

Confronting Extremism and Terrorism

Terrorism is one of the most significant problems facing the modern world. The impact of this phenomenon has increased the speed and the momentum of media coverage of crimes that threaten all of humanity. Although people have suffered from the menace of war since the dawn of time; terrorism has had a different and more detrimental effect.

Religious extremism and radical ideology are one of the most tenacious issues that haunt and threaten the development and stability of the international community. They are the root causes of the disintegration of societies and their social fabric. Religious extremism and radical ideology are the main sources of violence and have created the devices that have undermined development throughout history. As result of religious extremism and radical ideology, ideological terrorism has come into existence and paved the way for terrorist movements to commit heinous crimes under the cloak of religion.

In recent years, terrorism has experienced qualitative transformations and these movements have become the latest, most dangerous, far reaching issue. They have transformed from small cells into groups with sophisticated heavy artillery including tanks, armor and anti-aircraft missiles, which were not



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available to terrorist organizations that emerged in the third of the last of the century.

The qualitative development of the terrorist organizations in a number of Arab countries has improved their combat efficiency, ability to recruit and mobilize supporters, and the exploitation of conflicts in the region, turning them into bloody and armed conflicts. These factors have led to increase pressure on Arab countries to maintain national security.

The developments of armed conflict in Arab counties, have given terrorist organizations an added advantage to tear through social fabrics using the divisions of sectarianism, clanship and tribalism to intensify conflicts and sectarian segregation.

Counter Terrorism

The resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council on Confronting Terrorism, to maintain international peace and security from Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) to 132nd IPU Assembly Resolution (2015), have all emphasized the urgent need for combining international efforts to take the necessary measures to combat terrorism in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law. In addition, the lack of a globally accepted definition of terrorism should not be an impediment to taking firm actions by international community against terrorist organizations and their activities, especially since all countries have national laws that provide clear and specific definitions of terrorist acts.

Definition of Extremism and its Relationship to Terrorism

Extremism is the process of giving up common values, norms and customs in society, and adopting different ones. As a matter of fact, the recourse to impose values, standards and views by force by an extremist group is a form of terrorism. In more detail, ideological and religious extremism are the leading sources of terrorism, especially since 95% of the cases of terrorism that has swept through the globe in the last couple years were the products of extremism.

There is no doubt that the danger of extremism increases when it transitions from a conceptual ideological and theoretical phase to practicing behavioral extremism phase. There is no doubt that the danger of extremism increases when it moves from its conceptual, ideological and theoretical phase to practice and behavioral extremism phase. This is manifested in physical forms using the means of violence, murder and terrorism to realize its objectives. Recently, extremism and terrorism have been linked to Islam, especially with the emergence of extremist religious groups such as, Daesh and other organizations of all forms of religious and political extremism, whether in it is in their ideology, beliefs or behavior.

The Causes and Motives of Terrorism and Extremism:

The root causes of extremism are:

1. Extremist Ideology: Terrorism is based on dehumanizing its victims. Extremist ideologies that dismiss the worth and dignity of others are essential tools of mobilization and recruitment. Such extremist

ideologies arouses a culture of violence and intolerance and increases support for terrorist groups.

2. **Violent Conflicts:** Many terrorist groups have emerged in the context of local or regional violent conflicts, some of which have served as a rallying cry for terrorist leaders. Prolonged unresolved conflicts often create conditions conducive to exploitation by terrorists. In addition, terrorist suicide campaigns often occur in the context of foreign occupation. It follows that successful conflict resolution efforts and attention to issues arising in the context of foreign occupation can help to reduce the prevalence of terrorism in the long term, such as resolving the Arab–Israeli conflict.
3. **Lack of Reliable Religious References:** Religious and fanatical discourse based interpretations and misinterpretations, contradicts Islam’s tolerance and is alien to the spirit of religion. The preservation of noble spiritual values is based on love, compassion, nonviolence and the acceptance of others.
4. The present intellectual vacuum, the absence of creativity, production, interest in Islamic cultural and ideological affairs, and the lack monitoring of intellectual currents has stifled the development of religious jurisprudence and fundamentalism and has led to the invasion of extremism in Islamic countries.
5. Further frustration in developing countries due to suffering from economic and social problems has affected the entire strata of society, especially youth. Thus, this frustration is exploited by terrorist groups,

to achieve their goals of recruiting youth into political and religious movements.

6. There is also sense of oppression due to double standards in international relations towards significant Arab and Muslim issues, such as the continuation of the Arabic-Israeli conflict and the occupation of Arab territories. This sense of oppression is in connection of the failure of the international community to take a decisive and firm stance in this regard.

The Egyptian Experience in Eliminating Terrorism

At the international level, Egypt was among the first countries to call for an international conference against terrorism in 1988. This was a result of its strong belief in the importance of the world's solidarity to combat this serious menace affecting the world in the past couple years.

At the national level, Egypt has adopted an integrated system against terrorism, including various security, legislative, social, political and economic aspects. This system is based on two main aspects:

- First: Security Confrontation (traditional method)
- Second: Correcting Extremist Concepts Resulting from Misconception (non-traditional method)

First: The first aspect is based on a number of points, mainly:

- Early detection of extremist organizations and persuading them to cooperate with security agencies.

- Providing legal support for security and technical measures relating to terrorism cases, and accelerating adjudication.
- Coordinate with countries that harbor terrorists to extradite them or cut off their means of communication. In this regard, several measures have implemented, such as the following:
 - Created a database that includes information on all extremist groups including leadership, terrorists and their strategy and method of operation.
 - Dried out terrorism's financial sources through multiple mechanisms aimed at stopping the flow of funds to individuals, organizations or countries.
 - Addressed and evaluated information of any size or level with the utmost level of urgency and seriousness.
 - Develop arming and training forces in various security agencies.
 - Use modern technology, including means of communication to monitor the terrorist groups.
 - Set up security and technical mechanisms to secure land, sea and air ports.

The second aspect, the non-traditional method included the adoption of the following:

- The transformation of ideology landscape through correcting extremists' misconceptions and misinterpretations.
- An ideological cyber strategy was employed to confront terrorism through the creation of a website of former extremist leaders who have changed their ideological misconceptions. This provided for exposure of their new ideas and refuted the violence and extremist system in a

moderate religious way. Such confrontation extended to address English speaking Muslim communities around the world, especially those witnessing bloody acts of violence.

In Egypt, Al-Azhar Al-Sharif and Dar al-Ifta have both played an important role in confronting terrorist organizations ideologically in more than one way, the most important of which are the following:

- **Ideological Observatory:** Al-Azhar Observatory was established to discover why people join terrorist groups such as Daesh. The observatory refutes the misinformation and fraud of religious propaganda and discourse belonging to extremist groups through evidence of how it has been taken out of context. The aim is to counter terrorist allegations in different languages.
- **Peace Convoys:** Peace convoys were launched worldwide to spread the culture of peace and correct the false conceptions, engagement with Islamic Arab elites according to their field of specialization; to dry out the roots of terrorist ideology through an integrated system including Islamic education, culture, legitimacy and tolerance.
- **International Conferences:** Al-Azhar has organized a number of conferences on Confronting extremism and terrorism, the most prominent of which was Al-Azhar International Conference on Confronting Extremism and Terrorism, held from 3-4 December 2014, with the participation of 120 countries and representatives of all Islamic sects and Christian communities. In its closing statement, the Conference pointed out that all armed groups that use violence are sinners ideologically. Scientists and thinkers therefore must take

responsibility for launching awareness programs and education courses to correct understanding of texts and concepts.

- **International Initiatives:** Dar al-Ifta launched global initiatives to combat the terrorist ideology of Daesh and to highlight the true image of Islam. Nearly a dozen global initiatives have been launched since last year, including the "Do not speak in my name" initiative that counter Islamophobia and address non-Arab and Muslim peoples. In addition, Dar al-Ifta discussed the possibility of providing many training programs for a number of European imams to deal with extremist fatwas.
- **Al Roya Magazine:** Dar al-Ifta launched an electronic magazine on the "InSight" channels in several languages in respond to the Da'ash's electronic magazine Dabeq". Moreover, it launched an observatory to monitor takfiri fatwas and extremist views, to provide comprehensive and reliable scientific responses to address and refute the allegations of these terrorist organizations.

Cooperation Strategies among states to combat terrorism and extremism:

International cooperation to confront terrorism has never been as necessary as it is now. Despite the security and military logic is very necessary, it plays a limited role in eliminating that scourge. Therefore, states must focus on preventive strategies to prevent youth from becoming tools to extremist and terrorist groups that become a clear and present danger throughout the world.

In adopting these strategies and Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) - on Youth, Peace and Security, states need to focus on the role of youth and women in eliminating that phenomenon. Hence today Youth suffer from the

consequences of absence of peace and security in many countries. Also we should not lose sight of the capacity of terrorist groups to recruit and use youth in conflict zones.

There is no doubt that governments have played a crucial role in the implementation of international agreements and treaties that have hampered the spread of terrorism. The below are important recommendations that must be taken into consideration by states to develop clear and direct strategies to combat terrorism:

Recommendations:

- Cooperation and coordination between states, particularly neighboring countries which suffer from similar or common terrorist offences.
- Development and strengthening of systems related to the detection of transportation, import and export of the stockpiling of weapons, ammunitions and explosives. In addition, the strengthening of trans-border and custom controls in order to intercept transfers of weaponry from one state to another.
- Development and strengthening systems related to surveillance procedures, securing borders, land, sea and air passages in order to prevent infiltration.
- Strengthening systems to ensure safety and protection of public and vital facilities.
- Encouraging coordination of security information and efforts with relative state intelligence organizations to expose the objectives of terrorist groups, and in turn thwarting their growth and revealing the extent of their danger to security and stability.

- Establishment of a regional database for states to collect, analyze data on terrorist elements, groups, movements and organizations in order to monitor the developments of terrorism and counter terrorism efforts. States, should update and exchange information with competent authorities.
- Ensure effective projection of witnesses and information sources of terrorist crimes.
- Establish cooperation networks with relevant authorities and individuals for combating terrorism through the inclusion of appropriate incentives and guarantees to encourage providing information and tips on terrorist efforts to support detection and seizure procedures.
- The cooperation information exchange among states on:
 - The activities and crimes committed by terrorist groups, their leaders and their sources of finance.
 - The means and utilization of communication to spread their propaganda, their operations, logistics, behaviors, and the movement of their leaders.

Undoubtedly, the will and efforts of the international community to eliminate and defeat terrorism is the most important aspect for the recommendations mentioned above.