



CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

Press Release

Addressing Underlying Issues: CASS Seminar Calls for Whole-of-Nation Approach in Countering Extremism

18 July 2023

The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, successfully concluded a seminar on ***'Advancing Resilience: Unleashing the Potential of Countering Violent Extremism in Pakistan.'*** The event featured insightful presentations from Mohammad Ali Babakhel, Additional Inspector General (Operations), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police; MS Azeema Cheema, Director of Research and Strategy at Verso Consulting; and SSP Dr Farhan Zahid, an international counterterrorism expert.

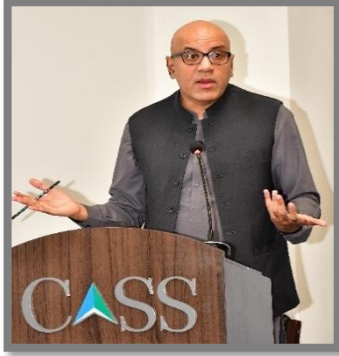


AIG Mohammad Ali Babakhel's presentation focused on Pakistan's evolving efforts in countering extremism, highlighting both successes and challenges. He emphasised the complexity of measuring success in countering extremism, as it cannot be instantly quantified due to its nuanced nature. He also addressed the disparity in technology usage between the state and violent non-state actors, stressing the need for effective policy implementation, monitoring, and communication strategies. He underscored the importance of highlighting Pakistan's best practices in countering

violent extremism and the need for greater investment in education. The speaker also stressed the significance of assessing factors such as ethnic and sectarian fault lines, service delivery impact, and political marginalisation in addressing extremism.

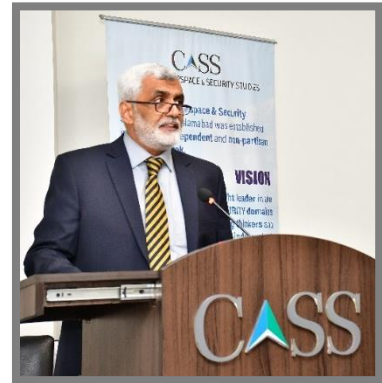
Ms. Azeema Cheema discussed the crucial role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in countering violent extremism. She emphasised the need to dispel the narrative of 'Pakistan exceptionalism' and urged a comprehensive approach to policy implementation. Ms Cheema highlighted the challenges faced by CSOs due to regulatory frameworks and pointed to the need for a comprehensive policy framework to address hate speech and disinformation online.





SSP Dr Farhan Zahid underscored the importance of partnerships with international entities engaged in CVE initiatives, such as the United Nations and the Global Counterterrorism Forum. He highlighted the role of technology in countering extremism, including robust monitoring mechanisms for online platforms and the integration of counter-narratives into educational curricula.

Air Marshal Farooq Habib (Retd), Senior Director at CASS and the seminar's moderator, acknowledged the lack of consensus on the definition of violent extremism. He stressed the importance of addressing underlying issues contributing to extremism, such as the acceptance of violence and the politicisation of Islam. 'CVE in its essence is a 'whole of nation' rather than a 'security-only' approach. This attribute makes it mandatory that the subject is debated openly, understood collectively and employed wholeheartedly, he urged.



President of CASS, **Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan (Retd)**, highlighted the crucial role of national interests in shaping objectives and formulating effective strategies. He put emphasis on the need to define and document national interests transparently. Air Marshal Khan also pointed to the significance of both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches in countering extremism and called for concentrated efforts to address hate and intolerance in society.



The seminar provided a valuable platform for experts and policymakers to share insights and strategies to counter violent extremism in Pakistan. The discussions underscored the importance of comprehensive approaches, investment in education, international partnerships, and pragmatic and holistic policy frameworks to achieve long-term resilience and stability under a whole-of-nation approach. It was attended by retired military officers, scholars from various think tanks, journalists, and students, who actively participated in the interactive question and answer session.