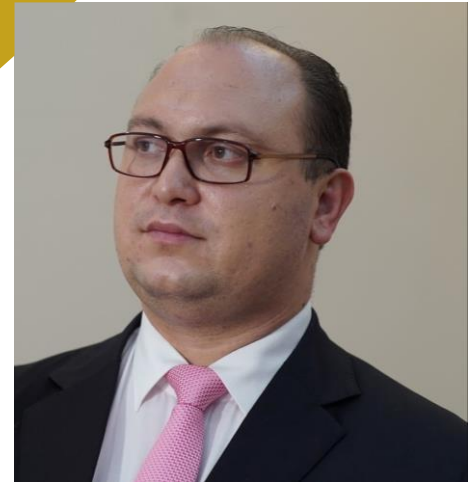ISLAMIC MILITARY COUNTER TERRORISM COALITION

Media and Terrorism - Levels of Relationship

Media has no doubt a huge and important role in the establishment of convictions and shaping the minds of individuals in the contemporary life. The influence of media is no longer confined or limited to the formal message promulgated by state-owned or state-controlled media. Such influence is no longer left to the international, regional, or national centers that have traditionally been steering the political influence of the media. What we see today is that every party, group, or organization, no matter how small it is, has established a platform or a website of its own to address and reach out to its followers, foes, and the world at large. Not only that, but even individuals of every intellectual, national, ethnic, religious, or political identity are managing their own websites and openly addressing themselves to all people including targeted or non-targeted groups. This image of the contemporary media status is comparable to a two-face coin that carries both good expectations and perilous warnings at a time, for these websites can either be used for the good of the people and to promote virtue and good guidance or used to harm people or lead them to the vicious paths of evil and self-destruction.

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Therefore, it has become imperative to face up to the media scene as it presents itself today as an area of open confrontation. Some of those groups or organizations are fighting their intellectual, religious, civilizational, or

political battles much more on the websites than they do in reality. Their action could be as dangerous as causing bloodshed, instigate enmity, and enflame hostilities between opposing parties more than it could ever be on a genuine battlefield.

So how will it go in a contemporary world which is almost overwhelmed by the calls for violence, conflict and depreciation of the other either on religious, civilizational, or geographic grounds under the pretexts of "Despising the Orient", "Clash of Civilizations", the dislike of Islam in the name of 'Islamophobia' or dislike of the West, its countries, or its people, etc. Hence it is not true that the advocacy of terrorism is characteristically confined or attached to the followers of a particular religion, nationality, race, or continent in the world.

The media confrontation takes a more serious turn when it becomes clear that we are facing terrorist parties or groups who preach and adopt violent terror using sectarian – **and not religious**- doctrines in justifying the alleged legitimacy of such doings as they spread their teachings on their media platforms. This is typically true of both the terrorist parties or groups supported by the so-called 'State Sponsors of Terrorism 'or the terrorist parties and groups who illegally infiltrate into countries and misuse their territories by setting up terrorist camps or claim that they have set up illusionary states or emirates whose sole mission is to practice terrorism acts, resulting in weakening those countries, overburdening the population, and destroying their economies.

Seeing that such terrorist parties, organizations, and militias have their message boards and media cells, the confrontation must not be merely limited to the military field of war or security agencies manhunt. For better results, we must have specialized and well-guided media organs, build up a well-informed, technically qualified team of media experts and set plans so we can be in a better position to counteract their systematic media campaigns. It goes without saying that the terrorist organizations are now in possession of electronic media organs and websites that were used to successfully win over more supporters, advocates and followers over the past few years hitting targets that went far beyond the expectations of the security agencies trying to track them. This would naturally put the organs of the Islamic Coalition Countries that confront the terrorist parties and organizations to the critical test of firstly digging out the causes that helped the terrorist media campaigns to successfully pass their message across; secondly finding out the causes of their success in winning over followers from among the citizens of those countries; thirdly planning and launching counter media campaigns that can beat back and overpower the impact of the terrorist media campaigns; and fourthly refuting and bringing to light the fallacy of their terrorist doctrine in the context of bringing to the foreground a convincing package of alternative teachings and methodology. Claiming that their thoughts have been refuted without introducing an

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alternative course would simply undermine the sufficiency and healing effect of the remedy.

Establishing the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) was a much needed and wise step taken to protect the populations of coalition member states and the Islamic nation against the threat posed by the terrorist parties and organizations.

Launching an electronic web portal by the IMCTC's leadership signals a wise, well-thought out and successful initiative that goes on the right track. The web portal's mandate is to take care of staging the media role in the war on terror. Needless to say, overlooking the role of the media amounts to ignoring an important part of the battle field in the fight against terrorism. Such an erroneous attitude would give the terrorists a wider margin and enables them to score higher rates of success playing on sectarian sentiment as well as perverted, extremist and malevolent rhetoric as they try to get through with their evil plotting and reach out to more followers that share the same way of thinking, ambitions, perverted ideas and the same terrorist sectarian sentiment.

A categorization and depiction of the relationship holding between the media and terrorism is all the more important and a pre-requisite for winning this running battle against terror. As a part of the special media fight against terror and the terrorists, it is most important for the IMCTC media platforms to adopt an appealing coeval Islamic rhetoric based on a moderate, straightforward and convincing Islamic creed which follows the civic and pacific methodology established by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) based on the root values of

compassion to all men and the acceptance and coexistence with the followers of other religious affiliations within the Muslim community and soliciting peace with non-hostile non-Muslim countries, communities and civilizations who have no enmity towards the followers of Islam. Islam has indeed ordered the Nation to be just and kind to those who have no hostilities and who do not fight Muslims on account of religion and to treat them with equity without hatred, clash or struggle with other civilizations. Instead, the guidance of Islam tells us to seek to know and become known to other nations and peoples and that we must help one another in righteousness and piety and not help one another in sin and transgression.

The Member Countries of the IMCTC have an obligation to call for a global dialogue whose main goal is to renounce religious hatred among countries in the world. They must also pass their message across to the leaders of those countries who have insisted on associating Islam with terrorism and demand that they avoid repeating this unjustified misrepresentation of Islam in their political and ideological statements flouted in the

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context of the war on terrorism, as such statements would only serve the purposes of international terrorism, not to mention the scholarly, historical and civilizational fallacy involved for it is well-known that Islam was historically at the heart of forging good and smooth international relations. Islam should

therefore be used as the best weapon in the struggle to track down and abolish the perverted sectarian trends who have departed from the true teachings of Islam today and who are taking root in every terrorist party, organization or militia in the Middle East and across the world.

The worst consequence of associating Islam with terrorism in the international media campaigns is that it increases the terrorist media's ability to win more supporters, advocates and media professionals as they claim that they have stepped forward as self-appointed defenders of Islam. The basic claim underlying the doctrine

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adopted by today's terrorist organizations is the claim that they are the frontline fighters in the confrontation with the major western powers bearing hostilities against Islam and Muslims and that they are the sole force defending Islam and Muslims and moving to thwart off international, Western and Zionist plotting against the Muslim Nation. Whether such claims are true or false, we have seen, in our experience, that those terrorist parties and organizations are quickly turning their back to those convictions and pointing their guns to Muslim countries and their peoples. Then they shift their goals to the killing of Muslims to the point that they slaughter more Muslims than the original enemies against whom they had initially taken up arms. Such a gross turn away from pronounced goals is totally unjustifiable and cannot be defended by the standards of reason, legal systems or religious affiliations.

The IMCTC's online media portal must consider the establishment of discussion boards with the aim of studying and closely examining the basic doctrines adopted by every terrorist organization using a knowledgeable, rational, scholarly and Shari'a-based methodology to finally refute their rhetoric with strong and seamless arguments supported by evidence, Shari'a citations, reason and political justification. The ultimate goal is to immunize Muslim youths against the danger of falling victims to a religious rhetoric that preaches the use of armed combat and violence to fight others indiscriminately.

It is against this background that we recognize the importance of focusing on characterizing and depicting the coalition created to counter terrorism as a characteristically Islamic entity. This becomes even more important in light of the fact that some circles continue to hammer on the allegation that Islam is the sole source of international terrorism when it is wiser to join forces with Islam in the war against terror. In summary it was very well thought out that the IMCTC was depicted as a characteristically Islamic coalition and that Muslim media professionals would strive to bring forward the Islamic identity of the coalition with the aim of achieving the IMCTC goals and foil hostile allegations.