

# التعاون

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## IMCTC DISCUSSES WAYS OF JOINT COOPERATION WITH KUWAIT'S ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF



On 24 March 2022 at IMCTC headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's Chief of Staff Brigadier General Fayyad bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili welcomed Kuwait's Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, in the presence of IMCTC Secretary General, Major-General Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi. They discussed the ways of joint cooperation regarding issues of common interest.

Al-Sabah praised IMCTC counter-terrorism efforts, noting that extremism and terrorism are a plague that requires intensified countering efforts of all countries and organizations, given that ways of addressing terrorist groups have been constantly changing, especially with the progress of technological means. He also noted that ideological confrontation is the basis for combating terrorism, followed by fighting terrorists' contacts, communications and tendentious messages, cutting off financing that helps them carry out their malicious criminal plans, and fully defeating them militarily and in terms of security.

IMCTC Secretary General, Major-General Al-Moghedi, stressed the significant and leading contribution of Kuwait to the fight against violent extremism and terrorism, its membership in many regional and international counter-terrorism organizations, its sublime principle of rejection of extremism and violence, and its belief in tolerance and brotherhood.

## CONCLUSION OF KCL-IMCTC TRAINING PROGRAMME ON "COUNTER-TERRORISM: PRINCIPALS AND PRACTICES"

**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**

On 15 March 2022 at its headquarters in Riyadh, IMCTC concluded a training programme on "Counter-Terrorism: Principals and Practices" in collaboration with the Center for Defence Studies, School of Security Studies, King's College, London.

IMCTC Secretary-General, Major-General Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi pointed out that the training programme is a fruit of a memorandum of understanding and joint cooperation between IMCTC and the UK in 2018 on counter-terrorism, sharing the latest trends that help expose terrorist organizations across the ideology, communications and counter-terrorist financing domains. Al-Moghedi further added that such qualitative programs work on training IMCTC Member Countries' delegates to keep them abreast of the latest international trends regarding counter-terrorism and combating violent extremism. [Details pp. 4 - 5](#)

## DEPUTY HEAD OF US CENTRAL COMMAND'S INFORMATION OPERATIONS DIVISION PRAISES IMCTC COUNTER-TERRORISM ACHIEVEMENTS



The Deputy Head of US Central Command's Information Operations Division, Rear Admiral Kevin Lenox, praised IMCTC achievements in combating violent extremist ideology and terrorism, including its services in sponsoring the interests of Member Countries in the various counter-terrorism domains.

This was during his reception by IMCTC Secretary General, Major-General Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi on 1 March 2022. Lenox received a detailed demonstration of IMCTC counter-terrorism efforts, and discussed ways of joint cooperation between IMCTC and the US Central Command.

# VIRTUAL ASSETS: CHARACTERISTICS AND RISKS



**Financing** is the lifeblood of terrorist organizations and groups which utilize all possible means to get it. Cryptocurrency has become an alluring source of financing for these organizations given all the advantages it provides, such as confidentiality, escape from government oversight, and ease of conversion.

More than 2,000 cryptocurrencies have emerged all over the world, most notably Bitcoin, Litecoin, Ether and AUS, some of which are issued by official banks, while others are issued informally, in addition to those issued by specific networks. The prices of these cryptocurrencies range between one cent to more than \$50,000. Cryptocurrency goes back to 1993, when mathematician David Chum invented the first “encrypted” digital currency. The “Liberty Reserve” website allowed users to convert dollars or euros into a digital currency that could be exchanged freely in return for a percentage of fees. However, the US government shut down the website after finding out that this digital currency was used in money laundering and terrorist financing.

On 3 March 2022, at its headquarters in Riyadh, IMCTC held a lecture entitled “**Virtual Assets and their Key Risks**”, delivered by Dr. Salem Bahammam, governance consultant and trainer. The lecture addressed the characteristics and risks of virtual assets, provided examples of ways in which they are used by terrorist groups, and displayed statistics on their exploitation of these assets.

## Cryptocurrencies

Bahammam reviewed the relevant international criteria and recommendations on virtual assets, the best practices to comply with such international criteria to combat terrorist financing, and the relevant Anti-Money Laundering practices.

He also provided various definitions of virtual assets (digital currencies), including the definition of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as “a digital representation of value that can be digitally traded, or transferred, and can be used for payment or investment purposes. Virtual assets do not include digital representation of fiat currencies, securities and other financial assets that are already covered elsewhere in the FATF Recommendations”. The European Banking Authority has described virtual assets as “a digital representation of value that is neither issued by a central bank or

a public authority, nor necessarily attached to a fiat currency, but is accepted by natural or legal persons as a means of payment and can be transferred, stored or traded electronically”.

## Characteristics and Risks

Given their unrestricted global spread, Bahammam examined the characteristics of global virtual assets, such as their secrecy, which makes them difficult to track or monitor, the ease of conversion without an intermediary, the low fees required, and the impossibility of confiscating or freezing them. These characteristics have added greatly to the risks of virtual assets, most serious of which is using them to finance terrorist operations, money-laundering, drug and arms trafficking, tax evasion, as well as significant fluctuations in their market value and the inability of all entities to control them, which increases their risk on the global financial system.

## Terrorists' Exploitation of Virtual Assets

Azim Abdullah, an ISIS member, did not need much money to set up a website for ISIS. All he needed was complete secrecy. Thus in 2014, he decided to turn to Bitcoin and pay just a little over the price of one Bitcoin, approximately \$400 at the time, to register the website domain. He asked website visitors to help pay what he called a “website maintenance cost” using a Bitcoin. Sending donations in cryptocurrency that hides the identity of the donors within a series of symbols and numbers made it difficult for banks or law enforcement authorities to track such funds; thus, it has become easy to use cryptocurrency to finance terrorism.

An al-Qaeda network, which has been tracked by the US government, received more than 15 Bitcoins, estimated at thousands of dollars in 187 operations from 5 February 2019 to 25 February 2020. A member of Ghost Security Group, a counter-terrorism or-

ganization, confirmed that Bitcoin has accounted for between 1% and 3% of ISIS' total income (i.e., between \$4.7 million and \$15.6 million).

### Criteria and Recommendations

The lecturer demonstrated the international criteria and recommendations regarding virtual cryptocurrencies, including FATF Recommendation 15, which called on countries to regard virtual assets as property, proceeds, or funds, apply relevant measures, assess and understand the risks emerging from virtual asset activities, require Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs) to be licensed or registered, ensure VASPs are subject to adequate regulation, supervision, and monitoring, ensure that there is a range of proportionate and dissuasive sanctions, and rapidly provide the widest possible range of international co-operation and necessary information exchange.

The Council of Arab Central Banks and Monetary Authorities Governors recommended that financial institutions and supervisory bodies, such as central banks, establish active governance and risk management structures. To this effect, some Arab and Islamic central banks issued a number of resolutions, including the following:

- Prohibition of the use of encrypted assets by banks and individuals;
- Declining crypto-assets for official business transactions;
- Punishing traders who work with crypto-assets, in accordance with the AML Act;
- Declining crypto-assets as a legal tender currency;
- Warning against transactions of crypto-assets for their high price-fluctuation risks;
- Warning against the risks of using crypto-assets for money laundering and terrorist financing.

Arab central banks advocated striking a balance between the benefits of issuing digital currencies and the problems and hazards that come with them, as well as the necessity for thorough review and selection of the best and most appropriate design for central bank-issued digital currencies. They also emphasized the significance of developing legal and regulatory frameworks as well as identifying other requirements for the successful issue of such currencies.

### Best Practices

Bahammam explained the best practices to comply with international CTF and AML criteria relevant to virtual assets; most importantly, communication and awareness programs to educate the public and providing information on virtual assets and relevant risks, given the lack of verified information and the dissemination of unreliable data over the internet. He also called for legal review in order to create a legal environment that regulates currencies issued by banks and for devoting attention to training since virtual currencies operate in a high-tech environment that accommodates highly capable and efficient teams.

### Technological Determinism

In the discussions following the lecture, Pakistan's IMCTC delegate inquired about the impact of the fluctuating prices of virtual currencies on their future. Bahammam replied that money launder-

ers and terrorism financiers are not afraid of a decline in the value of virtual currencies after purchase. They are willing to sacrifice a portion of the money in exchange for laundering their money, legalizing and formalizing it.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sebeih, KSA communications representative, addressed the issue of technological determinism and the need to adapt to the technical transformations and positively guide their use, given that the issuance of virtual currencies by official state banks minimizes recourse to illegitimate ones. KSA and UAE have agreed to launch a joint cryptocurrency under the name (Aber). Project Aber was started as an innovative project by the central banks of the two countries, and it is one of the first worldwide central bank experiences in this domain. This initiative aims at reinforcing the concept of central banks issuing cryptocurrency, as well as understanding and studying the relevant aspects, actual application of Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT), and dealing with these techniques directly in financial transactions across KSA and UAE banks in a way that ensures shorter processing times and lower costs.



## KCL-IMCTC TRAINING PROGRAMME ON COUNTER-TERRORISM

The Centre for Defence Studies, King's College, London, has given a counter-terrorism training programme at IMCTC headquarters in Riyadh on 13–15 March 2022 on "Counter-Terrorism: Principles and Practices" as part of IMCTC's cooperation with sponsoring countries.

The programme was presented by a group of distinguished scholars from the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College, including **Professor John Gearson**, programme moderator, **Professor Peter Neumann**, **Dr. Martin Navias**, and **Dr. Hillary Briffa**, programme supervisor.

### Programme Content

The programme included lectures and working sessions that provided a general demonstration of the development of terrorism in recent years, the most prominent trends of this cross-border phenomenon, strategic counter-terrorism approaches, and their applicability and feasibility in the face of contemporary threats. It provided practical training on effective counter-terrorism means and techniques, including terrorist financing detection, best practices for coordination between counter-terrorism agents, and analysis of citizens' response to terrorism, to understand its impact on target segments.

Participants were provided with the latest specialized research in the four IMCTC counter-terrorism domains, with a solid foundation for understanding the multidimensional challenges of terrorism. The programme focused on ISIS and its ideology, as well as its external operations strategy and the reasons that led to this terrorist organization's use of excessive violence.

The programme also provided an intellectual reading of extremism, the threat posed by the dissemination of such an ideology on-

line and over social media, counter-approaches, the link between crime and terrorism, and the motives behind the conversion of a terrorist organization into an armed insurgency, taking advantage of grievances and ethnic, religious, and cultural aspirations.

### Counter-Terrorist Financing

The programme analyzed the needs of terrorist organizations for funds to finance their activities and to expand their sovereignty and deployment strategies. It further highlighted the methods that can be used to track such funds, disclose their sources, and prevent those organizations from access to them. The programme lectures, presented by legal experts specializing in AML, explained the illegal financing methods of terrorist organizations, means of international oversight, and concepts of money-laundering related to criminal activity. They looked at the stages of illegal financing and how individuals and groups use it in both local and international settings as well as the ways governments can better invest in their resources in order to cut off common types of illegal financing.

### Counter-Terrorist Propaganda

The programme covered terrorist groups' propaganda dissemination strategies as well as approaches to resisting the long-term viability of terrorist discourse, so that participants might refute it and create a conscious counter-discourse. Lectures of the Communications Domain, particularly the ones approaching terrorist recruitment, confirmed the importance of media campaigns that care about citizens, based on a deep, serious research, the contribution of public diplomacy, strategic communication, and the smart long-term vision of countries seeking to formulate a counter-discourse against that of insurgent terrorist groups. The programme further discussed the importance of the linguistic and



visual presentation of public media campaigns and the methods of formulating long-term strategic plans, in order to develop a counter media discourse against the terrorist discourse nationally and internationally.

**Programme Approach**

The programme was conducted to promote productive learning. To this regard, presenters adopted a variety of teaching techniques to ensure that participants achieved the best educational results and outputs, such as lectures and panel discussions. Each lecture was given by an expert or practitioner, to frame the topic, moderate the discussion with participants, encourage them to acquire knowledge, and share ideas, experiences and observations. Participants engaged in group work in smaller panel discussions which varied between group discussions, and discussions within each small group, so that participants could discuss programme topics in a collectively detailed search, facilitate the exchange of



different views and ideas, and learn tools to improve and fully capitalize on training outputs.

Panel discussions provided participants with a greater ability to examine specific aspects of topics in more detail and depth, based on their interests. Panel discussions made up of smaller groups gave participants the opportunity to better understand the yet-to-be explored areas, and learn through discussion and cooperation with their fellow participants, develop close participation among delegates, and improve their communication skills and means of consultation.

The course was concluded with a group discussion to open the floor for any questions or inquiries related to the topics addressed across the four domains of ideology, communications, counter-terrorist financing, and military, and to allow for the integration of all information and expertise received throughout the course. This would enable participants to understand how these practices can be integrated into national security approaches, and to support decision-makers in the fight against terrorism.

**Programme Presenters**

	<p><b>Professor John Gearson,</b> programme moderator.</p>	<p>Pioneer in terrorism and asymmetric warfare fields, Director of the Centre for Defence Studies, Professor of National Security Studies in the Department of War Studies, King’s College, London.</p>
	<p><b>Dr. Hillary Briffa,</b> programme supervisor.</p>	<p>Lecturer in National Security Studies at the Department of War Studies, King’s College, London. She previously worked at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Birkbeck University of London, and Queen Mary University of London.</p>
	<p><b>Professor Peter Neumann</b></p>	<p>Professor of Security Studies and Founder of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR). He holds a PhD in War Studies from King’s College, London.</p>
	<p><b>Dr. Martin Navias</b></p>	<p>Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Defence Studies, specialized in anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing.</p>

# DATA ANALYSIS AND DECISION-MAKING METHODOLOGY



**Managing** crises, addressing problems, developing realities, or planning for the future requires conscious and rational decisions. This would only happen if decisions are based on verified, accurate information. Counter-terrorism authorities are in dire need for making such decisions, which requires complete knowledge of the data analysis methodology, given its importance in making the right decisions.

In view of the risk posed by this issue, IMCTC held a working session on "**Data Analysis and Decision-Making Methodology**", delivered by Dr. Muhammad bin Suleiman Al-Subaihi, Delegate of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to IMCTC in the Communications Domain, on 21 March 2022, in the presence of IMCTC Security-General and IMCTC Member Countries' Delegates.

## Basics of Analysis

After providing definitions of data, information, knowledge, ideas, views, and normal and scientific thinking, Al-Subaihi laid the foundations of data analysis and decision-making, starting with the theory of knowledge and the means of access to its different aspects: the individual seeking to acquire knowledge, the subject of knowledge, the relationship between the knowledgeable self and the subject of knowledge, and the methods of acquiring knowledge. He then moved to analysis of critical theory, which attaches great importance to one's self in its interaction with the subject. He further stressed the importance of dealing with information and big data, which are the main source of human knowledge and what decision-making is based on in various areas. Given the magnitude of such information and data, handling them requires a rigorous scientific approach, in order to employ them, benefit from them, and meet the goals and objectives we seek to achieve.

The methodologies of handling data include the following:

### ► Sample-based Analysis:

Analyzing a sample of data on a certain subject, and then generalizing the result to apply to all data, taking into account that the sample is representative of this set of data, and this requires that all elements of the set are well represented in the sample.

### ► Using Scientific Metrics:

Scientific metrics are used to determine the degree to which pieces of information are verified and their relationship with one another using descriptive and semantic statistics to classify and

arrange data, based on their type, source, or size, by carrying out a number of calculations and graphs, and compiling data according to their type and degree of verification.

### ► Scientific Reading of Findings:

This reading is based on a stable scientific basis, which is a theoretical input consistent with the nature of the subject under study and analysis, enabling data analysts to attribute the findings to a solid scientific vision, which would contribute to their development and interpretation in an approved normal context.

## Data Sources

Al-Subaihi classified data sources, types, and analysis methods into secondary and primary, theoretical and field (practical), analytical and experimental, formal and informal categories. He also pointed out reliable sources for obtaining required information, including secondary sources of knowledge, such as books, studies and research, search engines, media platforms, and digital platforms. Primary sources are sources of data linked directly to the topic at hand, such as interviews, surveys, and content and observations analysis. It is critical to document and identify the sources of data, regardless of the type or source. The data source has a substantial impact on their validity and reliability. This is not to say that other data should be ignored; rather, identifying their source is a crucial element of the research and decision-making process.

The data analysis process adopts two main approaches to controlling the phenomenon and reach reliable results: quantitative and qualitative approaches. Either is chosen based on the type of the phenomenon or topic in question and the nature of data and target results.

## Interpretation of Findings

Al-Subaihi proceeded to explain the importance of data analysis and findings interpretation in decision-making. He pointed out the six types of data analysis as follows:

- **Descriptive Analysis:** Describes the content of data without seeking explanations, in line with data analysis of a country's census.
- **Exploratory Analysis:** Identifies the parameters, correlations and tendencies by measuring several variables in order to reach specific ideas and hypotheses.

- **Deductive Analysis:** One of the most essential, extensively used, and popular data analyses, which aims to assess a variety of distinct correlations between variables using available data in order to derive what defines the nature and tendency of such associations.
- **Prognostic Analysis:** Provides predicted future insights, inspired by the results, in an explanatory context in order to identify a pattern for future results of variables.
- **Causal analysis:** Monitors the causal relationship between data, in order to identify the causality extent of variables to be analyzed, one of which being a cause of the other, without asserting this causality and how much of it is true.
- **Mechanical Analysis:** Monitors the proven inevitable relationship between two measurements of two variables, under controlled conditions, and through experimental studies that adopt a rigorous, accurate methodology.

### Stages of Data Analysis

The speaker highlighted six stages of data analysis in terms of objectives of analysis and the decisions to be taken:

#### ► Identifying the appropriate data analysis methodology.

This is the plan that informs the analytical work through the rest of the analysis stages, and includes several important elements, such as identifying the subject-matter of the data, recognizing the main objective to be achieved, identifying the appropriate theoretical approach to achieving this goal, formulating bifurcating inquiries, and providing procedural definitions to the variables obtained from objectives and inquiries.

#### ► Data Collection, Classification, and Tabulation.

Secondary and primary sources can be relied upon to obtain information, using information-gathering tools, where data are classified and tabulated according to their link to inquiries.

#### ► Using an Appropriate Statistical Analysis.

At this stage, data are subject to a number of descriptive and semantic statistical processes relevant to their type, the purpose of analysis, and the queries we need to answer.

#### ► Reading Findings in Terms of their Significance and Interrelations.

The data analyst reads the findings, defines their size and degree of achievement, assesses the nature of the relationship between them, and offers meaning to the results, including the degree of the link, if it is significant, as well as the direction and strength of the significance.

#### ► Discussing and Interpreting Findings in the Light of Appropriate Scientific Basis and Contexts.

These are the most important stages of data analysis, because data analysts at this stage translate data into knowledge by placing the findings in their natural context, reviewing the main outcome of each type of data. Data analysts then discuss the findings by looking into their compatible and varied relations with previous ones while demonstrating the semantic differences of time and space variables. Findings are then interpreted according to their contexts, based on prevailing culture, explanatory theories and relevant literature.

#### ► Passing Recommendations to Help with Decision-making.

The accurate wording of recommendations is manifested in the classification of results into positive and negative, opportunities or threats, incomplete or vague results, and then recommending the investment of opportunities, paying attention to positive results, and adopting the right approach.

### Practical Application

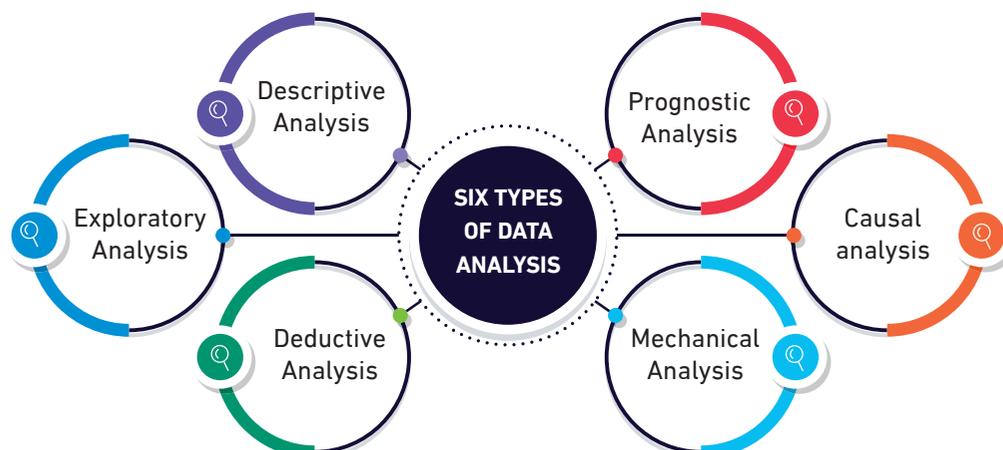
At the end of the session, Al-Subaihi provided a practical application of data analysis, based on the identification of media power (for the Dabiq magazine) produced by terrorist ISIS, using a descriptive and quantitative analysis methodology.

After applying the stages of data analysis, the results concluded that the scope of geographical follow-up of ISIS media content targeted Syria in the first place at 30.5%, then Iraq at 28.3%, followed by countries of Central Asia (Afghanistan, Turkistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) which ranked third at 21.9%, Egypt at 10.2%, Europe and the US at 7.3%, Libya at 1.6%, and finally Yemen at 1%.

The discussion of the results revealed that the media content of the Dabiq magazine targeted community members in Syria and Iraq with a total percentage of 58.8%, which is a normal indicator; given that Syria is one of the largest areas of ISIS dominance after its inception in Iraq, followed by Central Asian countries at 21.9%, indicating ISIS growing activity in these regions.

Egypt comes later at 10.2%, which is a logical indicator as the analytical stage coincided with the comprehensive operation in Sinai 2018, led by the Egyptian armed forces in Northern Sinai, targeting ISIS members.

The recommendations called for the creation of a media magazine aimed at Syrian and Iraqi societies, with media content that refutes ISIS's ideologies while also offering immunizing, professional content and compelling discourse.



# FUTURE OF TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM: COUNTER STRATEGIES



**Ideological** extremism is one of the most dangerous negative phenomena that has been threatening the security of societies; it is a divergence from moderation and positive values, which shape a cohesive, civilized society that is secure and stable, into a society of turmoil and poor development and progress. The problem becomes more complex when extremism is linked to organizations that try to spread their poisons as food for thought to maximize polarization and recruitment, which often lead to armed violence conducive to loss of life, property destruction, and havoc outbreak.

To combat the threat posed by ideological extremism, IMCTC held a lecture on 23 March 2022, at its headquarters in Riyadh, on "The Future of Extremism and Terrorism" presented by Professor Zayed Al-Harhi, Delegate of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to IMCTC in the Domain of Ideology, in the presence of IMCTC Secretary-General and member countries' delegates.

## Earth Reconstruction

The lecture addressed the reality of ideological extremism and terrorism over the past years, their future, and counter strategies. The lecturer presented global models of true Islamic views reinforcement and application in daily life. Al-Harhi started with how man originally reflected on the reconstruction and repopulation of the Earth, society service, and worship of Allah the Almighty who says: {He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it} [Hud:61]. This includes all that is beneficial to society and to individuals. However, when man deviates from these noble goals

and his innate, God-created nature, society struggles, conflict intensifies, and terrorism, havoc, and turmoil prevail. Extremist ideology generally seeks to corrupt beliefs and behaviors which lead people to commit crimes of aggression.

## Reality of Extremism

Al-Harhi explained how various countries have suffered from the scourge of terrorist operations that targeted innocent lives and destroyed properties, and how terrorist means have progressed throughout history, from primitive tools such as light arms, sharp tools, and assassinations to sophisticated arms, large-scale military confrontations, and suicide attacks. In recent years, cyber-terrorism has emerged, based on modern technical means, as well as biological terrorism such as anthrax and drones maliciously exploited by terrorist groups, signifying that the world may witness further terrorist progress as far as technology allows in the future.

The lecturer explained how states have encouraged their people and elevated their potentials and resources in the face of this threat. They established bodies, organizations, and alliances; they also held conferences, concluded agreements, and deployed forces to conflict zones. According to official statistics, there is a noticeable decline in terrorist operations in recent years in most countries of the Middle East and Africa as a result of decline in the capacity of extremist organizations to carry out operations and the success of counter-terrorism measures in light of serious international cooperation in addressing this threat.

For example, 2014 witnessed a large number of terrorist acts, which amounted to 32,685 and then decreased to 18,814 in 2017. Nevertheless, it cannot be confirmed that terrorist acts have completely ended, as long as they are fueled by pervasive and prevalent ideological extremism that penetrates into societies very quickly. These acts include operations of the so-called right-wing extremism, which are expected to increase with the activity of extremist nationalist and populist parties and organizations. Western Europe and the United States are facing a rise in hate crimes, most of which perpetrated by far-right extremists: 127 terrorist operations by far-right extremists between 2013 and 2017 resulted in 66 deaths.

In a 2018 report by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), hate crimes, particularly in the US, increased by 17% in 2017 compared to 2016, while the largest percentage was estimated in Canada by 50% according to a report published by the Canadian government in December 2018. UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, pointed out the following at the Second Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of member countries: Terrorist threats are still ongoing, and social media are used extensively in spreading violent beliefs and hate speech, noting that since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, cybercrimes have increased, as these platforms give room for terrorist propaganda, recruitment and financing. This requires harnessing the same technologies in fighting such threats within the framework of the rule of law and respect for human rights.

## A Long-Standing Phenomenon

Al-Harthy stressed how ideological extremism has been a strong, long-standing phenomenon, particularly with regard to religious beliefs; adherents are biased to their own beliefs as if they were absolute truths, whereas opposers are highly misguided. This type of extremism exists among adherents of the same religion and different religions, too, even though all monotheistic religions denounce extremism and call for cooperation, tolerance, Earth re-population and reconstruction, and self-preservation.

Islam always adopts a sound thought that calls for peace, coexistence, unity, respect for human beings and for upholders of opposing views. It has presented different models of this coexistence, especially in the age of the Prophethood and the Wise Caliphate that established self-purity and renounced intolerance and racism. However, some so-called Muslims adopted extremist views and beliefs, which they taught to adherents to Islam later, taking advantage of those ideologically vulnerable, low-cultured, and in need, to brainwash them, force them to embrace their views, then rob them of their will, and direct them towards misguided, violent extremist and terrorist ideology.

Al-Harthy showed that extremist thought would continue, but in different types and forms, taking advantage of modern and advanced technologies. He further predicted that many countries will face several problems in the next two decades, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence, a technical revolution that has influenced the course of life and different services, often preceding the ability of man to make his own decisions and solve his own problems.

In his book, **The Future of Terrorism in this Century** published in 2006, Dr. Ahmed Falah Al-Amoush stated that types of terrorism may change, while motives remain the same. Societies may face the threat of organized, mutated, and cross-border terrorism that may use unfamiliar weapons leading to widespread destruction and heavy losses, reaching more states, which is what actually happened. Examples abound. Some terrorist operations take place in certain countries and reflect in other faraway ones.

## Counter Strategies

Al-Harthy argued that in the fight against extremism, visions and strategies related to the so-called battle of ideas emerged as a proactive preventive strategy in the fight against terrorism. Var-

ious counter-extremist aspects have emerged, such as awareness-raising, educational, youth-oriented, familial and community work. Dealing with such crimes is no longer limited to the legal, military and security apparatus. Nonetheless, means of reinforcement and prevention have been found, and are included under the umbrella of ideology, rather than the law. These means focus on moderation and centrism, home keeping, and conservation of possessions and supreme interests.

The speaker further presented some counter-approaches against ideological extremism as follows:

**1. Establishing the scientific foundation of ideological structures** at the hands of qualified professional scholars, entities, and organisations engaged in establishing religious sciences and ideological issues, including cultivation of the jurisprudence of controversy, constructive criticism, and the spirit of intellectual dialogue.

**2. Promoting global models** within the context of reinforcing sound thought and moderation principles, as in the case of the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), and Makkah Charter issued by the Muslim World League in Ramadan 1440 Ah (May 2019), on the sidelines of the International Conference on Centrism and Moderation. Makkah Charter has become a historic constitution for achieving peace and for preserving moderation and centrism in Muslim countries. Some of its principles were previously introduced by Professor Al-Harthy, Saudi Arabia' delegate in the Domain of Ideology, to become an initiative adopted by IMCTC. Such an initiative shall become a foundation for successful presentation of true religious thought.

**3. Knowledge Security:** The lack of knowledge security is a major risk to humanity. When humanity has recently encountered the COVID-19 pandemic, it stood crippled, seeking a cure for the anxiety, depression, suicide, material and moral damage that hit millions of people around the world owing to quarantine and lockdown. The lack of genuine knowledge of true religious thought has led to conflicts between different beliefs and philosophies, underscoring the need for knowledge security which is integral to ideological security, thus contributing to bridging the ideological gap between different cultures, to reach a satisfactory state of coexistence in a safe, dignified life.



# IRREGULAR WARFARE AND MILITARY COUNTER STRATEGIES



The last two centuries have witnessed major political, economic and technological developments and events, which have paved the way for the emergence of non-state actors who engage in violence, such as militant groups, terrorist groups, insurgent and separatist groups, and warlords. These non-state actors have all been means of exerting pressure on national states as they adopt irregular warfare principles, defy regular armed forces, and require fast and comprehensive responses politically, socially, ideologically, culturally, security-wise, and militarily, in order to defeat and undermine them.

Unfortunately, some geographical areas provide the perfect environment for extremist organizations and militant groups to grow rapidly with employable political objectives from abroad. Such a phenomenon has received the attention of IMCTC. Thus, it held a lecture entitled “**Irregular Warfare and Military Counter Strategy**” on 29 March 2022, delivered by **Major-General Dhafir Al-Shehri**, Delegate of Saudi Arabia to IMCTC in the military domain. In the presence of Lieutenant-General Raheel Sharif, IMCTC military commander, and IMCTC employees.

The lecture addressed the analysis of irregular warfare adopted by terrorist groups and organizations, in order to develop a strategic and military understanding of such a threat and help experts with military planning and armed forces with strategic and practical preparation.

## Irregular Warfare Threats

In the first section of the lecture, Major-General Al-Shehri addressed the strategic and practical evaluation of irregular warfare and its sinister threat. He further discussed the concept of irregular warfare, its strategic and operational surroundings, traits and advantages, terrorist organizations’ military doctrine, and their

leadership, organization, communication, and arming systems.

Major-General Al-Shehri defined irregular war as one where both parties do not employ the same strategies or means, with no balance of power on both parties, where militant organizations and groups seek to impose their authority, defeat governments, and achieve their ideological and political objectives by overtaking regular armies with an unprecedented war pattern they have not trained for professionally. Unconventional means are applied while employing psychological, ideological and media warfare to achieve proactivity and freedom, and to impose their will, as happened when the Islamic State (ISIS) entered Mosul, and as evidenced by the entry of the Houthis terrorist group into Sana'a.

The strategic environment of irregular warfare is manifested in the international war on terrorism and the so-called Arab Spring revolutions, which resulted in strategic shifts that led to a complex reality and serious circumstances in the Arab Islamic World. This produced fragile or failed states, which allowed for the emergence of insurgent militant organizations and groups. Subsequently, external, regional, and national forces took advantage of this chaos to achieve their own interests through providing political, military, and financial support to these extremist organizations and groups, which is known as proxy war. Although these organizations and groups have different objectives, loyalties and intellectual and ideological references, they share the same means of combat, all of which fall under irregular warfare.

The practical environments of irregular warfare have varied. In the mountainous areas where operations are carried out, mountains have historically provided an ideal combat environment for guerrilla warfare and terrorist organizations, while being a natural impediment to regular forces, challenging and hindering their flexibility and military capacities.

In inhabited areas, urban and rural warfare poses a challenge to regular armies. However, guerilla and terrorist organizations exploit such an advantage to control as many villages and cities as possible. In case the conflict theatre expands and turns into a war of attrition, these cities and villages become a suitable combat arena for terrorist organizations. Forests and wooded lands are also a perfect environment for terrorist organizations for laying and camouflaging traps, mines, ambushes.

## Irregular Warfare Features

Major-General Al-Shehri analyzed irregular warfare, highlighting its development path along three timelines:

**First:** Activity in this war is limited to “hit and run” operations in small groups, sparsely numbered and armed, which are concerned with attacking the opponent’s patrols and isolated points.

**Second:** Organizations begin capacity building by seizing equipment and supply from the opponent, or by taking advantage of external support, or primitive industrialization, to reach a balance of power with government forces, and then they occupy convenient areas and use them as a springboard for their groups.

**Third:** Terrorist organizations are evolving, their military structures are becoming more paramilitary, and they may gain public acceptance by imposing a new political and economic reality, as

terrorist Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and ISIS in Raqqa in Syria did, before seeking to overthrow the state and impose their partial or total control.

### Military Ideology of Terrorists

Major-General Al-Shehri uncovered the military ideology of terrorist organizations, arguing that they adopt a hybrid ideology that integrates both regular and irregular warfare and relies on attrition in small, agile groups that spread terror, establish barriers, and execute lightning-fast attacks. They focus on fighters and their morale, for which the human factor is primarily responsible, while armaments come next. They also pay attention to the ideological and moral aspects of their fighters. This ideology follows the practical methods of guerilla warfare, such as lightning-fast attacks, working in consecutive groups, targeting isolated members, attacking vulnerable points, and maintaining a high state of readiness, to be able to flee as soon as they are attacked by the opponent. Besides, attacking transportation routes is prioritized over attacking fixed bases, while increasing the number of ambushes and deceptions.

Leadership, organization and communication styles in irregular warfare depend on a strict chain of commands, based on leadership loyalty, sectarian affiliation, capacity to influence and persuade, and decentralized leadership.

Their structure of terrorist organizations is characterized by the independence of militant groups, as befits the nature of tasks, achieving agility, flexibility and fast implementation. Communications are based on a primitive approach predicated on social media, private protected networks, and spy networks.

### Military Confrontations

In the second part of the lecture, Major-General Al-Shehri presented a vision of the strategic and practical preparation of the armed forces in countering terrorist organizations. Such a preparation is based on identifying the strategic objectives of the armed forces in this war, framing the strategic principles of fighting these organizations, establishing a joint fighting ideology, and arming and organizing forces as befits operations targeting irregular organizations, such as militant groups and terrorist organizations, including the preparation and rehabilitation of fighter commanders, and the planning of operational stages.

The **strategic objectives** of armed forces in the irregular war against terrorist and militant organizations can be summed up as follows:

- Analyzing the operational environment and establishing control and domination.
- Achieving deterrence by influencing the will of the opponent.
- Maintaining freedom of maneuver, and possessing the capacities and militant capabilities in all environments.
- Achieving integration and full inclusiveness between affiliates of the armed forces within the framework of joint operations.
- Establishing joint national cooperation with other state entities involved in the crisis.

Major-General Al-Shehri addressed the major strategic principles of fighting such organizations:

- Providing accurate and reliable intelligence data, and sending them quickly to field commanders in order to develop appropriate plans and orders.
- Quick decisiveness, by physically eliminating enemies, particularly through influencing leaders.

- Directing selective air and ground strikes against figures and leaders of organizations, their centers of gravity and critical milestones.
- Reinforcing border security measures to stop terrorist infiltration across borders and to prevent terrorists from identifying ambushes, sniping and raids.
- Preparing psychological, ideological and military operations targeting terrorist organizations and groups in order to isolate their leaders from current and potential supporters, cut off all opportunities for terrorists to carry out any successful defensive acts or retaliate against the attacks of regular forces, and deny them freedom of action and initiative.
- Setting a joint fighting ideology in the face of irregular organizations, based on a quantitative military advantage suitable for tactics of intimidation grounded in the principle of blitzkrieg, not war of attrition, on the effectiveness of fighting dispersed groups, and on employing small, flexible and fast-moving ground units to avoid terrorist hideouts and mine-laying, as well as adopting the "hybrid war" style that combines traditional warfare capacities with non-conventional warfare.



### Forces' Organization and Armament

Major-General Al-Shehri finally addressed the appropriate organization and armament methods of regular armed forces in their war against terrorist organizations. He explained that this must be based on a system of relatively small groups, which can mimic the armament, fighting style and training of guerilla warfare, to be able to fight solely for a long time, and to provide a faction of snipers in every infantry brigade after guerilla warfare has demonstrated the importance of snipers.

Meanwhile, arming regular forces in their war against terrorist organizations is based on light armament that facilitates movement and camouflage, with special reconnaissance capabilities and combat troops.

The lecture concluded with some statements and recommendations that emphasized the importance of proactively anticipating terrorist threats and comprehensive military preparation of the armed forces in order to be able to engage in irregular militant operations against these organisations, including developing plans, the theatre of operations, the weapon, and the fighter, as well as creating a unified national dialogue about the threats posed by these terrorist organisations.

## Al-Moghedi: The World Defence Show in Riyadh is an Example to be Emulated and the Military Industry Receives Considerable Support from Wise Leadership



An IMCTC delegation headed by IMCTC Secretary General, Major-General Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi and IMCTC Member Countries' delegates visited the first edition of the World Defence Show 2022 in Riyadh on 9 March 2022.

Al-Moghedi praised the latest local and international military technologies on display that have become a global example to be emulated in world defence exhibitions, highlighting the great efforts of the wise leadership in supporting military and defence industries. The delegation toured the exhibition, and checked out the local, regional and international participations, which included many military equipment and distinct modern technologies.

## IMCTC Receives Military Leadership Delegation from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Bangladesh



On 30 March 2022, in its headquarters in Riyadh, IMCTC Secretary General Major-General Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi received a delegation of military leadership personnel from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, participating in the counter-extremism course at the Institute of Religious Affairs of the Saudi Armed Forces. The visit took place in the context of knowledge exchange regarding the fight against violent extremism and terrorism.

While receiving the delegation, IMCTC Secretary General noted that IMCTC is based on legitimacy, independence, coordination, participation, and the effort to keep all IMCTC Member Countries' counter-terrorism efforts in line with international rules, norms and laws.

## Conclusion of TAFL Program



IMCTC concluded its TAFL program (Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language) at its headquarters in Riyadh on 22 March 2022. The program was launched in partnership with the Islamic University of Imam Mohammed Bin Saud, aiming to develop the capacities of IMCTC Member Countries' delegates, and enhance their cognitive, linguistic and communication skills.

