganda and the general inefficiency of the political system made the youth suspicious of politics to a degree that they consider it as bad as evil activity. Such an attitude turned youth apolitical which also meant that they were unwilling to challenge the stereotypes, be it religion, society, education or politics.

The following observation of an Islamabad based analyst Ms. Salma Malik is worth noting that majority of the *madrassas*, which were traditionally religious seminaries attached to mosques converted into lethal jihadi training camps. She elucidated these became recruitment grounds tailor made at times for the purpose by internal as well as external forces. "This resulted in serious consequences for the internal sovereignty of the state, where non state actors such as the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Jaish-e-Muhammad and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan on the religious front and big scale political actors such as the MQM, turned the country into a virtual killing fields."[5]

Here, the question is: how the successive governments in Pakistan have responded towards the challenge of youth radicalization overtime. That is, has the dominant trend of youth being a 'frontline actor' in the everyday terrorist incidents across the country been looked at seriously? And if so, what measures have been adopted to reverse this trend?

State Response and Policy of Youth De-Radicalization

Prior to 9/11, Musharraf regime initiated number of steps to improve law and order and check the rising tide of religious extremism within the country. On August 14, 2001, General Musharraf announced a ban on Lashkar-I-Jhangavi and Sipah-e-Mohammed. Similarly, on June 18, 2001 the Pakistan Madrassa Education Board Ordinance 2001 was promulgated. Following 9/11, government launched Education Sector Reform (ESSR) in Dec. 2001. One of the key objectives of the program was to increase the national literacy rate; provide universal education; reduce gender disparity; improve education quality and initiate national curriculum reform. National Education Policy (2009) government envisaged universal educational opportunities for all. NEP was truly a promising document, if delivered on ground could have been decisive in turning the youth bulge into a productive element of national cohesion.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced six new schemes to facilitate youth development in a bid to combat soaring unemployment in the country at a total initial cost of Rs. 20 billion. On 24 December 2014, Prime Minister Sharif in a televised address to the nation announced the 'National Action Plan' (NAP) to deal with terrorism. He said that;

"The Peshawar atrocity has changed Pakistan. We need to eradicate the mindset of terrorism to defeat extremism and sectarianism", he said. This horrendous attack has shaken the nation as the terrorists attacked the future of this country.

Federal government announce the comprehensive program for youth in education sector- merit based scholarships, laptops, re-imbursement of fees and paid internships for educated unemployed youth.

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Parallel to this, since 2009 an Army led 'de-radicalization program' initiative revolves around four pillars:

- De-radicalization of juveniles;

- De- radicalization of selected "reconcilable" detainees;

- De- radicalization of families of selected detainees to which they would fall back on release;

- De-radicalization of certain villages in general, from which the bulk of militants had originated.

De-radicalization Efforts of Pakistan Army, ensuing Operation Rah-e-Rast in Swat in 2009, when the Army embarked on a de-radicalization programme for rehabilitation of the ex-extremists and radical elements who had taken up arms against the society.

Furthermore, the curriculum revision with more focus on Peace Education is encouraged at national, provincial and local levels respectively. However, this task is far from being completed specifically with regard to Madrassa Curricula Reforms. The critical role of media is also being harnessed to curb the youth radicalization within the country – awareness, encourage healthy activities (sports, debates,..) to foster positive competition among marginalized Youth.

According to the Pakistani government's National Education Policy in 2009, access at all levels to educational opportunities remained low. Few people educated in public schools were able to move up the ladder of social mobility. The NEP notes that the government's spending on education, 2.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), was far from adequate. The following policy actions were to be achieved:

- Increase spending on education to 7 percent of GDP;

- Increase public-private partnerships;

- Introduce subjects taught in regular schools in *madrassas*;

- Increase teacher training, enact curriculum reform, and improve teaching aid materials;

- Introduce food-based incentives to increase enrollment and improve retention, especially for girls.[6]

The NEP (National Education Policy) was truly a promising document, if delivered on ground could have been decisive in turning the 'youth bulge' into a productive element of national cohesion. To productively channelize the 'human capital' of the country's legal, constitutional, educational and social reforms are essential. **In September this year, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced six new schemes to facilitate youth development in a bid to combat soaring unemployment in the country at a total initial cost of Rs. 20 billion. The six fold policy is as follows:**

1. The micro-interest free loan scheme is targeted at disadvantaged sections of the society and will benefit two

hundred and fifty thousand people. An allocation of Rs. 3.5 billion has been made during the current financial year.

2. The second scheme is for small business loans for those youth who were educated and/or skilled and wished to become entrepreneurs in their industry. Five billion rupees have been allocated for the scheme, which will give out loans ranging from Rs 0.5-2 million.

3. The youth training scheme will provide training for entry into the job market to an estimated 50, 000 potential graduates who have completed 16 years or more of education. This scheme has Rs. 4 billion earmarked for it.

4. The youth skilled development scheme will provide technical and vocational training to students who have passed the eighth grade. They will be given six months of training in different trades along with a scholarship of Rs. 5, 000 a month.

5. Under another scheme, the government plans to sponsor the tuition fees for the higher studies of financially deprived students. The government will pay at an average, forty thousand rupees of annual fees on behalf of each of the 30,000 students for MA, MSc and higher level education. This scheme is being launched at a cost of Rs. 1.2 billion.

6. Another scheme was launched for the provision of laptops to 100,000 students. This will incur a cost of Rs4 billion rupees.[7]

The six pointers of the Nawaz Sharif led government are very promising provided there will be rigorous implementation of these initiatives. If they end up on paper only, futility of ending the marginalization of youth will be elusive. Besides of continuous attempts to implement these reforms and initiatives and the ongoing anti-terrorist offensive in North-Western Pakistan and other critical areas, terrorists got an opportunity to inject an intolerable damage to Pakistan. On 16 December 2014, Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) conducted a terrorist attack on the Army Public School in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar. The foreign national's militants, including one Chechen, three Arabs and two Afghans killed 145 people, including 132 schoolchildren.[8] However, a rescue operation was launched by the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group (SSG) who killed all seven terrorists and rescued 960 people.[9]

After the Peshawar incident, government decided to proceed with the execution of extremists convicted in terror related cases.[10] On 24 December Prime Minister Sharif in a televised address to the nation announced the 'National Action Plan' (NAP) to deal with terrorism. He said that the December 16 Peshawar school massacre has drawn a line between 'coward' terrorists and the Pakistani

nation. "A line has been drawn. On one side are coward terrorists and on the side stands the whole nation," he said.

The plan received unprecedented levels of support and cooperation across the country's political spectrum, inclusive of the federal and provincial governments. And combines foreign and domestic policy initiatives aimed to crackdown and eventually eliminate proscribed organizations across the country. The plan was provided the framework for the Twenty-first Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan which established speedy trial military courts for offences relating to terrorism. Following is summary of the short-term National Action Plan;[11]

1) Execution of convicted terrorists

2) Establishment of special trial courts for two years for speedy trial of terror suspects

3) A commitment to ensure that no armed militias are allowed to function in the country

4) Strengthening and activation of NACTA

5) Countering hate speech and extremist material

6) Choking financing for terrorists and terrorist organisations

7) Ensuring against re-emergence of proscribed organisations

8) Establishing and deploying a dedicated counter-terrorism force

9) Taking effective steps against religious persecution

10) Registration and regulation of *madrassas*

11) Ban on glorification of terrorism and terrorist organisations through print and electronic media

12) Administrative and development reforms in Fata with immediate focus on return of IDPs

13) Dismantling communication networks of terrorist organisations

14) Tangible measures against abuse of internet and social media for terrorism

15) Zero tolerance for militancy in Punjab

16) Taking the ongoing operation in Karachi to its logical conclusion

17) Empowering Balochistan government for political reconciliation with complete ownership by all stakeholders

18) Dealing firmly with sectarian terrorists

19) Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all unregistered illegal refugees

20) Revamping and reforming the criminal justice system, to strengthen counter-terrorism departments including granting of powers to the provincial CIDs to intercept terrorist communications

Twenty-first Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan was passed on 7 January 2015.[12] A report presented to the Prime Minister on March 10, 2015 states that 303 actionable calls were received on the terror hotline and 2,237 intelligence-based operations were conducted across the country. Law enforcement agencies arrested 25,896 people across Pakistan on various charges, while security agencies conducted 24,844 "combing" operations across the country.[13] 55,000 Afghan refugees expelled by between January and March 23, 2015.[14]

Way Forward: Essentials for Youth counter-radicalization strategy in Pakistan

To wean away youth from the well knitted web of religious extremists, holistic policy focusing on human security as an essential element of national strategic outlook is needed. The role of state as a facilitator and regulator of people's aspirations needs to be re-defined on a pro-active basis. This in turn requires re-writing, social contract between the state and the society at large. That is, state must remove caveats in its governance mode such as nepotism, selective usage of rule of law, and invest in public education, development sector, and ensure justice across the board.

- Understand and acquire in-depth know-how of the 'targeted group' – statistics; demography; nature and sources; shun monolithic lens (e.g. force-based) towards the challenge of radicalization within the society;

adopt indigenous, multi-prong measures based on multi-agency (state as well as societal) coordinated efforts; break free from 'Us vs Them' approach and encourage inter and intra-faith dialogue, reconciliation, and aim for winning 'hearts & minds' of the people at large; clarity in means and ends; political will and commitment ; National Youth Policy (NYP) – caveats in implementation needs to be fulfilled.

- An effective national counter-terrorism policy must deconstruct political violence, militancy, insurgency or terrorism to understand why and how people adopt 'violence' as the preferred mode of behavior at the micro or macro level. There is dire need to invest in policy analysis of the various regimes in Pakistan that often turned a 'blind eye' towards the issue of 'Youth Radicalization' and adopted half-baked measures ignoring the indigenous context (ideational and real) that created, shaped and sustained this phenomenon.

- Though Cyber-terrorism laws have been drafted and adopted, online radicalization remains a central medium in propagating and perpetuating violent/extreme mindset. The speed, anonymity and connectivity of the web have led to its emergence as unrivaled medium to facilitate propaganda, fundraising and recruitment for radical militant outfits. *Sakinah Campaign (online*

NGO's campaign) launched by the Saudi-Arabian government uses Islamic Scholars to interact with individuals looking for religious knowledge with the aim to steer them away from extremist sources. In case of Pakistan, innovative use of 'Religious Peers', 'Sufi Saints' and 'Cultural tolerance' can serve critical medium to de-radicalize through online and off-line (Print, Tele and Radio) sources. Here, community-government should work as equal partners rather opposite contenders.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, youth violent extremism facing Pakistan falls in between the traditional and non-traditional security challenges. It requires well-coordinated and sustainable response on the home front. That is, optimal use of all elements of national power: men, mind and material.

Re-socializing national youth is a generational task and calls for strategic fore-sightedness and clarity/commitment at the level of policymaking and implementation.

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Countering Youth Radicalization in South Asia

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It is truly a pleasure to be among top scholars and other dear friends of the South Asian Countries today, at this critical juncture on our region's path to peace and prosperity. Indeed, great pleasure being here among a group of experts who are dealing with one of the most important topics of our time in our region.

The youths of this part of the world are undoubtedly the most vulnerable strata of the nations in South Asia that deserve deeper concern and studies. This is because this issue has a direct corollary with the most unconventional threat of the region, which is radicalism.

I believe that radicalization is becoming as a part of our daily social life with an impact on the political systems in the region. This system like all other systems in the world, has three interlinked parameters: Inputs, Process, and Outputs.

In terms of methodology, changing the nature or direction of any system must begin with the reforming of inputs, because the criticism of outputs is some kind of destruction and vise versa the criticism of Inputs is for sustainable and irreversible reforms.

So while we are talking and thinking about Youth Radicalization, we must realize that this factor certainly is the output of our abnormal behaviors, psychology, dogmatic beliefs, intolerant characters, poverty, dysfunctional education system, multilayered identities, our history in the region etc.

With due regard to this main point, I believe that for dealing with such complicated problem of radicalization, we must bear in mind that, for a short time, instead of countering youth radicalization in south Asia, we have to learn on how can we confront this phenomena? For dealing with this subject in the longer term, we have to search the fundamental solutions for changing the inputs of our social and political system. As a Persian poem says:

> *Don't forget the result of an act*
> *Wheat grows from wheat and*
> *Barley grows from Barley*

<div dir="rtl">
از مکافات عمل غافل مشو
گندم از گندم بروید جو ز جو
</div>

A glance at the literature and known truths on fundamentalists, radicals and extremists in greater South Western Asia brings us home to the reality that the absolute majority of the sympathizers and enthusiasts consists of the young generation. This is not only to say the soldiers and militias but also the top leadership are young and radical.

We are gathered here in Nepal to single out many factors only to search ways and means to tackle the issue, and see what are the possibilities to get a positive result out of different experiences of South Asian states.

Although many scholars, researchers, politicians and other related groups have produced vast literature on the main reasons behind radicalization of youth across the globe, especially in the Islamic World, but I believe that many a time we are diluting the fundamental causes and defining the dependent variables.

You may speak about poverty, political instability or any other factor, but few have talked about the social disturbances and negative strategic playing of the states as their assets.

On the one hand, a political vacuum in the Islamic World and the lack of a regional potential Islamic power to feed the needs of the radical thinking resulted to the production of huge literature on radicalization of the youth, and on the other, the Post Cold war along with the disintegration of Soviet Union resulted in the greed of regional power to replace it. This power replacement policy and the usage of various tools to weaken others, created today's unrests. Well, the question is how to counter this process and not let our young generation opt for radicalization. We believe that there were and, are, many projects and mechanisms to make the youths busy in some kind of productive engagements other than radicalized process so that we can stop the process.

Until and unless states are not promising to take serious actions based on regional and global consensus, a single state cannot afford to stop and prevent radicalization of the youth either by military or any other means.

The definition, indicators, laws, rules and certain other related concepts of radicalization have to be singularly defined without double standards in South Asia, so that there can be hope to reduce and put an end to these threats.

At the end I have to re-emphasize on a simple prologue that Youth Radicalization in South Asia is an historical-social disturbance which has been used by some states in the region and beyond to promote their national interests. Therefore, this cannot be fought unless there is no consensus amongst all of us.

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An Overview of Youth Movements and Youth Radicalization in Nepal

AIGP (retd.) Rabi Raj Thapa

INTRODUCTION

Nepal, as at the most crucial social political cross-roads at the moment. It has gone through six decades long political transition with four major political changes (1950, 1960, 1990, and 2005.) with seven constitutions, 36 prime-ministers in 66 years of its democratic political practices and governance of Nepal. At present, newly structured federal system of the state is facing an uphill task of maintaining political harmony, restoring peace and development. Failing to steer the country into a successful federal democracy, Nepal may turn into a fragile state or even a failed state. In that case, there is a great apprehension of radicalization, extremism, violence and even terrorism that may engulf the country as a whole.

RADICALIZATION DEFINED

Radicalization is defined as 'to radicalize someone to shift a person or group's opinion toward either end of the political spectrum.' The word comes up a lot during times of political upheaval or revolution when people's opinions stray far from the mainstream. To radicalize people is to cause a shift in their beliefs that make them want to take action for social reform. Once they're radicalized, they'll want big political or social changes and work to make them happen.[1]

In other word, radicalization is a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.

Therefore, the main issue in Nepal is to fathom and understand terrorism, extremism, radicalization, political training and orientation, social deviances and criminalization of the youth of Nepal.

It shows that the politics of Nepal is still too fragile to be termed as a radically driven extremist led operated by radicalized leaders and cadres. The good point is there is less chance that Nepal will face a suicide bomb or devastating terrorist attacks as witnessed in other parts of the world lately. Under the present circumstances, there has been cases where the political cadre of own party have assaulted their higher command couple of times.

After the political transformation of Party-less Panchayat to the Multi-party system and constitutional monarchy, Nepal has gone through rapid economic political change that is gradually passing through a radicalization process. This assumption is supported by a Slippery Slope[2] or True Believer" syndrome[3] which explains as "Gradual radicalization through activities that incrementally narrow the individual's social circle, narrow their mindset, and in some cases desensitize them to violence". This is a process in which one becomes increasingly serious about their political, social, and religious beliefs as a product of 'taking the next step". One can begin by participation in non-violent activities such as mutual aid, wherein the best way to raise one's in/group social status is to demonstrate seriousness about the cause and increase the level of commitment in terms of belief and activities. As an individual commits act after act, sunk cost are developed. Even if activity initially only ideological or only criminal, the process of radicalization conflates the two such that criminal acts are justified for intellectually radical purposes and radical purposes are invoked to justify what are ultimately criminal act.(Ibid).

However, there may be some inherent factors that may contribute Terai Madhesi Youth to get radicalized. But, if the government and people of Nepal do not identify the root cause and address this problem adequately on time, this situation can lead Nepal into another

bout of violence and extremism in future.

It shows the symptom of hate crime for the first time in Nepal. But the government and the political parties are too clumsy and are not showing any interest to address it adequately. Although, the visible actors of the conflict are only Madhesis, there are many hidden factors and unseen agenda of domestic and foreign interests. Such indications have developed distrust and hostility that may be the purpose of many external players to disintegrate Nepal so that external forces can enjoy free reign over the government and rulers of Nepal.

This process is going through two different paths in Nepal. One is the weak internal governance due to problems and challenges posed by prolonged political transition and lack of good governance, corruption, unstable government and so on. On the other hand, Nepal is going through a lot of external pressures directly and indirectly through international organizations. For example, Nepal has faced three blockades since its democratic transition of 1951 till 2015. Besides, there is a direct and indirect pressure from various international groups and actors that have undermined Nepalese values and sentiment to dictate their own interest and agendas.

Besides, there is a vast difference between western perspective of youth radicalization which is focused more on

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Islamic radicalization known as Jihad, IS, ISIS and so on. As Nepal has less number of Muslim population, the direct role and impact of IS may be less or even negligible at the present circumstances. On the other hand, political change of 2006 has seen a larger proportion of the population proselytizing and conversion campaign that is also a form of radicalization in our context.

ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES

Since the promulgation of the new federal constitution of 2015, Tarai Madhesh that is the southern plains of Nepal has become disturbed and politically volatile in terms of radicalized youth.

The threat of violence and radicalization among the Terai Madeshi population is getting more complicated and confrontational since the promulgation of the constitution of 2015.

Currently, there is a political stalemate in Madhesi demand of the constitutional amendment that has been brewing since the promulgation of the Constitution. This has been further stalled by announcement of local elections of Region No. two. In fact, ever since the political change of 2006, there has been a new surge of unrest on the issues of ethnic identity, indigenousness and caste (Anya Jati or non-indigenous race). For example, C.K Raut, one of the proponent separate independent Madhesi State is going all out to

segregate Nepal into Pahadi (Hilly) and Madhesi states. For this reason he has already demarcated the new map of Nepal and designed the Madeshi Flag also. It is yet not clear where he receives financial support for his cause. His demand does not look any different than the demand of Tamil Tigers' leader Veluppillai Prabhakaran of Sri-Lanka.

In this context, an eminent columnist C. K. Lal writes, "Technically speaking, Madheshis too are as 'Nepali' as any other, but they are not so easily permitted to feel a part of 'us'. He further enumerates, "The three Madesh uprising since 2007 have tried to correct the anomaly through politics of dignity, but events since the 16 Point Conspiracy (SPC) of June 2015 have shown that a prolonged struggle lie ahead if unity and integrity of the country is worth saving and have to be saved. (CK Lal, Republica, Monday, March 13, 2007). There may be some truth in his assertion. But there is no doubt that such an unprecedented situation had never prevailed in two and half century Nepalese history. This can be taken as a new surge of radicalization to turn one race against another on the basis of ethnicity and geographical location.

According to Anil Kumar Karna, 'Historically, a strong political movement seeking enlarged participation is not a new agenda in Nepal, but the more violent Madhesi movement emerged in 2007, decisively setting the agenda for federalism.[4]

SYMPTOMATIC INDICATORS OF YOUTH RADICALIZATION – CPN (MAOIST) FACTOR

The people's armed struggle initiated by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in 1996 changed the political and societal landscape of the country. CPN (M) used the ideas and tools that could train, indoctrinate, motivate and radicalize Nepalese to turn against the state forces that made it possible for them to come to power.

As timely and rightfully quoted by Krishna Hachhethu, "This plan of initiation of the people's war would be based on the principle that everything is an illusion except state power. While remaining firm on the principle aim of the armed struggle as to capture political power for the people, the Party expresses its firm commitment to wage relentless struggle against all forms of deviationist thought and trends including reformism, and anarchism.[5]

Hachetthu's assertion is that the Maoist insurgency expanded on three major grounds – gas, bas, and kapas; i.e. food, shelter and cloth. According to him, CPN (M) applied three major instruments to lure, motivate, indoctrinate, and radicalize the people at large; i.e. 1) to radicalize people by advocating radical and revolutionary changes and achieving economic equality even at the cost of political liberty. 2) Play and synchronize with the ethnic revivalists to cash on the post-1990 ethnic uprising. In this regard, CPN (M) achieved exceptional success up to the stage where it could develop and propose 14 ethnic based states in Nepal.

The formation of CPN (M) battle formation to brigade, battalion to company on ethnic base and strategic defense, strategic equilibrium, and strategic offence were very effective jargon to impress the outside world and indoctrinate and radicalize the people's sentiment. However, after 11 years of signing the Comprehensive Peace Treaty (CPA-2006), now it seems these were just a strategy of CPN (M) to give an impression that they really had a well-structured military formation to fight with the government forces. Internationally, CPN (M) also became active member of the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia and RIM that CPN (M) utilized to impress the international community about their legality and higher stature.

Therefore, it is necessary to examine and assess the state of affairs in Nepal on the stage, conditions and root cause of terrorism or radicalization and its probable outcome in future.

After the cessation of ten years armed conflict, CPN(M) were given a safe landing along with a good package of political power sharing. But due to lack of proper orientation and motivation, CPN (M) showed the difference in their ideology. The first victim of this was the

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demise of Prachanda Path. Then there was the division within the party that led to the split of the Baidhya group.

At the present moment there is another party led by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai who has formed a new party called "Naya-Sakti Party". Similarly, another party led by Netra Bikram Chand, "Biplav" is supposed to hold the original extreme ideology of the CPN (M) by Biplav's Communist Party (Maoist).

But, in Nepalese context, it is not so easy to find proper narration of youth radicalization and what it entails. For example, when a police officer gets stabbed to death in Indonesia, the news is circulated all over the world and condemned vehemently.[6] On the contrary, even after the senior superintendent of Nepal Police and other senior officers get lynched and burnt alive in daylight, the government as well as the world keeps mum, rewarding the suspect with compensation of 17 million Nepalese Rupees. (US $170.000 equivalent).

People of Nepal may be equally angry and frustrated like any other nation of the world, but why they do not blow themselves up and kill the people that they hate? There are three incidences where incumbant Prime ministers of Nepal were attacked by the people, but even their attack they had shown enough empathy and compassion and not so violent so as to call it terrorism.

MIGRANT WORKERS AND POTENTIALITY OF RADICALIZATION

Nepalese youth are in large number in the Middle East, working and sending back remittances to their families which is sustaining the economy. But this phenomenon if left un-checked can produce radicalized people in the future due to their frustration coming out from their misery. There are many instances where the frustrated disgruntled youth from European countries have volunteered as IS fighters without any valid reason or rationale. There are reports that some of the Nepali youth in the Middle East and Malaysia are converting to Islam, their return to the country, whereabouts and future plans need to be properly studied and analyzed by the state.

NGOs and Threat of Youth Radicalization in Nepal

A large number of NGOs and INGOS are doing a great contribution to Nepalese society. They have become the vehicle of engaging youth aspirations with youth related programs and activities. But, at the present juncture a lot of NGOs and INGOs have come to close scrutiny and criticism for their nefarious activities. It may give ample space to the radicalization of Nepalese youth to engage themselves in illegal and criminal activities including criminal and terrorist activities within Nepal and use Nepal as a safe-heaven.

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GANG, EXTREMISM, TERRORISM, AND RADICALIZATION

The daunting challenges of identifying threats and challenges of gang, extremism, and radicalism is hard to differentiate in our society. Unfortunately, the government and the community are not serious on these important and sensitive issues. Various students unions and trade unions affiliated to political parties rule and dominate industries, educational institutions and most construction and development projects. The environment at the academic institutions are controlled and dominated by student unions. There is no juvenile justice administration to address the problems of teens. Drugs and substance abuse is rampant and increasing day by day. There are certain gangs identified and linked with the major political parties who dare to challenge society and government openly. Nepalese youth gang-leaders are becoming role-model and icons for petty criminals. Newer, unknown gangs are mushrooming day by day. One of the most notorious gangster Dines Adhikari aka "Chari" was killed in a cross fire with police on Aug 6, 2014. He was considered to be a closely affiliated to a major political party. When he was killed in a police encounter, the major ruling political parties demanded the suspension and prosecution of the responsible police officers. Similarly, another notorious don of the capital, Kumar Shrestha alias "Ghainte" was also killed in another

police encounter in August 25, 2015[7] in which top-leaders of another major political party even came to the media and the parliament to condemn the killing. It shows the close nexus between extortionist, gangs and political party leaders. Thus, 'politicization of crime and criminalization of politics' has become a buzzword. In all these incidents, the police force was appreciated and thanked by the general people.

Counter Radicalization

At the current scenario, there are many social and legal loopholes for any interest group to radicalize Nepalese youth whether it is political, social, religious or ethnic issue. Till date, there is no specific government plan or policy to address youth radicalization problem in Nepal. Most of the countries of the world have well advanced de-radicalization and counter-radicalization programs. They have also developed intelligence and data-base system to monitor and retrieve data and developed adequate intelligence and security apparatus.

In the year 2015 Government of Nepal, Ministry of Youth and Sports has formulated a National Youth Policy that states that there are 40.3 percent youth population. By youth it has taken the age group between 16 to 40 years of age.[8] It has emphasized on streamlining youth population on their capacity building

and preservation and promotion of their minimum basic needs.

But it has failed to address any concrete policy on the rehabilitation and reintegration of the Maoist Combatants who were recruited when they were middle level students. The negative impact and the after effect of ten year long armed conflict has radicalized Nepalese youth to such an extent that they have become more violent and aggressive, but still at a lower level compared to its other SAARC Regional countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka and Bangladesh where there are incidents of suicide bombing and assassination of higher government personalities. But the recent incidents of lynching of the security personals on duty in Tikapur and Saptari, and kidnapping of business people and killing has shown the tendency of political and criminal violence that may lead to more violence and crime in future. Therefore, Nepal must take necessary measures so that it will not fall prey of youth radicalization and turn Nepal into a safe-haven of radicalized criminals and terrorists of the world.

CONCLUSION

The Government of Nepal needs to keep close vigil of burgeoning local, regional and ethnic aspirations. Inability of the successive, fragile, short lived coalition governments of four political parties have concentrated more on survival of their administration than long-term

planning. As a result, it has created a chaotic situation that is leading to another bout of hopelessness and despair. After two rounds of successful local elections, state has to show enough flexibility to facilitate them with enough laws and autonomy as promised by the federal constitution itself.

On the other hand, failing to address their demand of constitutional amendment, the government and the Madhesi parties both will lose their legitimacy and pave the way for Madhesi radicals in the long run. Tarai is a volatile area along with the open border of most backward states of India. Terai is the area where there were more than 107 armed outfits during 2007 who had run amok with looting, murder and extortion in the name of political movement. Besides there are other groups like Limbuwan who tend to defy and challenge government decrees in the pretext of rules imposed by the Khas Bramhin and Ksheriya Hegemon invaders. Therefore, both the state and civil society of Nepal need to be careful as regards to the issue of youth radicalization.

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