

## **Advancing Strategies in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Bridging the Gaps in P/CVE Research and Practice**

Understanding the roots of violent extremism begins with recognising the complex interplay of emotions and societal influences. Emotions like aggression, anger, and hate, when coupled with biases and a lack of moral and ethical grounding, can lead to discrimination based on thoughts and beliefs. This often results in the marginalisation of individuals or groups. Intolerance of differing viewpoints, beliefs, and religious denominations can escalate into extremism, which may eventually manifest as violent extremism. In particular, religious biases at various societal levels, including in higher education institutions, are contributing to an alarming increase in religious extremism within Pakistani society.

In response to the rising tide of radicalisation and extremism, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) has implemented a series of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiatives to safeguard society. Key among these are robust anti-terrorism laws, the National Action Plan of 2014, and Paigham-e-Pakistan, a narrative that promotes peace and harmony. The GoP has also established a dedicated CVE Wing within the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and a Media Cell on CVE at the Press Information Department of the Federal Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. These entities are tasked with advancing CVE activities and research, raising public awareness about the dangers of violent extremism, and promoting effective prevention and countermeasures.

Over the past five years, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) has been at the forefront of researching violent extremism in Pakistan and the measures for its prevention and counteraction (P/CVE). During this time, SDPI has produced an impressive array of 54 research studies, policy papers, and synthesis studies focused on P/CVE-related issues. These publications have focused on key themes pertinent to CVE in Pakistan, highlighting the needs for an evidence-based approach. These themes include the role of religion; women's involvement; social factors contributing to extremism; effective countermeasures; engaging youth in the CVE narrative; and institutional and educational policies to combat violent extremism.

This substantial body of work has significantly contributed to the literature on P/CVE in Pakistan, addressing a previously noted scarcity in this area. While SDPI has been a leading contributor, other institutions have also been active in researching this field. The establishment of the CVE Wing by NACTA marks a significant step forward, as it will now join these efforts in conducting crucial research on P/CVE.

This session is designed to concentrate on these critical areas, bringing together renowned subject experts, researchers, and practitioners in the field. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions on the various themes highlighted. Furthermore, the speakers will discuss institutional approaches and educational policies that can be leveraged to counteract violent extremism effectively in order to pave the way for future strategies in the field of P/CVE.

### **Panel Organisers**

Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, Research Fellow, Resilience Development Program and Director Policy Outreach, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: [shafqat@sdpi.org](mailto:shafqat@sdpi.org)

Mr Ali Rehmat, Research Assistant, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: [alirehmat@sdpi.org](mailto:alirehmat@sdpi.org)

Ms Ramsha Mehboob Khan, Project Assistant, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: [ramsha@sdpi.org](mailto:ramsha@sdpi.org)