

قومی یکجہتی:
انتہا پسندی اور عدم برداشت



POST SEMINAR REPORT

EXTREMISM AND INTOLERANCE A THREAT TO NATIONAL COHESION

Two Days National Seminar

3-4 January 2023

Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA)
National Defence University, Islamabad

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CONCEPT NOTE

National cohesion is the first and foremost objective of National Security Policy (NSP) of Pakistan which is threatened due to the multiple factors such as crime, extremism, intolerance, militancy, and terrorism etc. The policy makers are now confronting a complex challenge to tackle these thin-line different yet overlapping concepts. The problem starts with the intolerant behaviours that leads to extreme views regarding social, political, economic, and religious issues. The extreme views are usually implemented/ spread over physical/information domain through the support of a terror-economy. The criminal activities are considered as the easiest way to fund the militancy and resultantly, it manifests as terrorism.

Extremism and intolerance emerge as serious threat to national cohesion within Pakistan. In response, the successive governments have undertaken certain initiatives such as National Action Plan, National Internal Security Policy, and madrassa reforms etc. to tackle the menace of extremism and intolerance. However, the country is once again facing an electric mix of extremist entities that requires robust and whole of nation approach. NSP, while defining the challenges to national cohesion, narrates that “divisive discourse around ethnic, religious, and social differences is a concern, exacerbated by disruptive external support that aims to undermine national cohesion and incite disharmony on issues of identity”. It also outlines the solution i.e., fostering “social cohesion through national values and ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity”. Thus, national cohesion can be fostered in Pakistan by analysing the aetiology of extremism and intolerance that is rooted into political, religious, and social differences.

In this regard, ISSRA is planning to hold a seminar to dissect the concepts of extremism and intolerance in case of Pakistan that will help in crystalising the plausible recommendations to address the contributing factors as well as capacity deficits of the government agencies.

Thematic Sessions

- The two-day seminar centred on two major themes
 - Extremism and Intolerance: Its Genesis & Types in Pakistan and Way Forward
 - Role of Religion in National Cohesion and Countering Extremism

PROGRAMME

Day 1 (03 January 2023 Tuesday)

Inaugural Session

Time		
1100-1105	Tilawat	
1105-1115	Welcome Remarks by President NDU / DG ISSRA	
1115-1130	Keynote Speech by Chief Guest	Ambassador Dr. Raza Muhammad
1130-1135	Group Photo	Collaboration Wall

Session I: Extremism and Intolerance: A Conceptual Discourse (Moderator: Mr Aneeq Ahmed)

1140-1230 (10 minutes each for 5 x speakers)	Extremism and Intolerance: Its Genesis & Types in Pakistan and Way Forward	Dr Khalid Zaheer (On Zoom) Ms Nasim Zehra Mr Orya Maqbool Jan Dr Mufti Zubair Usmani Dr Arfa Sayeda Zehra (On Zoom)
1230-1330	Interactive Session	
1330-1340	Moderator's Remarks	
1340-1345	Presentation of Souvenirs	
1345	Prayer/ Lunch	

Day-2 (04 January 2023 Wednesday)

Session II: Extremism and Intolerance: A Threat to National Cohesion (Moderator: Dr Arshi Saleem Hashmi)

1100-1105	Tilawat	
1105-1115	Role of Religion in National Cohesion and Countering Extremism	Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (On Zoom) Dr Anis Ahmed Mr Khursheed Nadeem Ms Munizae Jahangir Dr Ikram ul Haq
1115-1155 (10 minutes each for 4 x speakers)		
1155-1255	Interactive Session	
1255-1305	Moderator's Remarks	
1305-1310	Presentation of Souvenirs	
1310-1320	Vote of Thanks by DG ISSRA	DG ISSRA
1320	Prayer/ Lunch	

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SEMINAR

- There are various terminologies e.g., extremism, intolerance, violent extremism, radicalisation, and terrorism which are interchangeably used in the discourse. There is a need to define these terminologies, at least at the state level so that individuals, society, and the state speak the same language.
- Every society has certain fault lines however, strong societies or states suppress the differences and promote common ideals. They do not let their enemies exploit their vulnerabilities. Hence, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure its writ at all costs. In this regard, promoting the rule of law and managing public opinion is necessary for Pakistan.
- Securitisation and politicisation of religion are major challenges therefore Pakistan should gradually move towards regulation of mosques and madrassas so that they become beacons of co-existence, tolerance, and religious harmony.
- Misgovernance contributes towards extremism and intolerance therefore it is the responsibility of the state to manage and regulate the society in a manner that can contribute to the overall welfare of citizens regardless of religion, creed, and gender.
- Education reform is a key tool against extremism. Twelve years of basic education should be made compulsory before admission to any specialised discipline including religious education.
- External interference is one of the key enablers of extremism and intolerance in Pakistan. In today's globalised world, no country enjoys absolute sovereignty. Everything comes with a price so Pakistan should rightly set its strategic priorities keeping the socio-economic well-being of the citizen at the centre of each strategic priority.
- Pakistan needs to evolve a strong and logical narrative against extremism and intolerance. In this regard, the role of media becomes critical in propagating a common narrative. Adherence to PEMRA's code of ethics is very important.
- Implementation of policies and adherence to the Constitution of Pakistan will help in fostering national cohesion and reducing the menace of extremism and intolerance within the society.

DAY 1

SESSION I

Extremism and Intolerance:
A Conceptual Discourse



THEME OF THE SESSION

Extremism and Intolerance:
Its Genesis & Types in Pakistan
and Way Forward

SPEAKERS



MODERATOR
MR ANEEQ AHMED, SI



Speaker 1
Dr Khalid Zaheer



Speaker 2
Ms Nasim Zehra



Speaker 3
Mr Orya Maqbool Jan



Speaker 4
Dr Mufti Zubair Usmani



Speaker 5
Dr Arfa Sayeda Zehra

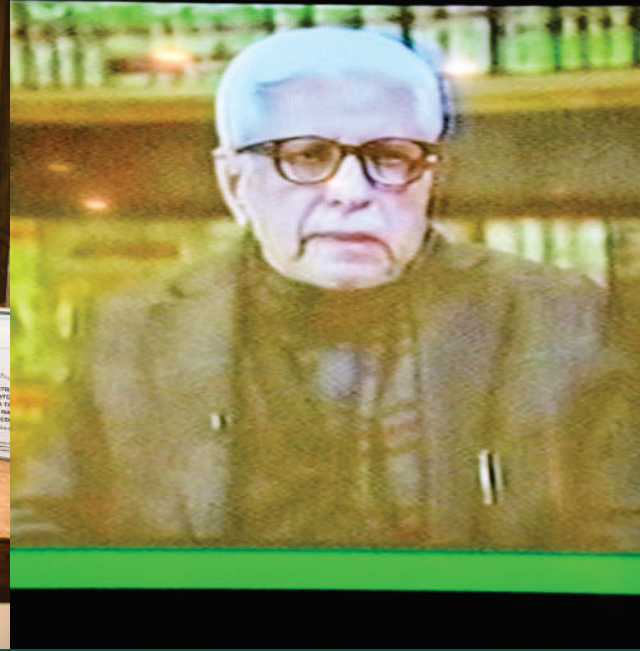
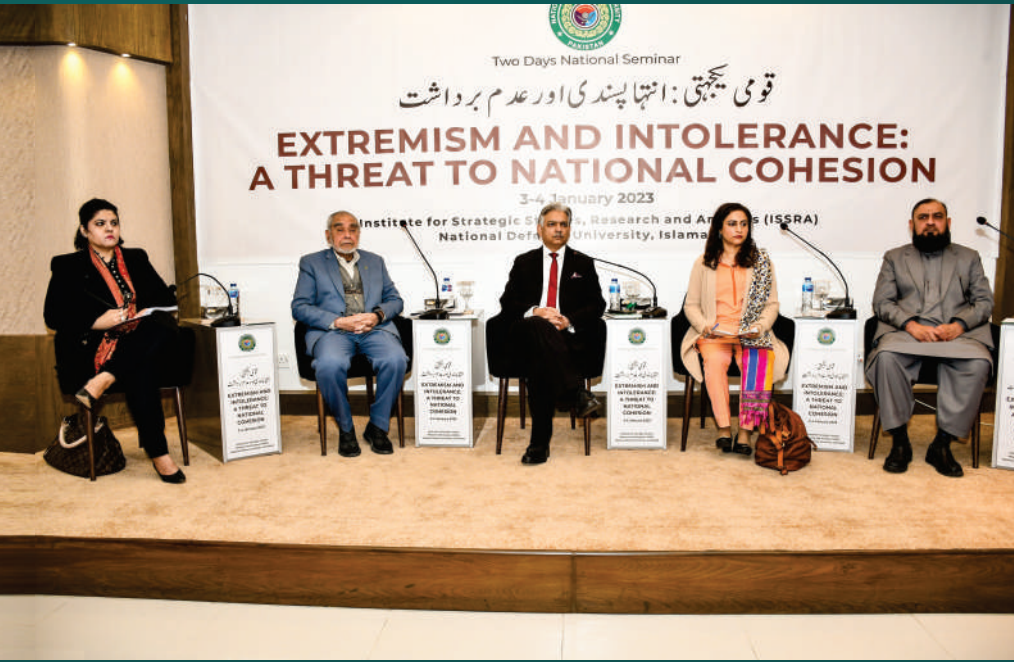
TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SESSION I

- In the present strategic haze, it is very important for Pakistan to chalk out strategic clarity to effectively deal with the current challenges as it is always necessary to diagnose a disease properly before any treatment.
- A large part of our society is gullible, so we need to raise the level of understanding of our society. Pakistan needs to promote a social environment where dissent is possible. It can be done by imparting education which promotes critical thinking.
- There should be zero tolerance for extremism and hate speech. The leaders should talk with manners, and mosques should be managed by the state in a progressive manner.
- Faculty exchange programme in madrassas should be started so that Ulemas of other fiqah could promote religious harmony and understanding.
- Extremism and intolerance exist in each society, but their perpetrators sit on the margins of society. It is the responsibility of the state to manage and regulate society.
- Poverty is not the main cause of extremism and intolerance in the case of Pakistan. It is an issue of governance as state machinery is not performing its due role. In fact, major contributors are weak and selective enforcement of law.
- External interference is one of the key enablers causing extremism and intolerance in society. The changing geo-political environment has also significantly contributed towards the adverse conditions of our society.
- Lack of education and injustice in society are the main causes of extremism in Pakistan. The remedy lies in enforcing the writ of the state, rule of law, provision of socio-economics justice, and education.
- Intolerance and extremism are the product of egoistic behaviours, narcissism, and self-righteousness. It is also an indication of a frightened society that needs enlightenment of values-based education.
- It is the responsibility of the state to promote ethical and moral values besides imparting quality education.

DAY 2

SESSION II

Extremism and Intolerance:
A Threat to National Cohesion



THEME OF THE SESSION

Role of Religion in National
Cohesion and Countering
Extremism

SPEAKERS



Moderator
Dr Arshi Saleem Hashmi



Speaker 1
Javed Ahmad Ghamidi



Speaker 2
Dr Anis Ahmed



Speaker 3
Mr Khursheed Nadeem



Speaker 4
Ms Munzae Jahangir



Speaker 5
Dr Ikram ul Haq

TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SESSION II

- Islam is a religion of peace, but the perception of reality is different. This is the time to change misperceptions through practical actions. So, socioeconomic well-being and justice as enshrined in Islam must be at the heart of the strategic planning.
- Rule of law is a key element in shaping a society. A society without justice cannot survive. Therefore, the provision of a speedy, fair, and effective justice system regardless of ethnicity and religious beliefs is a requirement of time.
- Extremism is an immoderate, drastic, excessive attitude, behaviour and personality trait that develops due to several reasons.
- Masjid (mosques) under private control, madrassas without broad-based education, and a lack of a common narrative against intolerance are three major factors behind extremism in Pakistan.
- 12 years of broad-based education should be made compulsory before admission to any religious madrassas or scientific schools. The state should take the control of mosques as it is being practised in the Middle East, Malaysia, and other important Muslim countries.
- The intellectual community of the society including philosophers, religious scholars, teachers etc should contribute towards building a national narrative based on scientific logic. It is not the responsibility of the state to provide a religious narrative, but it should emerge naturally from society.
- In case of Pakistan, religion has been used by pressure groups for their vested interests in power politics, which needs to be changed.
- We are a confused nation and must become serious if we want to progress. Regionalism, race, economic interests, and local culture cannot become the basis of national cohesion in Pakistan. In Pakistan's case, only Islam as Din and not as madhab/maslak can foster national cohesion.





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