What is Extremism? A Conceptual and Theoretical Understanding

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Abstract

In spite of being one of the most frequently used terms in the 21st Century, extremism is poorly understood and loosely defined. Seen either as a prerequisite to violence or a principal driver of terrorism, the term extremism has not only become derogative and pejorative but is also typically condemned and dismissed out of hand. It will be the contention of this paper that extremism, in and of itself, is not necessarily bad or wrong. Treating it otherwise is not only wrong-footed but also seriously risks undermining and sabotaging the prospects of all Prevention of Violent Extremism related policies and initiatives. It is therefore necessary to redress this gross policy neglect and academic oversight. To do so, we will first have to isolate extremism from violence and terrorism and then theorize and conceptualize it in its own right.

Key Words: Extremism, Violent Extremism, Terrorism, Counter Terrorism, Definition, Conceptualization, PVE, CVE.

Introduction

One of the greatest ironies and in many ways even tragedies of our times is that some of the most frequently used words are also amongst the least understood. Even though the 21st Century, at least for the good part of the first two decades, was largely dominated by the so-called war on terror paradigm, there was never any meaningful agreement or consensus on what that actually meant or entailed. Although arguably war on terror was essentially about fighting terrorism and dismantling terrorist networks across the globe, the notion of terrorism itself is amongst the most fiercely contested and poorly understood terms.

As one of the major drivers of terrorism, Violent Extremism (VE) and in extension extremism, have also been in limelight ever since the fateful September 11 attacks. However, much like terrorism, VE and extremism are just as poorly understood and loosely defined. Notwithstanding the ensuing confusion regarding these terms, the increasingly common practice of associating VE and extremism with terrorism has completely stripped the terms of any justification and morality. Though arguably this makes sense for VE, the subsequent extension of this justificatory logic to extremism is deeply unfair and hugely problematic.

It will become clear over the course of this article that extremism, in and of itself, is neither necessarily derogative nor inherently pejorative. On the contrary, it will be argued that the term extremism is incredibly subjective that can potentially be

applied to any value-orientation or belief-system. Its usage therefore (as opposed to VE), should not lead to blind critique and unequivocal condemnation.

Separating extremism from the likes of VE and terrorism is necessary for not just conceptual and theoretical clarity but is also crucial for the sake of all Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) and Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) related programs and initiatives. As the discourse on terrorism continues to evolve, CVE and PVE are increasingly taking the centre stage. However, lack of clarity over extremism and its customary conflation with VE and terrorism creates an unstable foundation that cannot provide or sustain space for healthy and constructive development of the discourse. Furthermore, the discourse on P/CVE will always be viewed with disdain by societies that are otherwise categorized or labeled extremist. Distinguishing extremism proper from VE therefore becomes both an academic and policy imperative.

Before attempting to conceptualize extremism, it is first necessary to detach it from the violence badge, which oddly has been attached to it somewhat unconditionally.

Separating Extremism from Violent Extremism

There is a strong tendency in policy, media and even academic circles to conflate extremism with VE. Although on the face of it, treating the two terms synonymously appears to be an intuitive and harmless affair, on closer inspection and scrutiny however it becomes clear that such a conflation poses substantial analytical and normative challenges.

To begin with, much like terrorism, extremism is a poorly defined concept and its perception and understanding varies from person to person. As Anna Williford (2018) notes, "The word 'extremism' can be tossed around in a variety of conversations, and with each utterance, its meaning fluctuates" (p. 937).

Owing to the confusion over the meaning of extremism, its association with any other word or phrase must be handled with care and diligence. As opposed to extremism, the notion of violence however is fairly well understood. To assume that the meaning or subtext of extremism would not change or alter when associated unreservedly with violence is therefore clearly a folly. Unless of course the intention is to deliberately bypass the confusion over the meaning of extremism by attaching it unconditionally with a word like violence that is not only better understood but also gives a clear judgment.

Substituting the ambiguity surrounding the word extremism by tying it up with a pejorative and condemnatory word like violence allows the user to create a bias and shape a response. Whether deliberate or incidental, extremism when tied up with violence, ends up being in the same camp as words like terrorism. This is of course not to say that violent extremism does not belong in the same league as terrorism. Both are pejorative, condemnatory and derogatory words with a strong propensity to delegitimize and proscribe the actions and organizations they are attached to. Moreover, both words are frequently utilized in overlapping contexts with violent extremism regularly treated as a surrogate for terrorism.

While the overlap between VE and terrorism makes both intuitive and logical sense, extremism in and of itself cannot and should not be equated with the likes of terrorism. This however becomes inevitable owing to the widespread practice of using extremism, VE and even terrorism synonymously. As Hassan et al. (2023) note, "Some of those who study extremism and extremist groups see little distinction between them and terrorists and use the terms interchangeably" (p. 575). This is an extremely unhealthy practice as the resulting conflation of extremism and terrorism

goes on to produce unstable structures and faulty narratives that are not only hopelessly paradoxical but also overly counterproductive.

Conflating terrorism with extremism is perhaps just as outrageous as equating terrorism with poverty, since both are essentially drivers of terrorism. Understandably the outlook and make-up of extremism changes considerably when the word violence is attached to it, which then also somewhat justifies its conflation with terrorism. However, the key here is the word violence and its propensity to completely overhaul the meaning of the word it is subsequently attached to. This however does not mean that extremism on its own should be meted out the same treatment as violent extremism. The word political for instance, on its own is somewhat of a value-neutral term but once attached to violence, it becomes fairly negative and tendentious. In fact, what we fail to realize is that the reason why the word violence is attached to extremism is because extremism as a stand-alone entity is neither a negative nor necessarily a derogatory term. In comparison, the word violence is never attached to value-laden terms like terrorism or genocide, since that is both implied and can easily be inferred.

As will become clear over the course of this discussion, the word extremism is neither necessarily derogative nor inherently pejorative. In fact, extremism is an incredibly subjective term that can be applied to any value-orientation or belief-system. Its usage therefore (as opposed to violent extremism), should not lead to blanket critique and universal condemnation.

In addition to conceptual and theoretical implications, conflation of extremism with VE also makes conservative, fundamentally religious and ideologically inspired societies deeply skeptical and apprehensive of all Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism (P/CVE) initiatives. This is because all such societies are typically categorized as extreme, especially fundamentally religious societies. A blanket condemnation of extremism not only denounces all such societies but also risks permanently alienating and isolating them. All P/CVE related activities could therefore be deemed as an attack on deeply held values and belief systems and understandably could be rejected out of hand.

Separating extremism from VE is thus vital for not just conceptual and theoretical clarity but is also crucial for the sake of all CVE and PVE related programs and initiatives. As the discourse on terrorism continues to evolve, CVE and PVE are increasingly taking the centre stage. However, lack of clarity over extremism and its blind conflation with VE creates a volatile foundation that cannot provide and sustain space for healthy and constructive development of the discourse. Furthermore, the discourse on P/CVE will always be viewed with disdain by societies that are otherwise categorized or labeled extremist. Distinguishing extremism proper from VE therefore becomes both an academic and policy imperative, especially for countries like Pakistan that are widely seen or regarded as extremist.

In order to effectively understand extremism and distinguish it from VE, it is necessary to first critically analyze its prevailing perception and understanding in the discourse.

Critique of the dominant understanding of Extremism

Extremism is often misunderstood and misconstrued for either vested socio-political interests or simply due to lack of forethought and clarity. As Williford (2018) aptly notes, "The narrative surrounding extremism is controlled by those in a place of power and privilege, as they dictate to society what is normal and what is extreme" (p. 937). Notwithstanding the confusion surrounding the term, the dominant perception is that extremism is incontrovertibly egregious and inherently bad. This

perception is often reflected and even endorsed by various formal and informal definitions of the term, which on closer scrutiny become both highly objectionable and indefensible.

Ismail et al. (2025) for instance note, "Extremism is broadly defined as holding radical views that depart from social norms and has been linked to negative outcomes such as prejudice, hostility and armed conflict" (p. 2). A departure from acceptable social norms and an association with vices like prejudice, hostility and armed conflict, would easily strip any social phenomenon of its legitimacy and permissibility, let alone extremism.

Torregrosa et al. (2023) have oddly defined extremism as "an ideological movement, contrary to the democratic and ethical values of a society, that uses different methods, including violence (physical or verbal) to achieve its objectives" (p. 9874). Treating extremism as an undemocratic and unethical ideological movement that uses violence to achieve its objectives, leaves no justificatory space and denounces it as a social evil. Such a negative definition of the phenomenon makes it incredibly difficult to separate extremism from the likes of terrorism. It also makes the practice of attaching the word violence with extremism somewhat unnecessary and redundant. Indeed, if extremism is inherently undemocratic and unethical movement that typically resorts to violence, there is then no logical or analytical need for the category of violent extremism.

In the *Origins of Political Extremism*, Manus Midlarsky (2011) offers an extremely negative and a fairly objectionable definition of the term. "Political extremism" he argues, "is defined as the will to power by a social movement in the service of a political program typically at variance with that supported by existing state authorities, and for which individual liberties are to be curtailed in the name of collective goals, including the mass murder of those who would actually or potentially disagree with that program" (p. 7). Albeit, Midlarsky is offering a definition of political extremism and not extremism per se, however, given that the notion of political is not problematic or controversial on its own, it is obvious that he is holding the addition of the word extremism responsible for the murderous and vicious underpinnings of the term *political extremism*. The notion of extremism, on its own, is not even necessarily violent. To define extremism as involving mass murder is therefore gravely misleading and disingenuous.

In an article titled, *Some Problems with Definition and Perception of Extremism Within Society*, Andrej Sotlar (2004) notes that extremism in terms of political issues like terrorism, xenophobia and racism, typically refers to "activities that are not morally, ideologically or politically in accordance with written (legal and constitutional) and non-written norms of the state; that are fully intolerant toward others and reject democracy as a means of governance and the way of solving problems" (p. 1). Dismissing this as an unsatisfactory definition of the term, Sotlar (2004) instead argues that "definition of extremism is similar to that of pornography-you cannot define it, but when you see it, you recognize it easily" (p. 1).

Sotlar's conceptualization, on the one hand, strips extremism of all morality and legality and his preferred understanding of the term on the other hand, conflates it with essentially contested terms like terrorism. As Richard Jackson (2011) argues, "as a result of the lack of definitional agreement, a great many terrorism scholars adopt the default position that, like pornography, everyone intuitively recognizes terrorism when they see it" (p. 117).

Adherence to an extreme position, social or political, is not always evident or easily discernable. Moreover, unlike terrorism, extremism is not usually accompanied by

an act of violence nor does it intrinsically carry a threat of violence. In fact, as will become evident over the course this discussion, the notion of extremism, in addition to being fundamentally subjective, is also neither necessarily negative nor inherently derogative. To assume therefore that extremism is like terrorism or pornography that everyone intuitively recognizes when they see it, is a flawed and unfounded assumption.

Given that the term extremism is neither inherently violent nor necessarily immoral, the amount of negativity and revulsion it provokes in academic and policy circles is both confusing and alarming. Keeping aside the usual suspects- post-911 associations with terrorism and lack of definitional clarity- one of the main reasons why extremism is held in contempt or viewed with such disdain, especially in the Western Hemisphere, is because it is typically associated with undemocratic norms and practices. As Uwe Backes (2007) points out that in Western tradition, political extremism is closely linked to non-democratic actors. Extremism, according to Backes (2007), not only seeks to undermine the 'liberty of citizens' but also the 'equality of the citizens' (p. 250).

While it is true that extremism has an inherent tendency to be somewhat intolerant, it cannot simply be disregarded as undemocratic or autocratic. Democracy itself comes in all shapes and sizes and some strands of democracy could even be characterized as potentially extreme or intolerant. In fact, any political ideology, democratic or otherwise, can have shades of both moderate and extreme viewpoints. To characterize the entire edifice of extremism as intolerant and undemocratic is therefore neither fair nor a distinctive characteristic.

Furthermore, it is worth bearing in mind that extremism is not necessarily always negative or undesirable, as most definitions would have us believe. As Martin Luther Jr. (1963), when accused of extremism, proudly owned the label and famously stated, "The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be".[1] This is why some serious researchers define extremism in neutral terms so that it may have both negative and positive applications. In a paper titled, *What is Extremism? Advancing Definition in Political Argumentation*, Hassan et al. (2023) critically examine the existing definitions and conclude that extremism can have both "political and non-political subject matter, and which can have both positive or negative applications" (p. 577). The definition they provide is thus "neutral in nature, leaving open the possibility that it can have both positive and negative instantiations" (p. 578).

Any serious analysis or application of the term extremism must not take a linear approach to the problem. Extremism, as we shall see, comes in all shapes and sizes. Deeming it unequivocally negative, notorious and immoral creates an intellectual blind spot that not only prevents us from studying the phenomenon objectively but also undermines the credibility and integrity of all contingent policy initiatives and programs, especially in the domain of P/CVE.

The notoriety and negativity attached unreservedly to extremism has indeed paved the way for its blanket rejection and universal condemnation, which is both regressive and counter-productive. It will be the contention of this paper that

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[1] King ML Jr (1963) Letter from Birmingham Jail [PDF]. California State University. https://www.csuchico.edu/iege/_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf

conceptual clarity of extremism is the first necessary step for redressing our existing misconceptions and paving way for genuine CVE and PVE related endeavors.

While it is true, that much like terrorism, extremism is a complex phenomenon that cannot be confined to one specific explanation or definition, however, there must be some baseline threshold that can help address some of the most baneful myths and exaggerated assumptions about the term. With the help of a continuum, this paper will attempt to establish a benchmark criterion that will not only allow us to dispel the prevailing myths and exaggerations about the term but will also enable us to both visualize and conceptualize extremism.

Conceptualizing and Visualizing Extremism: The Continuum

In spite of all the confusion and disagreements, extremism, simply put, can at least be understood as a tendency or disposition to go to extremes (furthest from the center), especially in political, religious and social matters.

To understand this deceptively straightforward concept, we have to imagine a hypothetical continuum with left, right and center. The right end of the continuum designates authority, control, order and hierarchy and is typically associated with traditions, customs, and conservatism. The left end on the other hand, signifies freedom, equality and decentralization and is usually identified with liberalism, rights, and internationalism. The center of the continuum, in principle, represents moderation and temperance as it sits squarely in the middle. In theory, the further one moves away from the center (either left or right), the more extreme a person will become.

The Left Wing — Freedom, Decentralization, Liberalism

The Center
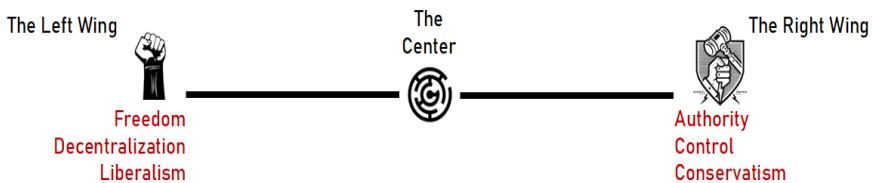
The Right Wing — Authority, Control, Conservatism

Figure 1: The Continuum

The continuum thus clearly allows us to visualize the two main types of extremes, namely left and right. These two extremes (and all the shades in between) can be found in political, religious and all other aspects of social life.

Although in principle, the right extreme is characterized by authority, control and conservatism and the left is characterized by freedom, decentralization and liberalism, the two extremes and anything in between is essentially determined by the degree of rights and freedoms an individual gets to exercise or is required to sacrifice. The more an individual gets to preserve and exercise his fundamental rights, the more he will move towards the left. Conversely, the more an individual sacrifices or gives up his rights and freedoms, the more he will lean towards the right. The same is also true for all socio-political ideologies, doctrines and belief-systems.

Since the likes of religion typically demand an unconditional submission of individual rights and freedoms to some divinely ordained principles and injunctions, all religions therefore characteristically align with the right end of the continuum. The same is also true for all ideologies and doctrines that prioritize some ideals, beliefs or convictions over individual rights and freedoms. The likes of Nazism and

Fascism (and even nationalism) for instance stipulate categorical submission to some core principles and tenets, usually at the cost of complete or partial surrender of individual liberty and freedom. The degree of surrender determines how extreme right the position would ultimately be. The more the surrender, the more the position will gravitate towards the right and the more extreme the position will eventually be. The less the surrender, the more the position will be closer to the centre and the less extreme it will subsequently be.

The rights surrendered by the individual (voluntarily or involuntarily) are handed over to the respective state, government or authority. The more the rights surrendered, the more powerful the state will be. This is typically the end goal of all extreme right wing positions that seek to empower the state or some presumed authority by stripping of the individual of his fundamental rights.

The rights required to be surrendered vary significantly and depend on the respective injunctions of the concerned right wing doctrine or ideology. For instance, a religious doctrine may demand that individual surrenders his respective manner or even the right of worship altogether. Similarly, some ultra-nationalist ideology may demand that an individual surrenders his sub-ethnic or linguistic identity for the sake of some overarching national identity.

Right wing extremism thus necessitates significant intrusion in the fundamental or otherwise intrinsic rights of the individuals. The degree of intrusion subsequently determines the intensity of extremity. The most extreme right position possible would strip off the individual of all his rights and hand them over to the state or designated authority. While such an extreme most position remains hypothetical, there are a number of extreme right positions (such as the ones espoused by right-wing terrorist groups) that come dangerously close.

As opposed to the right, anything left of the continuum seeks to empower the individual and uphold his fundamental rights and freedoms. The more an individual gets to preserve and exercise his rights, the more he will move towards the left. Most prominent examples of the left include the likes of liberalism and Marxism. Where liberalism focuses on values like freedom of religion and expression, Marxism focuses on structural class distinctions and economic disparities that hold the individuals back from exercising their inherent rights. While the philosophy of liberalism is more reserve and conservative in both its outlook and aspirations, Marxism is far more forceful and emphatic in its ambitions and intentions. This is why liberalism would lean towards the centre-left position on the continuum, whereas Marxism would be closer to far or extreme left end of the continuum.

Much like the extreme most right position, it is difficult to visualize the left most extreme point on the continuum. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity and for conceptualizing left-wing extremism, it is important to understand what such an extreme position would entail. Theoretically, on the one hand, it should empower the individual absolutely with no constrains or restraints of any kind on individual freedom and autonomy. Practically however, it is difficult on the other hand, to visualize or even imagine such an extreme position, especially with the somewhat mandatory and constraining provision of state or government, since authority of any kind would put restrain of some sort on individual rights and freedoms. This is precisely why the further we move left of the continuum, the less powerful and insignificant the state becomes, until it diminishes altogether.

Although the likes of Marxism have laid claims to creating a stateless society in the long run, the ideology that can truly be crowned as the champion advocate of stateless society is Anarchism. With its strong and uncompromising critique of not just religion, culture and values, Anarchism is completely dismissive of the state, society and any other symbol of authority that can strip an individual of any of his

rights and freedoms. In fact, the word anarchy comes from the Greek word *Anarkhos* which means "without authority" (Jun, 2009, p. 507). Anarchists are relentlessly critical of state and government because they are created at the cost and expense of individual freedoms and liberty. As William Godwin (as cited in Jun, 2009) pointed out, "freedom is logically incompatible with government" (p. 509). While Anarchists have never quite agreed on what a completely stateless and government-less society would ultimately look like, their underlying philosophy however helps us visualize the extreme left end of the continuum.

Left-wing extremism thus simultaneously sets out to empower the individual and weaken the state. The more the individual gets to retain and exercise his rights and freedoms the weaker the state would have to be and the more the continuum will gravitate towards the left.

To sum up, our respective extremes, or the lack of it, is thus determined by how much freedom we deem an individual should get to exercise. One the one hand, the more an individual gets to preserve and exercise his fundamental rights, the more the continuum will move towards the left and the weaker the state will be as a result. On the other hand, the more the inherent rights are taken from an individual, the more the continuum will gravitate towards the right and the stronger the state will be as a consequence. In other words, the left is concerned exclusively with the individual whereas the right is focused solely on the collective whole.

Whether a person prioritizes the individual over the collective or vice versa is largely a matter of respective socio-political values, customs and traditions, religious beliefs, ideological orientation, and perhaps most importantly subjective preferences. Assuming that all human beings are entitled to holding varying beliefs and convictions, it will understandably be wrong to project some subjective preference, left or right, as a matter of fact or value-judgment. Intuitively of course, it may make sense to discredit any contrasting or opposing viewpoint, but logically and rationally there is no justification for an uncompromising and confrontational value-orientation.

To dismiss any position out of hand, even an extreme position, is therefore not just unreasonably impulsive but also needlessly belligerent. This is because hollow assumptions or blanket rejections of each other's beliefs subsequently lead to division, intolerance and bigotry. Given that this is a precursor to violent extremism and terrorism, it is necessary to separate value judgments from unqualified denouncement and outright condemnation. To do so, we will have to reexamine and reassess our prevailing attitude towards values or beliefs that we simply disregard or rebuke on account of being extreme.

Extremism and Value Judgments

Since the two extremes, along with all the shades in between, can be found in all aspects of social life, the question is: should all extremes be condemned equally and are they all necessarily bad? The prevailing sentiment, along with the mainstream definitions (as discussed already), would indeed have us believe that all extremes are egregiously bad and must therefore be condemned unequivocally. However, this assertion is far from accurate and must therefore be dispelled unreservedly.

While it is true that a resort to extreme makes one more prone to violence and sabotage, there is nothing wrong with holding an extreme viewpoint in and of itself. As humans, we are all entitled to have different social, political, and religious beliefs- be they left, right or center. An extreme position, whether left or right, is essentially a byproduct of human consciousness and we all at one point or another may adhere to beliefs or convictions that can be deemed extreme. As Macnair and

Frank (2017) point out, 'It is not altogether uncommon for several individuals to, at some point in their life, hold views or opinions that may be considered extreme' (p. 149).

It is also important to understand that categorizing a belief or opinion as extreme is usually fraught with both difficulty and controversy and is not a simple or straightforward affair. This is because determining an extreme position typically depends on one's own belief system, respective perspective and relative position on the continuum. For instance, a center-right position on the continuum could verily be deemed extreme by a person with center-left orientation. Similarly, a religious person could find all liberal viewpoints on the left end of the spectrum as extreme or problematic. Determining an extreme, especially without first taking account of one's own extreme, is a deeply contentious and divisive affair. As Van et al. (2013) suggest that radical and extremist ideas, when taken on their own, are not necessarily something that are innately worthy of condemnation.

Since all viewpoints on the continuum could potentially be categorized as extreme (by people of different value-orientations), it is safe to conclude that there is nothing wrong with holding an extreme viewpoint per se. Extremism in and of itself is therefore neither necessarily bad nor unequivocally condemnable. In fact, we are all entitled to our own respective extremes.

This logical deduction raises a pertinent question. If extremism is not bad per se, then why is it so often linked to violence and sabotage? Answer to this seemingly perplexing question is surprisingly simple and straightforward.

There is indeed nothing wrong with holding an extreme viewpoint as we all tend to have our own respective extremes- be they liberal or conservative. It is only when we disregard and dismiss all other beliefs and viewpoints and forcefully try to impose our extreme on others that it becomes problematic. Imposition of an extreme viewpoint upon others by any means possible is what really encourages one to resort to violence and even terrorism.

What is needed therefore is not a blanket critique of extremism (as is normally the case), but its imposition upon others by force. There is an urgent need to inculcate in our community and all concerned personal the ethos that will allow us to first respect, acknowledge and come to terms with our own respective extremes. This, among other things, will enable us to understand that much like us, everyone else is also entitled to their own respective extremes. What we must refrain from essentially is imposing our extremes on others and vice versa.

Recommendations

If we want to prevent extremism's descent into violence and terrorism, then we must first do away with the stereotypical and superficial engagement with the problem. Contours of extremism must be adequately explored and understood, especially by segments of society that are actively working on the issue. Community outreach initiatives, such as engagement with citizens in the context of PVE, will continue to be futile exercises if they fail to first shed the confining prisms that blindly link extremism with violence and terrorism without any forethought and introspection.

Experts working in the field confront the problem of individual extremes on regular basis. Their default reaction is to somehow controvert or work around such individual extremes. Such a practice is not only counter-productive but in light of our discussion, is in fact also counter-intuitive. Individuals everywhere will always adhere to one or the other extreme since it is a privilege of free will they are all intrinsically entitled to. We must accept and respect this verity so as to work constructively and positively in the community. All PVE and community resilience

endeavors will continue to be futile if there continues to be a blanket rejection of the community's respective extremes and a forced imposition of some prescribed extreme.

Such clarity over what extremism entails is all the more crucial for fundamentally religious societies like Pakistan where people (even the ruling elite at times) have a tendency to equate efforts to prevent VE with some hidden foreign agenda to counteract state sanctioned religious injunctions or sentiments. In almost all Muslim majority countries where fundamentalist religious thought is 'part of the democratic political discourse', notions of PVE and CVE can easily be viewed with skepticism, since they allegedly do not allow the stakeholders to distinguish between violence prone radical thoughts and officially endorsed fundamentalist religious discourse (Vergani, 2021, p.11).

Clarity over what extremism constitutes, difference between extremism and VE, and an acceptance and acknowledgement of each other's respective extremes, is therefore necessary for not just conceptual and theoretical clarity but also for the success of all CVE and PVE related programs and initiatives.

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