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DIALOGUE STRATEGY FOR ANTI-EXTREMISM



IMCTC hosted Dr. Abdel Moneim Suleiman Al-Mushawah, researcher in digital counterterrorism and Head of the Sakinah Program for a keynote lecture conducted in the IMCTC Headquarters in Riyadh on 31 May 2021, featuring **DIALOGUE STRATEGY FOR CONFRONTING VIOLENT EXTREMIST IDEOLOGY ON THE INTERNET**. Dr. Al-Mushawah discussed the use of the Internet by terrorist organizations in fueling extremism and terrorism, confrontation methods, the international associated context, the characteristics and impact of cyber-bred terrorism, and the experience of the Al-Sakina Program for constructive dialogue, which is a Saudi campaign affiliated with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs...

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AMBASSADOR OF NIGERIA TO KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA PAYS VISIT TO IMCTC



The **IMCTC** Secretary-General, Major-General Mohammed Saeed Al-Moghedi, received Ambassador of Nigeria to Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Yahya Lawal alongside the visiting delegation on June 15, 2021.

The two parties discussed avenues of cooperation between IMCTC and the Republic of Nigeria. The delegation was provided with a detailed explanation of the counterterrorism efforts in the four key domains, and the productive impact on coordinating and promoting the efforts of the IMCTC member countries. Major-General Al-Moghedi further explained that IMCTC represents a holistic and important system that seeks to enhance cooperation among the IMCTC member countries, based on the values of legitimacy, independence, engagement, and coordination, while streamlining the IMCTC counterterrorism efforts in concert with international systems, norms, and laws. 🌸

SIX GROUPS RECRUITED BY TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS



IMCTC in Riyadh hosted Al-Jasser to deliver a keynote lecture, featuring **COMBATING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE**, which provided the analysis of the individuals most targeted for recruitment by extremist organizations and treatment approaches to free them from the clutches of extremism...

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UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS ON COMBATING TERRORIST FINANCING



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MEDIA DISCOURSE OF TERRORIST GROUPS



IMCTC organized a keynote lecture, featuring **ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA DISCOURSE OF TERRORIST GROUPS** by Colonel Dr. Abdullah Muhammad Shadi, Delegate of Yemen to IMCTC. It addressed the characteristics of terrorist discourse, the impact of the theory of media frameworks alongside associated elements in interpreting the media message of terrorist groups...

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DIALOGUE STRATEGY FOR ANTI-EXTREMISM TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS GO AHEAD OF SOME COUNTRIES IN USING THE INTERNET



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Dr. Al-Mushawah discussed the use of the Internet by terrorist organizations in fueling extremism and terrorism, confrontation methods, the international associated context, the characteristics and impact of cyber-bred terrorism, and the experience of the Al-Sakina Program for constructive dialogue, which is a Saudi campaign affiliated with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, which conducts digital dialogue with individuals of extremist ideology, and those who have propensities towards supporting, espousing and sympathizing with terrorist acts. It makes itself available on various websites, forums, and groups, and have a serious dialogue with extremists who write anonymously on the Internet, which is carried out by an expert team of interdisciplinary backgrounds.

Reality

Al-Mushawah emphasized that interpreting reality and learning from mistakes is one of the key elements of success in counter-ing cyber-fueled terrorism; terrorists are like-minded, despite the glaringly obvious difference between terrorist organizations. Whoever reads reality can anticipate the future of terrorism and associated methodology.

In monitoring the historical trajectory and chronicle of terrorist use of the Internet, Al-Mushawah remarks that 1995 witnessed the first individual use and e-mail correspondence by terrorists, which predates the introduction of the Internet to some countries. In 1997, the first website of a terrorist group was established, and in 1999, the activity of students sympathetic to terrorist organizations, such as electronic jihad, came into play. In 2000, Al-Qaeda launched its website **MILESTONES OF JIHAD**, then the websites of terrorist organizations came flooding into reality in 2001. 2003

was the golden year for Al-Qaeda on the Internet, ballooning and snowballing into wider territories and more robust organization.

Nature of Cyber-Fueled Terrorism

Al-Mushawah also discussed tracking, monitoring and analyzing the nature of cyber terrorism, stating that terrorist organizations deal with the media in an organized, fast and advanced manner. Their presence on the Internet often precedes their terrorist operations, and many of them may not have advanced weapons, but most of them have high communication and know-how skills.

Cyber terrorism has been characterized by its continued rapid development, adapting to the environment and the pressures encountered, the type of terminology used, and the driving arguments. It is concerned with religious legal arguments and emotional aspects, mental and psychological aspects. Terrorists have fed on the rapid spread of the Internet and the nature of the transcontinental network. They have employed it in mobilization, recruitment, and training. They have even transferred the Al-Battar Camp onto the Internet, making it a hub for training in improvising explosives and carrying out terrorist operations.

Terrorists found in the dark web a means of disguise and sought in the open world of the Internet not only to attract supporters and followers but also to create big influx of supporters and sympathizers for them, even if they do not join their organizations physically. They aimed to agitate and create an emotionally charged atmosphere through a highly repeated broadcast of materials that serve their goals, and a diversification of the presentation method, including books, magazines, bulletins, audio tapes, and video footages. This means that their work was not randomly orchestrated; rather, it was a teamwork based on substantial expertise and the development of performance.

Impact of Cyber-Fueled Terrorism

Al-Mushawah explained the impact of cyber-terrorism, remarking that the Internet was a key factor in attracting or grooming about

70% of terrorists for recruitment between 2003-2017, and it became a major or auxiliary factor in 85% of terrorist operations outside conflict areas in 2017. With this coming into, the world feels it is a must-do action to confront this scourge.

In 2013, the United Nations Task Force on Implementation of Counter-Terrorism Measures called for the use of the Internet to counter cyber-terrorism and stated that discussions taking place on the Internet provide opportunities to present opposing viewpoints, or engage in constructive discussion, which may lead to the dissuasion of potential supporters of the terrorist organizations from engaging in such activities.

It is possible to put forward counter-ideas based on well-established facts in discussion forums, photos, and videos on the Internet. To ensure the effectiveness of the ideas presented, sympathy can be shown for the underlying issues that contribute to extremism, such as the political, social, and economic conditions, and highlighting alternatives to achieve the desired results, without resorting to violent methods. Strategic messages containing ideas against terrorist propaganda can also be broadcast on the Internet in various languages to reach a wider and geographically more diverse audience.

The US Department of State's Center for Strategic Counter-Terrorism Communications provides an example of an interagency initiative aimed at curbing the turn to extremism and violence by timely detection, including of extremist propaganda on the Internet, and promptly responding to it with specific counter-rhetoric goal, through a wide range of communication technologies, especially digital tools.

Confrontation Patterns and Models

Providing a detailed explanation of the patterns of ideological confrontation with terrorism, Al-Mushawah divided it into two types: the primary effective confrontation, which is mostly an official government in which governments wage a battle of attrition against this type of terrorism, by nipping it in the bud. The other type is the deep confrontation, through direct communication and interaction with the targets, which are mostly voluntary and slow, yet effective and useful.

Al-Mushawah presented various global models of institutions engaged in the ideological confrontation of terrorism, such as IMCTC, the International Coalition against ISIS, Al-Azhar Observatory, Sawab Center, Ideological War Center, ETIDAL Center, Sakina Campaign, and the Center of Excellence for Cyber Security at Naif University.

Sakinah Experience

Al-Mushawah presented the experience of the Sakinah Program based on direct dialogue, refutation of suspicions, scientific au-

thentication, documentation, and verification, knowledge building, creating a current and public opinion within the target environment, and laying bare such allegations by solid research studies cogent information. The program carried out many dialogues between 2003 and 2017, which included authentication and correction, and the method of direct dialogue, which was effective, deep, and influential.

The program conducted six thousand dialogues, 25% of which led to reviews of different levels, and despite this success, it remains a limited success without ambition, and it requires an administrative, knowledge and integrated research system with a long breath, possessing skills, and being patient. The program was appreciated and praised by the international community. Its results were praised by the Senate Committee on National Security and Governmental Affairs in the US Congress in Confronting Extremism and Terrorism, in its session, in which it discussed the impact of the Internet in spreading terrorism. It includes a mature cognitive content, increases the space for individual independent reasoning, and allows the possibility of learning about and identifying terrorists, network of relationships, measuring associated threats, dismantling ideologies, and wielding control over them.

The program conducted six thousand dialogues; 25% reviewed different levels. However, it remains a limited success without ambition; it requires an administrative, knowledge and integrated research system with a long breath, developing skills and patience. Highly appreciated by the international community, the results were also valued by the Senate Committee on National Security and Governmental Affairs in the US Congress in Confronting Extremism and Terrorism.

A study published by the US Military Academy at West Point, by Christopher Boucek, stated that the success achieved by the Sakina Program in confronting the extremists and takfirists' use of the Internet to spread their venous ideologies and threatening societies arouses great international interest, and can be a useful lesson for other nations and peoples wishing to curb extremism, and protect their youth from the influence of extremist groups and corrupt calls for a jihad that was not encouraged by scholars. The success prompted Britain, Algeria, Kuwait, and the UAE to express their desire to establish similar programs.

The book LIMITS OF JIHAD published in Paris in French by the orientalist Jean-Pierre Filiu, adviser to former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, called for the generalization of the Sakina Program to better monitor global websites, as it is a good way to enlighten those lost and led astray and prevent their recruitment. By the same token, a research study published by Foreign Affairs considered it a model and a source of inspiration for similar efforts to prevent cyber-fueled terrorism. 🌸



EXPERIENCES OF COMBATING VIOLENT EXTREMISM ANALYSED BY DR. ABDULLAH AL-JASSER

RECRUITMENT OF SIX GROUPS OF YOUTH IS TARGETED BY TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS



Terrorist organizations go to great lengths to vehemently attract and embroil youth into the arena of terrorist operations; a terrorist organization hardly operates without online cells to recruit youth. Terrorist cells make up 70% of youth attraction methods. Many of such youth lay bare the mendacity and deception of these organizations and are looking for a way out of this inferno. As such, a question mark remains hovering: What are the characteristics of such youth who respond to terrorist organizations? How can they be freed from their clutches and reintegrate them into their society as productive members?

Experience and Expertise

Dr. Abdullah Saad Al-Jasser has a substantial experience that best helps to provide answers to the previously worded questions. With his PhD degree awarded by the American University of Illinois that goes back to 28 years. For 14 years, Al-Jasser has been researching into youth issues, including rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees of terrorist organizations.

On June 10 of 2021, IMCTC in Riyadh hosted Al-Jasser to deliver a keynote lecture, featuring COMBATING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE, which provided the analysis of the

individuals most targeted for recruitment by extremist organizations and treatment approaches to free them from the clutches of extremism.

Al-Jasser highlighted that Al-Qaeda and ISIS are on the lookout for youth models for recruitment. Experiences show that they avoid individuals who do not offer subservience after close investigation and scrutiny. Therefore, they search for youth and adolescents. Al-Jasser also added that the target individuals of extremist organizations have an energy that seeks guidance, as they want to understand who they are and what their roles in life are.

Target Categories

Target individuals fall into various groups. Al-Jasser divides target individuals into six main categories, each with defining characteristics and advantages:

1) Revenge Seeker

They see themselves as victims of society; they believe that there are external factors that bring them unhappiness and failure, look for to resentment or anger. Terrorist organizations seek to recruit such individuals, give them the opportunity to give vent to their retaliatory attitudes, and use them on two levels. First, disseminating ideologies of a given terrorist organization; second, carrying out terrorist acts. One would

put chains in traffic tunnels outside cities to cause fatal accidents for pedestrians.

2) Prestige Seeker

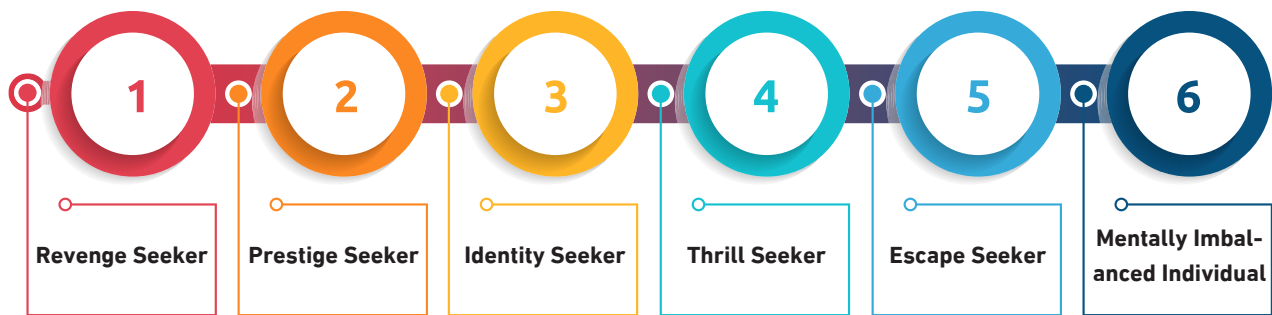
They see that their society does not understand or appreciate them duly; they believe that they have high abilities not positively reflected in their value in their societies. Their capabilities are often less than their ambitions. Terrorist groups capture such people and give them prestigious titles, such as a prince, a leader, or a mujahid to make them feel their high status, albeit honorific yet meaningless titles.

3) Identity Seeker

Such individuals evince keen interest in joining a group or organization to be part of an entity. The sense of belonging is a natural and innate need, and the identity seeker needs to belong to a group because this affiliation determines one's function and one's activity in society. Often, such people grow up in families that do not make them feel their worth, and do not share their interests; therefore, they feel that their presence or absence makes no difference; terrorist groups capture such individuals and give them a sense of belonging.

4) Thrill Seeker

Such individuals are bloated with energy and vitality, seeking to prove their mas-



Targeted Categories for Recruitment by Extremist Organizations

culinity through resounding and arduous achievements, or get engaged in an adventure; they are ready to be embroiled and involved in the most notorious problems and the riskiest confrontations, once they gain excitement, as is the case in dramas. For this reason, terrorist organizations address such individuals with exciting films about their operations, the alleged heroism of their members, and their claimed power! The thrill seeker is bored at home, always looking for a new experience or adventure, and is often middle-class, with no conscious vision of one's future. While rehabilitating one individual of the said category, Al-Jasser was told that he voluntarily joined the terrorist organization he used to work for without being recruited by attractive methods.

5) Escape Seeker

Individuals falling into this category seek to escape from family or community-triggered problems that they cannot solve or face; they get involved in new experiences, even if they are part of an extremist group. Al-Jasser spells out that such individuals make up the bulk of youth who join terrorist organizations. A 22-year-old youth went to a conflict area to escape from a family problem; his sister left the house and did not return, and society blames and stigmatizes the family. The young man saw that by going to the areas of conflict, he would be martyred and purify the reputation of his family, which had been destroyed by the escape of his sister. Upon his return, and during the rehabilitation sessions, he told the young man that he was looking for a legal suicide! It was later found that his sister was ill and had bipolar disorder, and she was treated. Another young man narrated that he went to a conflict area to escape the problems between his mother and his father, who had married another woman and mistreated his mother; she showed him disobedience. The young man saw that his parents were

disobedient to Allah and would be sent to Hell; he imagined that by going to conflict areas and his martyrdom might intercede for them.

6) Mentally Imbalanced Individual

Such individuals suffer from psychotic neurotic disorders, which only appear when they are exposed to stressful situations. They are often in the early stages of disruption when terrorist organizations recruit and use them for bombing operations.

Lifejacket

Al-Jasser also discussed methods to rescue those decoyed by extremist organizations, highlighting that most of the individuals lured into going out to conflict areas discover the false allegations and misinformation they received. Over time, they start to fidget about looking for a way out of the predicament they have slipped into, looking desperately for a lifeline to help them sneak out.

Helpful methods vary; primary ones draw on family care. In most cases, the relationship of a young man with one's family is bad, and one finds no support or aid in one's family. Some families may be excused for their helplessness to meet the needs of their children.

Family care begins in recovering deceived youth, by learning about their children abroad and communicating with them, then creating a channel of communication with the situation while abroad. At this stage, various social media are used to reach the target group and provide a safe and accessible means of communication that can be utilized according to the target countries. The follow-up of the return procedures stage comes next in close coordination between the various agencies concerned with a safe and reliable return; most of those involved in crimes are difficult to return because of their intense fear, or because they like their new situation.

Upon successful return, they are provided with primary care in the country according to the two stages of diagnosis, then various services are provided to them according to need, including ideological, mental, social, health, educational, economic, and professional fields. At this stage, it is important to pay attention to the fact that terrorist organizations will seek to recover these repentant people and put pressure on them; therefore, their problems must be resolved; they must be integrated into their societies, and their follow-up must be continued.

Conclusion

The floor was open for robust discussion. Dr. Zayed Al-Harthy, Delegate of the ideological domain of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to IMCTC, pointed to other ideological, social, and economic aspects, in addition to the mental aspects addressed by Al-Jasser, which explain why such young people join terrorist organizations. These aspects must be considered to reintegrate such youth into society. In this regard, the experience of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in rehabilitating repentant terrorists and integrating them into society stands out, beyond compare. It is a rich and successful experience that can be made a model for other countries to follow suit.

Brigadier General Rashid Al-Dhaheri, Delegate of the United Arab Emirates to IMCTC, put forward a question: What are the protection methods for youth from the extremist ideology promoted by social media? On his side, Al-Jasser replied that confronting this phenomenon requires an initiative not a reaction; young people take the initiative themselves, as they know better what their peers think of. Beyond a shadow of doubt, social media is the preferred arena for youth, and we must put into action attractive proactive initiatives, spearheaded by proactive and informed youth. If they believe in an idea, they live it up. 🌟

UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS ON COMBATING AND CRIMINALIZING TERRORIST FINANCING



Money per se is the lifeblood of terrorist organizations, as they instrumentalize it to purchase and funnel weapons, manage their payrolls, and finance all their subversive activities. Terrorist organizations do not spare any effort to attain money, including looting resources, drug trafficking, kidnapping civilians for ransom and other infamous methods. The liquidity that characterizes the global financial system has provided an opportunity for terrorist groups to instrumentalize official financial systems to move their money.

While being fully aware of such illegal activities, the UN Security Council stood up to it and issued several resolutions to combat and criminalize terrorist financing. To view the UN Security Council resolutions, IMCTC invited Mr. Suleiman Ali Al-Zaben, Director of the Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Department at the Central Bank of Saudi Arabia, June 23, 2021. To this effect, IMCTC hosted and organized a keynote lecture, featuring IMPLEMENTATION OF RELEVANT SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS ON COMBATING AND CRIMINALIZING TERRORIST FINANCING.

Mr. Al-Zaben analyzed the means of freezing the funds included, the types of such funds, the procedures that financial institutions must follow accordingly, the penalties applicable in the event of non-compliance, and the substantial experience of the Saudi Central Bank in implementing such resolutions and procedures.

STRICT COMMITMENTS

Mr. Al-Zaben indicated that the Security Council resolutions on combating and criminalizing terrorism terrorist financing hold all countries obliged and bound to freezing the funds and assets of any individual, group or entity associated with terrorist activities, terrorist organizations, or terrorist financing, with no fail or delay. The Security Council Resolutions obligate the world countries to

take all measures and procedures that would prevent any funds or other assets from being made available for such persons, groups, or entities, from any person, group, or entity within the Saudi territory or under own jurisdiction.

Mr. Al-Zaben reviewed the Security Council Resolutions on combating and criminalizing terrorism and terrorist financing, highlighting the consolidated list of the Security Council Committee (1267, 1989 & 2253) related to the ISIS and Al-Qaeda terrorists, and all other associated individuals, groups, institutions, and entities. The Security Council Resolution No. (1988) and associated addenda and appendices, relating to the Taliban movement was also reviewed along with the Security Council Resolution No. (1373) targeting anyone who provides, collects, or legitimizes the provision and collection of funds, by any direct or indirect means, or who attempts to do so with the intention of using them to commit a terrorist crime, or being aware that they will be used in whole or in part for this act, or for the benefit of a terrorist organization, or a terrorist person for any purpose whatsoever.

The instructions issued to implement the UN Security Council Resolutions emphasized the freezing of any funds, economic resources, or property owned, controlled, or acquired in whole or in part, directly or without prior notice, with no fail or delay (within hours), and without warning, by freezing any funds, economic resources, or property owned, controlled, or held in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, by any person, group or entity included in the Consolidated List of the Security Council Committee or the Security Council Resolution No. (1988) Committee or any person acting on behalf of, or at the direction of, or directly or indirectly owned or controlled by, a person, group or entity listed by the Security Council.

The UN Security Council Resolutions prohibit the provision of any funds, economic resources, or property to any listed person, group, or entity, and prohibit the provision of any form of financial or other services directly or indirectly to these persons or for their benefit, except after the Security Council committees have been raised the name to the security or obtaining a previously reasoned permit from the Central Bank of Saudi Arabia.

The UN Security Council Resolutions require the close follow-up to update the data of those listed on the United Nations lists daily, by referring to the website of the Consolidated List Committee, or the website of the Security Council Resolution No. (1988) Committee, containing the updated lists of the names of the listed persons.

The UN Security Council Resolutions permit allowing the addition of any payments made in favor of those listed by individuals, groups, institutions or entities to the suspended accounts provided that such payments remain frozen, and that they are reported to the Saudi Central Bank.

WIDE SELECTION

The UN Security Council Resolutions specified the funds that must be frozen as any money, which is an expanded term that includes assets, economic resources, or property of any kind, no matter how obtained they are and of whatever value or type, whether material or intangible, tangible or intangible, movable or immovable, as well as documents, instruments, documents or instruments of whatever form, including electronic or digital systems and bank credits that denote ownership or interest therein, including but not limited to all types of cheques, remittances, shares, securities, bonds, promissory notes and letters of credit, and any interest, profits or other incomes accruing from or generated by these funds or other assets, whether inside or outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The freezing directive includes the funds owned or controlled, in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, by the person concerned, in such a way that makes the freezing directive apply, for example, to businesses controlled by the listed person, or controlled directly or indirectly, for example by children minors, spouses, shell companies used by the listed person, joint ventures in which they are involved, and companies with complex or ambiguous ownership structures with the aim of concealing control or ownership of a listed persons.

The UN Security Council Resolutions include funds that are jointly owned, controlled, or held jointly by the listed person, group, or entity and a non-listed person, group, or entity.

SAUDI EXPERIENCE

Based on the Saudi anti-money laundering and terrorist financing law, the Central Bank of Saudi Arabia must be notified of any freezing within five working days, maximum as of the date of making the freezing effective, with information on the status of the funds, any measures taken in this regard, the nature and quantity of the frozen funds, and any other relevant information. Financial institutions must ensure that the information they provide is accurate. If it becomes clear to a financial institution that it does not hold or manage any target funds, it should inform the Saudi Central Bank immediately if one of its former clients, or any transient client it has dealt with, is on the CFT list. If the freezing order is lifted, the Saudi Central Bank must be informed of the lifting of

the freeze within a maximum of five working days from the date of lifting such freezing, providing it with information regarding the status of funds, any measures taken in their regard, the nature and quantity of funds from which such freezing was lifted, and any other relevant information.

Mr. Al-Zaben discussed the work of the Saudi Central Bank in verifying the compliance of financial institutions with the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions related to combating and criminalizing terrorism and terrorist financing. Mr. Al-Zaben further explained that the Bank does this through field visits, and evaluates the financial institution's commitment to local and international ban resolutions, the UN Security Council Resolutions on anti-terrorist financing and counterterrorism, and methods of applying the penalties on anyone who has neglected the freezing or the freezing order on persons to whom the methods of implementing Security Council resolutions apply, and anyone who makes available funds or provides financial or other related services to the listed person or for own benefit, or who does not disclose the information, or willfully disclose incorrect information, negligently, or delay in providing the information.

DISCUSSIONS

Into the discussion opened for the floor, Brigadier-General Rashid Mohammed Al-Dhaheeri, Delegate of the UAE, inquired about the possibility of including those listed on the national list to combat terrorist financing in a country to the list of those on the international list of the UN Security Council, and about the opportunities to control the exploitation of electronic currencies in financing terrorism. Mr. Al-Zein, replied that the inclusion in the national and international regulations to combat terrorist financing is in place and enforceable. The United Nations addresses countries to add persons, organizations or bodies that have been included by the United Nations to their national list.

As such, any country or a regional organization can request the United Nations to include persons, bodies, or organizations in its list to combat terrorist financing, and provides justification for such a request, and the United Nations will accordingly look into such a request.

Mr. Al-Zaben added that the new currencies impose a challenge to efforts put in combating terrorist financing: electronic currencies are treated as paper currencies, but virtual currencies are different. Some countries have recognized them. Fears increase as they will be used to finance terrorism.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in 2019 recommended a set of measures related to combating the exploitation of virtual currencies in financing terrorism, but the rapid development in the issuance of this type of currency complicates the problem.

Dr. Mohammed Sulaiman Al-Subaihi, the media delegate of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to IMCTC, inquired about the problem of money laundering, the amount of which is greater than that of terrorist financing, and the method how such efforts can be made to combat money-laundering.

Mr. Al-Zaben replied that money laundering may be linked to terrorist financing, and it is a big problem that requires substantial expertise. The level of proof in combating money laundering, investigation, and follow-up procedures, and uncovering tactics requires building expertise and using advanced technologies. 🌟

MEDIA DISCOURSE OF TERRORIST GROUPS

FEATURES, FRAMEWORKS, AND CONFRONTATION METHODS



Terrorist organizations established platforms on the Internet and various social media to communicate their media discourse to the targets, attract them, gain their attention, and recruit many misguided people. Despite their different ideological orientations, such terrorist organizations adopt a similar types of media discourse, based on justifying violence on religious, national, and racist grounds. They drum up for an existential crisis that threatens their survival and continuity, and violence is the only way to prevent this.

IMCTC organized a keynote lecture, June 24, 2021, featuring ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA DISCOURSE OF TERRORIST GROUPS by Colonel Dr. Abdullah Muhammad Shadi, Delegate of Yemen to IMCTC. The lecture addressed the characteristics of terrorist discourse, the impact of the theory of media frameworks alongside associated elements in interpreting the media message of terrorist groups, the key groups affected by such discourse. The lecture also highlighted the elements of the media discourse against or confronting the terrorist discourse, with telling examples of analyzing the media discourse of ISIS.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TERRORIST DISCOURSE

Dr. Shadi pointed out that the discourse of terrorist groups is not directed at a specific group, with specific ideologies; rather, it is a general discourse that targets all Muslims of the world and uses the rhetoric and syntax of the true religion to be attractive, especially to those who are disillusioned and frustrated by the bad situation they are decoyed, orchestrated to agitate against the authorities. For instance, Al-Qaeda terrorists designed and chanted their media discourse, bearing the slogans of DEFENDING THE NATION and PROTECTING RELIGION, using emotive language that seeks to communicate their messages to the targets in an effective manner.

The media discourse of media groups combines different types of rhetoric fueled by two key ideologies: it employs historical, religious, cultural, political, and social visions, ideas, and texts;

second, it presents itself as a prerequisite condition for achieving freedom and a proper return to religion.

It is a type of discourse that holds itself responsible for defending the entire nation, without being held accountable or responsible or even brought to book to involve the recipient or the audience, and to place a burden and responsibility on them outside of their competence. It is a closed circular discourse, that starts and ends with religion, sanctifying and glorifying history to lure the target audience, tamper with their ideas, and serve own interests.

THEORY OF MEDIA FRAMEWORKS

Dr. Shadi analyzed the impact of the theory of media frameworks on crafting the media message of terrorist groups, and framing their ideologies on important issues, considering the public's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to such issues to influence opinions, ideas, and beliefs.

The impact of framing media messages is not achieved only by highlighting certain aspects of events or facts; rather, it is enhanced by ignorance on the side of the communicator, as framing the terrorist message includes the communicator, the text of the message, the audience of the recipients, and the cultural and social framework.

The media frameworks for the discourse of terrorist groups are based - as on several elements:

1. **Selection:** the person communicating in the terrorist discourse selects some elements, information, and visual images that deemed worthy of focusing on.
2. **Highlighting and Polishing:** the target issue acquires the largest share of the available media sources, and it is the dominant issue. The official media can assist, intentionally or unintentionally, drawing attention to the importance of media control, especially after any terrorist act.
3. **Social Cues:** The formation of media frameworks for terrorist messages and texts depends on the symbols, prevalent

meanings, and social cues used by the media to disseminate and promote target ideas and opinions.

4. **Exclusion:** removing certain information that may affect the public's interpretation of events, by ignoring certain news, or dropping some explanations of the event, especially suicide operations.
5. **Repetition:** it means the repetition of displaying some words and pictures to influence the public's awareness of certain events; terrorist groups aim to paint a mental picture of such events to serve own interests.
6. **Tone of Media Coverage:** It defines the nature of media coverage, the tendencies of this medium, and attitudes towards media content. It usually uses influential religious words.

PEOPLE IMPACTED BY TERRORIST DISCOURSE

Dr. Shadi turned the spotlight on the key groups affected by the media discourse of terrorist groups:

- **Seekers of Revenge or Justice:** people who consider themselves part of the group of oppressed who have been or are being repressed.
- **Identity Seekers:** Those who feel isolated or alienated from society seek a new identity and evince a great willingness to adopt extremist ideologies.
- **Salvation Seekers:** those who adopt the ideologies of extremist movements, believing that they will mitigate their past sins to be used by terrorist groups to carry out suicide operations.
- **Seekers for Romantic Relationships:** most of such people are girls who suffer from an emotional vacuum and are targeted by terrorist organizations for recruitment.

COUNTER-MEDIA DISCOURSE

Dr. Shadi discussed mechanisms for the media discourse that confronts terrorism. such methods are driven by the government, security men, citizens, society, scholars, thinkers, civil institutions, traditional and modern media. The key counter-media discourse methods include:

1. Security and media control of the situation, and ownership of the security and media initiative, when a terrorist attack is carried out.
2. Dissemination of correct information on terrorism to educate and sensitize citizens about taking preventive measures, and

not giving the terrorist media the opportunity to exaggerate the events and communicate false information, disseminating the views of the terrorists' families regarding the crimes committed by their children,

3. Highlighting the images of terrorist crimes and their hideous reality and shedding light on the innocent victims of terrorism to influence public opinion.
4. Renewing the language of media discourse and correcting misperceptions about given concepts.

TELLING EXAMPLES OF TERRORIST DISCOURSE

Dr. Shadi presented an analysis of a sample of the ISIS magazine (Arabic). The results of the analysis revealed that the said magazine focuses on religious and political ideological propaganda by 31%, and on public statements and messages by 22%, which is consistent with the objectives of psychological warfare to convince and influence the targets.

The magazine keenly concealed the identity of the communicator in most of the pages. The key ISIS leaders made up 31%, while 41% was anonymous. The magazine targeted a global audience by 46%, 28% for the Arab audience, and 7% for the Muslim audience. This means that ISIS addresses the global audience to gain support.

As for the reference frameworks for the content of the magazine, the religious frameworks did not exceed 22%, the political frameworks made up 28%, and the religious political frameworks accounted for 35%. This means that the reference frameworks in the ISIS discourse depend mainly on religious and political frameworks by up to 85%.

Dr. Shadi presented the results of analyzing the ISIS speeches on YouTube channel. Hate topics dominated the content on YouTube. The call for revenge, exclusion and killing topped the media discourse on YouTube at 37%, calls for terrorism 11%, excommunication 9%, hate and violence 7%, and insults, slander, and defamation 6%. This confirms what many research studies have indicated: terrorist groups seek revenge and murder. The duration of most of the video footages published on YouTube did not exceed two minutes in 87% of the total published material.

This means that the message or media discourse is largely supported using evidence, proofs, and evidence to be effective. The accusations also dominated the channel's media discourse by 94%. ❁



HOW DO WE WIN WAR ON EXTREMISM? AMERICAN VISION



Extremism is the incubator in which violence snowballs into reality, and it is the first stepping stone on the road leading terrorism. The eradication of terrorism must begin with combating extremism, which is the source on which terrorism feeds and balloons into a breeding ground. The book by FARAH ANWAR PANDITH addresses this key issue. PANDITH is widely known expert in countering violent extremism. She is an American Muslim who immigrated in her childhood from Kashmir to the USA. Although she confines this book to Muslim societies, we find that her other recent writings have addressed the far-right in the USA.

AUTHOR'S POSITION

The author was the first special representative of the US State Department to Muslim societies, under US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry (2009-2014). Under President George W. Bush, she served as Director of Regional Middle East Initiatives at the National Security Council, and as Head of the USAID Office for Asia and the Near East. She then served on the Homeland Security Advisory Board between 2015-2017. She also chaired the Task Force on Countering Violent Extremism.

She now works as a writer and media commentator for major media organizations, such as CNN, BBC, and Fox News. She writes regularly for the most famous American newspapers, such as The New York Times and The Washington Post. It advises government and civil society on countering violent extremism. She is widely known to the political elite in the Democratic and Republican parties. Her ideas are critically important because they may turn into real policies.

PLAGUE OF EXTREMISM

The author describes extremism as a rapidly spreading plague, infecting individuals alongside entire communities, destroying lives, families, and disrupting the global economy. She hopes that her book will offer a better way for governments and civil society to better help youth prevent extremism by resolving their identity crisis and building a safer and more stable world.

The author promotes her approach to combating violent extremism that she calls open force, which she considers a quantum leap, based on her visits to eighty countries, hundreds of interviews she conducted in various parts of the world, and her high-level experience in the Bush and Obama administrations. The author calls for a shift in the American approach to combating extremism, bringing together the expertise of diplomats, institutional leaders, mental health experts, sociologists, businesspeople, local communities, and most of all the world's youth themselves.

The author laments US policy that it has spent billions of dollars since the 9/11 Attacks 2001, attempting to defeat terrorist organizations. Despite this, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups remain a major threat, and in some ways the threat has only gotten notoriously worse. She describes her country's policies that will not reduce extremist violence but may make it easier for terrorists to spread their hateful ideas, recruit new members, and carry out dangerous attacks.

The author warns her fellow decision-makers in the United States, stating that [We are losing our war on extremism, and I find this tragic. We are facing intractable problems, and after more than a decade of government efforts and visiting hundreds of societies in

the world, I well understand that curbing extremist recruitment is one of the most important policies. The right solutions will enable us to contain this threat, in a short time, and at a relatively low cost]. The author adds: [We have fought extremism in the first place by attempting to prevent groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS from instrumentalizing military tools, but our approach to stopping recruitment has been incomplete, fragmented, underfunded, and ineffective.

We were content with small-scale, one-off campaigns, and did not build the infrastructure that we need to win the war of ideas. Military action is important, we need to hit extremist groups hard, but ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab and others specifically target Muslim youth. If we can stop or slow down recruitment, we can defeat the extremist threat].

PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

The author believes that the identity problem is the root cause of extremism: [Since the 9/11 Attacks 2001, Muslim youth have experienced an identity crisis. Imagine that you grew up as a digital citizen and saw negative images of followers of your religion, culture, and heritage, everywhere you look in the global media! This is what Muslim youth lived through, unlike their parents, who have come to believe that America and the West are at war against Islam, and that their personal identity is at risk. Religious practice and the traditional way of life adopted by their families, teachers and imams are inefficient.

Identity and sense of belonging have become the main component or the common reality that binds the experience of Muslim youth around the world, in the era following the 9-11 Attacks 2001. The questions posed by Muslim millennials in non-Muslim majority countries were like Spain and Italy, akin to those put forward by their counterparts in Morocco or Malaysia. That was remarkable. However, the US government encountered difficulties in determining this connection; they tend to segment their interest according to region. However, the culture war does not limit itself to a region or a country.

The media constantly reinforce the notion of US vis-à-vis THEM. This is what peer groups and everyday actions do. Muslim youth spend most of their time on the Internet like other youth, as they migrate to this virtual world in search of religious identity, and an opportunity to meet like-minded friends. Unfortunately, they are

picked up by extremists to give easy answers, use the latest trends and technology to connect with them and get them hooked. What is the solution then? The author replies: [We need daily contact with the local Muslim communities around the world. We need to look for broader trends in the emotional and intellectual lives of Muslim youth and increase our support for influential ones].

BLAZE A TRAIL

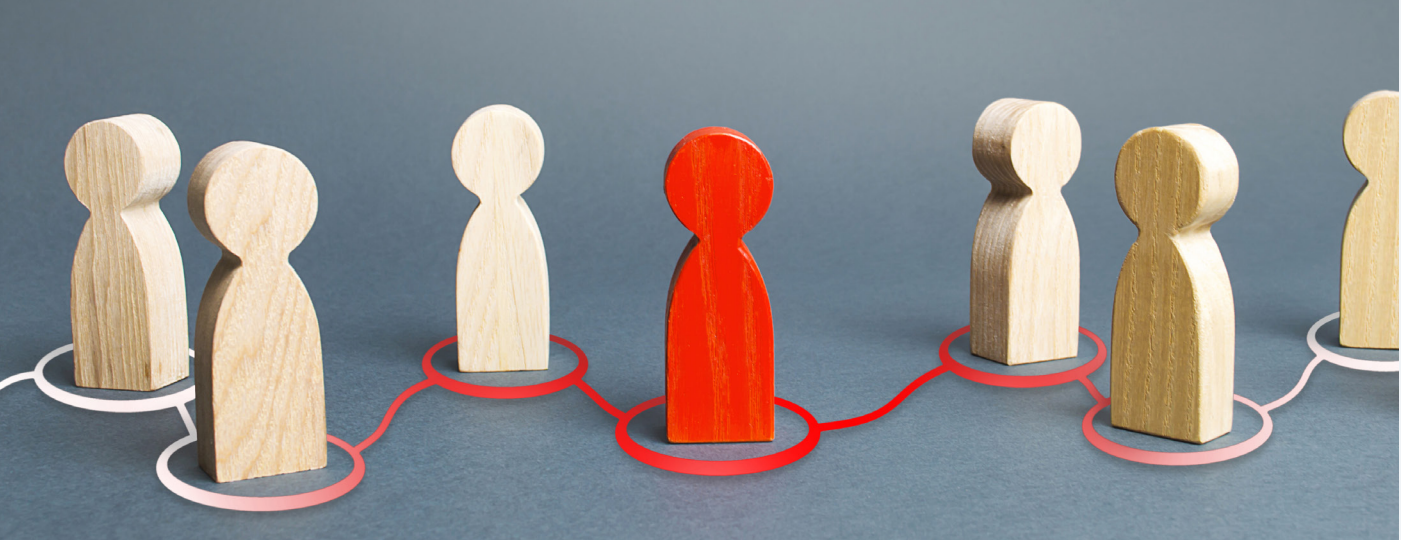
The author states extremism as a fast-moving, practical threat, and governments must become fast-moving and practical. Great and feasible ideas should be sought and put into action to see ow they pay off, and creative risks should be taken.

We need to unify the actions of governments related to the ideological and cultural battle, and to adopt a single comprehensive strategy. In crafting this strategy, we need to break out of current practice and consult with a range of experts, psychologists, ethnographers, technologists, social media experts, cultural activists, communications experts, historians, and religious scholars. We need to broaden the angles of vision to see extremism in its entirety, with all in-depth and detailed complexities.

Instead of the traditional hard power, which is military power, or soft power, which is changing behavior by persuasion, we need to practice a new, updated type of soft power, which the author calls open power. We need real, conscious openness and more accessible policy-making that can continue as global issues change. It is also vital that America takes action to support indigenous Muslim cultures and traditions.

Otherwise, a generation of Muslims is liable to fall under the influence of evil creeds and ideologies that present themselves as authentic and correct and transgress the reality and the Musim heritage and past, which is rich in virtues and values.

The United States should develop a comprehensive strategy to combat hate, marginalize those who engage in hate speech, protect young Internet users who are vulnerable to recruitment by extremists, and include technology companies in this fight. The front line of the war on extremism and terrorism is now Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms, most of which have failed to combat extremism. At the international level, alliances and cooperation must be restored, as successful combating extremism needs real global partnerships, including small and large countries, global and local organizations 🌐



MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION SIGNED BY IMCTC AND KING FAISAL RESEARCH CENTER

At the IMCTC Headquarters, IMCTC signed on June 2, 2021 a memorandum of cooperation with the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies to better enhance cooperation between the two sides in combating extremism and terrorism.

The said memorandum was signed by Major-General Mohammed Saeed Al-Moghedi, IMCTC Secretary-General and Mr. Turki Mohammed Al-Shuwaier, Secretary-General of the King Faisal Center. Al-Shuwaier alongside the accompanying delegation was briefed on the IMCTC goals, initiatives, activities, and concerted counterterrorism efforts. They toured around the IMCTC headquarters to learn about the departments, sections and the tasks mandated and entrusted.



Established in 1983, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS) is a scientific and research hub with the purpose of imparting knowledge, enriching academic and cultural depths locally and internationally with original research, resources, and unique experiences, and strengthening the cooperation bonds with the relevant research centers and institutions.



DELEGATIONS FROM JORDAN VISIT IMCTC



The military attaché of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Ajareme, alongside the visiting delegation, paid a visit to IMCTC on June 22, 2021.

The delegation was briefed on the IMCTC counterterrorism efforts of the IMCTC member countries across the four key domains (ideology, media, military, combating terrorist financing). They toured the IMCTC headquarters to learn more about the departments and section. The delegation paid tribute to the IMCTC counterterrorism initiatives.