

IMCTC SECRETARY-GENERAL RECEIVES AMBASSADOR OF DJIBOUTI

Maj. Gen. Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi, Secretary-General of IMCTC, received Ambassador Ziauddin Saeed Bamakhrama, Ambassador of the Republic of Djibouti to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 8 November 2020.

Mr. Ambassador was provided with a detailed explanation of the IMCTC counterterrorism efforts in the domains of ideology, communications, counter-terrorist financing and military, while coordinating and intensifying the efforts of the member countries and supporting international efforts aimed at maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Ambassador commended the efforts made by IMCTC to develop strategic partnerships among the member countries, supporting states and international organizations to exchange best practices and counterterrorism capacity-building. ■



IMCTC MONTHLY SYMPOSIUM DISCUSSES METHODS TO COMBAT VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES IN WEST AFRICA

IMCTC held its eleventh monthly symposium in the IMCTC Center in Riyadh, on 26 November 2020, featuring “Violent Extremism and Development Challenges in West Africa.” The symposium was moderated by Dr. Mansour Saeed Al-Qarni, Director of Ideology Department at the IMCTC Center. Dr. Al-Qarni emphasized that the said symposium brings under discussion seminal avenues and approaches to enhance comprehensive development, peace-building, social peace, settling conflicts and extremism, while seeking to build a common future among the peoples of the region.

Dr. Mustafa Abdullah, researcher at the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Center, discussed development, violent extremism, future threats and challenges, calling for major investments to address development problems. In the same vein, Dr. Lassana Diarra, researcher at the Strategic Center for Security in the Sahel and Sahara, explained the impact of local development in promoting social peace in West Africa, and the importance of engaging local communities. **Details P. 8**



TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR SAFER MEDIA CONTENT

IMCTC held a training session, on 17 November 2020, at its headquarters in Riyadh for the delegates of the IMCTC member countries which was presented by Dr. Mohammed Suleiman Al-Subaihi, Delegate of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to IMCTC in the Communications Domain.

The presenter first discussed the challenges posed by the developments in the telecommunication environment. Information and communication technologies have well contributed to changing the modes of communication for the media, and have further provided the public with opportunities to easily and seamlessly produce media content, which requires a new approach to better operate in such an updated environment. It discussed the challenges of the digital environment, the prospects for socially conscious interaction, and the exchange of successful experiences in using social media safely through four foci: digital environment characteristics and challenges, positive and negative social media, aspects of socially conscious use of social media and safer media content. ■

2019-2020 ISIS TERRORISM IN IRAQ REDUX



■ Editorial Team

The resurgence of ISIS-launched terrorist operations in Iraq, and the escalation across huge swathes of the country claimed a large number of victims and caused material losses, threatening the security and safety of the Iraqi sects and ethnicities. Since Baghdad officially declared in 2017 the elimination of ISIS across the country, Iraq has not sustained this number of attacks that included the headquarters and sites of the security forces, the Popular Mobilization Forces and Kurdish fighters (Peshmerga), targeting remote villages and highway roads, while also perpetrated kidnappings and killings of civilians and burning down their farms.

The most notorious qualitative development in ISIS's operations was marked by a series of coordinated attacks simultaneously launched on four areas in Salah Al-Din, and the Intelligence Directorate in Kirkuk and security points near Samarra prison, in addition to the attacks in Diyala, Kirkuk, Babel and Karbala, which caused deaths and injuries to dozens of civilians and soldiers. The flip side of the scenario shows the abject failure of the power parties to confine the risks of ISIS redux.

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Michael Knights and Alex Almeida (2020) indicate that ISIS recovered from the defeats of 2017. ISIS has returned to Iraq with a powerful force; the rate of attacks in the past eighteen months shows that ISIS has regained its balance. ISIS has redeployed its forces and followers across many areas in Iraq, equally at the same levels that it had once in 2012. Indicators show the possibility of increasing its operations in rural areas in 2020 and 2021, with a large number of seasoned fighters from Syria possibly joining ISIS, while – regrettably enough – the capabilities of the Iraqi forces and the coalition are on the decline. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the economic crisis is expected to escalate the ISIS campaign to drain the Iraqi government, army and tribes.

Based on official statistics, the two researchers reveal that ISIS still shows a high level of resilience in Iraq, as it has intensified its attacks into the third and fourth quarters of 2019 and the first quarter of 2020. According to certain data, the number of officially reported ISIS attacks increased from 1470 attacks in 2018 to 1669 attacks in 2019, in addition to 566 attacks reported in the first quarter of 2020.

Analyzing these statistics while taking into account the qualitative details better displays the image of a militant organization that is re-establishing and restructuring itself in Iraq, capitalizing on a team of seasoned planning leaders and bomb-makers who returned from the Syrian battlefields in 2019 to carry out new operations, following the war plan of hit-and-run strategy, in all areas of Iraq where ISIS lost its physical control over the population and resources.

The aim of investigating and analyzing the information and statistics documented for the attacks at the level of the Iraqi government and examining each governorate separately to determine the nature of the various trends in planning and attack across different environments is to review the qualitative nature of the attacks and to discuss the factors expected for the recovery of ISIS in Iraq.

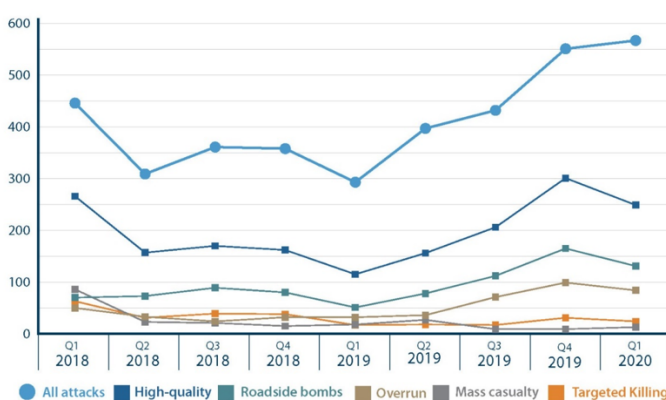
According to the analysis based on the metrics used in previous research studies by the researchers, from October 2018 to March 2020, this article has discussed ISIS attacks in Anbar, Salah Al-Din and the rural belts in Baghdad, Nineveh, Kirkuk, and Diyala by dividing these attacks into explosive-dependent or explosive-independent incidents and examines the four categories of high-impact attacks, including high-impact bombings, attempts to bypass Iraqi security forces checkpoints, attacks on individuals and high-casualty attacks.

NATIONAL TRENDS

It should be highlighted that a research study conducted by the Counter-Terrorism Committee in 2018 revealed the significant decline in ISIS operations in Iraq by the end of 2017 and into 2018. ISIS carried out about 490 attacks per month in 2017, then it decreased to 122 attacks per month in 2018, and this decline continued until 2019, when the attacks reached nearly 97 attacks per month in the first quarter of 2019. The number of attacks has increased every quarter since then; in the second quarter of 2019, 132 attacks were carried out per month, then 143 attacks per month in the third quarter, and in the fourth quarter the number reached up to 183 attacks per month, then to 188 attacks per month in the first quarter of 2020. The attacks in the first quarter of 2019 to the attacks in the first quarter of 2020 shows an increase of 94%.

Figure (1)

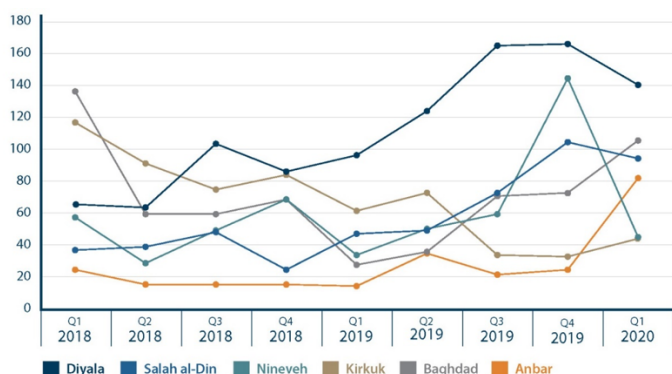
TRENDS OF ATTACKS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN IRAQ BY TYPE OF ATTACK



It is possible to observe some important trends by examining the different situations in the governorates experiencing increased activity by ISIS, such as Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh and Salah Al-Din. In 2018 attacks, Kirkuk had (370), Diyala (340) and Baghdad (328). In 2019, the situation changed, Diyala became more vulnerable to attacks (550). Nineveh had (293), Kirkuk (228), Baghdad (214), Salah Al-Din (142) and Anbar (105). In the twenty-seven months that the researchers monitored the attacks from 2018 to 2020, Diyala had (1030), Kirkuk (644) and Nineveh (601). The two researchers have examined each governorate separately to better understand the operations plans and directions

Figure (2)

TRENDS OF INTER-GOVERNORATES ATTACKS



GEOGRAPHY AND TOOLS

One of the great challenges for Iraq is ISIS’s control of various hills and heights extending along the Syria-Iraq borders and the Iran-Iraq borders; ISIS has put in great efforts in developing the

infrastructure in the slopes and caves, to be hideouts, strongholds and multipurpose stashes, such as storing provisions, water, solar energy generators, explosives and bomb-making components, motorcycles and car bombs. It is possible that such strongholds are close to the garrisons of the security forces, and they may appear to be extremely vulnerable to surveillance, raids and bombing. The insurgents move on bicycles or on foot between such strongholds, and ISIS seeks isolation in uninhabited areas, and prefers sites for bases with weak capabilities and areas with low population density, such as abandoned or demolished villages.

The research shows that ISIS directs a team from Syria deployed in the rebel centers that have regained their activity west of Baghdad; its influence dwindles in the remote secondary fields in Kirkuk and Diyala. As per a reliable source, the two researchers remark that the decision to transfer important people with their equipment from Syria to Iraq was taken by ISIS before the fall of Raqqa, which dances to the tune of the transformation of ISIS to the strategy of dissolution described by Hassan (2017), featuring “Insurgents Redux”.

RESUSCITATION FACTORS

The two-way strikes launched by the armed groups backed by Iran and the US gradually enfeebled the ability of the coalition to support the Iraqi security forces. The US was therefore restricted and could no longer interact directly with the Sunni tribal forces because of the politicians supported by those armed groups. American advisors were excluded from some operations in the areas of Tarmiyah, Nineveh, and Diyala.

It is too early to analyze the impact of the killing of Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis and the unrest mushroomed between the US and Iran, while the vigorous efforts by ISIS to feed on the American-Iranian unrest are not visible. The efforts to counter ISIS seem to fade away albeit shored up. This is because the Iraqi security forces are not supported by the global coalition; they are neither trained nor equipped to advance counterinsurgency, and these forces will remain unprepared by themselves to weather and counter the ISIS-fueled threat.

COVID-19 pandemic is an ideal opportunity for ISIS; the ISIS members are shut off from society, their number is relatively few and they are socially marooned in rural shelters. Taken together, the ISIS members in Iraq are at the zenith of avoiding COVID-19 pandemic, capitalizing on it to better achieve as many interests as possible - to regain strength in planning, preparedness and implementation.

The two researchers believe that the internal factors that attract the highest international attention, especially the unrest between the US and Iran and COVID-19 pandemic, are factors that rapidly help the recovery of ISIS in Iraq. It is also possible for ISIS to re-attack collective targets if it can construct strong bases in the rural belts of major cities, such as Baghdad, Mosul, Ramadi and Fallujah. ■



National Counter-Terrorism Center

US Counterterrorism Spearhead



In the wake of 9/11 Attacks, 2001, the National Counter-Terrorism Center was established in 2004 at the directives of US President George W. Bush, approved by Congress, and the Central Intelligence Agency, Homeland Security, the Ministry of Defence and the FBI. It was preceded by the inauguration of Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC).

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT

NCTC is an important actor to unify the efforts of the counterterrorism centers in the US and abroad, and it has realized resounding achievements across all levels. The paramount function mandated with NCTC is protecting the US and the US interests from the threats of terrorism at home and abroad.

NCTC, headed by Christopher Miller (Director) and Darrell Vingia (Undersecretary) and Pamela Duke (Executive Director), attracts national counterterrorism efforts, collecting information on domestic and foreign terrorism and analysing and sharing such seminal information with relevant institutions, while supporting government counterterrorism measures. In 2009, NCTC functions expanded following the attempt to blow up an American airliner on Christmas Day, and it became an important reference for terrorists and suspects.

NCTC operations room is run by more than 100 employees, planning strategic operations around the clock, conducting assessments constantly and providing judgments on critical and dangerous issues; they are sincere partners in ensuring peace and re-

jecting terrorism. All the NCTC actions are carried out under the close supervision of the office of the Director of National Intelligence. The counterterrorism reports are submitted directly to the NCTC Director.

NCTC ACTIONS

NCTC includes four main directorates: Directorate of Intelligence, Directorate of Terrorist Identities, Directorate of Strategic Operations Planning and Directorate of Operations Support, alongside other offices with an intelligence mission that collect data on terrorists.

NCTC is one of the governmental organizations in the US, under the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act. It is mandated with informing its partners of all cases of international terrorism. It also ensures that other agencies working in counterterrorism have access to needed intelligence, providing support to policymakers and other members of the politics, intelligence, defence, homeland security and foreign affairs communities.

NCTC conducts accurate assessments of critical issues, including regional terrorism, safe havens for terrorism, terrorism-sponsoring states and counterterrorism cooperation around the world. NCTC provides counterterrorism agencies with information directly 24/7, reports terrorist threats and tracks security events.

NCTC acts as a spearhead of the National Intelligence Counterterrorism Administration; its paramount mandate is best reflected in several functions and activities, including supporting the US counter-

terrorism community and national plans, assuming legal responsibilities for strategic planning procedures for operations in counterterrorism activities within the US government and mobilizing national, diplomatic, financial, military, intelligence and security efforts. Planning includes long-term strategic plans that ensure the development of coordination on key issues. NCTC forms joint task forces between the institutions and their leadership, analysing the expected threats.

Empowered by the legal mandate it is entrusted with, NCTC serves as a central information bank of notorious terrorists, suspected terrorists, and international terrorist groups, in addition to information on targets, plans, communications networks and support channels for terrorists. NCTC maintains the information in a special database, which is the central secret repository of the US government for all international terrorists.

NCTC updates regularly all the information through its database. The terrorist identities database compiled by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee contains more than one million two hundred thousand identities of individuals suspected of having links with terrorism, important local individuals. Given its relentless activities and unremitting and concerted efforts, observers consider NCTC the US counterterrorism spearhead; NCTC is mandated with protecting the US interests at home and abroad, and drying up the sources of terrorism internationally, eliminating its impact and visibility. ■

JOINT TERRORISM ANALYSIS CENTER BRITISH COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY



Britain faces a spate of different and ongoing terrorist threats. The increase in threats is attributable to the rise of ISIS and the pertinacious threat of Al Qaeda. The global coalition, in which Britain is a spearhead, successfully clamped down on ISIS militarily, which led to a decrease in its territories, and a deterioration of its central propaganda apparatus, and a decline on the media level and on the ground. However, JTAC's ability to direct threats, carry out attacks and enthrone extremists to join terrorism is still the most dangerous global terrorist threat targeting the countries of the world in general, and Britain alongside its interests at home and abroad in particular.

FOUNDATION AND STRUCTURE

It has been always imperative for the relevant British authorities to enhance the capacity of their security and intelligence services and further expand their influence in combating violent extremism and countering terrorism. To this end, Joint Terrorism Analysis Center (JTAC) came into play in 2003; JTAC has grown bigger to better enhance its performance and ability to carry out the tasks entrusted professionally.

JTAC has become a key element in the British National Intelligence structure; JTAC is located at the headquarters of the British Military Intelligence Service, MI5, in London, and is an independent, self-contained organization consisting

of representatives of 16 government departments and agencies. JTAC operates under the supervision of the Director General of MI5. JTAC oversees the UK's counter-terrorism plan based on four foci: prevention, follow-up, protection and preparedness.

Equally important, JTAC brings together Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), Government Communications Command Authority and counterterrorism police among others to analyze the threats facing the United Kingdom.

The JTAC Director is accountable to the Director-General of MI5, who reports on the JTAC's activities to the Government's Joint Intelligence Committee. The Oversight Board headed by the Cabinet Office monitors the feasibility and impact of the committee's actions with departments. JTAC is mandated with providing the necessary analysis and information, including intelligence information on terrorist threats.

One of the main objectives of JTAC is to break the institutional barriers between intelligence agencies; it involves all in one headquarters, giving them a new common identity developed by the JTAC membership.

TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

JTAC is mandated with analyzing and assessing all intelligence related to international terrorism, determining threat levels, issuing warnings of terrorist

threats, providing clients in government departments and agencies on a large scale with such warnings and issuing meticulous reports on terrorist trends, networks and their capabilities, while pooling the counterterrorism expertise of the police and government departments and agencies.

In a similar vein, a comparative academic study on JTAC and the Threat Analysis Coordination Unit was published in 2019, revealing that JTAC is tasked with assessing risks and threats of terrorism to Britain's vital interests, which local citizens may be vulnerable to. JTAC identifies five levels of terrorist threats: imminent critical threat, highly likely severe threat, high and strongly potential threat, moderately yet unlikely threat and improbable low threat.

CONCLUSION

JTAC is one of the largest and most professional intelligence agencies in counterterrorism, and it has well contributed to the drafting of many important counterterrorism reports in Britain, drawing on a professional work team, and advanced systems and technologies, aimed at identifying terrorist risks and threats. It has notched up resounding and phenomenal success that helped in controlling threat levels, while anticipating any potential threats and nipping in the bud any terrorist attack that might threaten Britain. ■

home countries, as they were denied citizenship and the right to their child custody born in conflict areas, in addition to fear of the potential reaction of their communities and stigmatization.

By extrapolating a set of cases, the research study reveals the lack of seasoned religious scholars keen on laying bare extremist ideologies. The research study also calls for reducing community-based exclusion of such returning women, while preventing a violent reaction towards them. To better enable their reintegration into their communities and the wider society, it is essential to involve the media and community leaders to provide balanced approaches that enable dialogue and social cohesion.

The statistics produced by the SOUFAN Group reveals the countries with the largest number of female enrollees in ISIS include Morocco (275), France (230), Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom more than a hundred and Tunisia (100).

The recent wave of terrorist women has been described as more complex; hence, it is enormously important to evince close cooperation between civil society and governments, with the aim of addressing many problems, including restoring trust and identity, empowering women and finding psychological and social support. As such, it can be argued that the participation of women leaders in these issues is vital and can be a springboard to bridge public policy gaps.

INDONESIAN EXPERIENCE

Indonesia used to be a hotbed of terrorist operations. In May of 2018, the counterterrorism police confrontation with ISIS supporters claimed the lives of 12 civilians, 7 police officers and killed 30 terrorists. Lamentably enough, among the perpetrators were entire families, a case which could be termed familial terrorism. Statistics indicate that between 300 and 700 Indonesians traveled to Iraq and Syria, of whom 45% were children and women.

Hence, the "Civil Society Coalition Against Violent Extremism" (C-SAVE) in close cooperation with the Indonesian government, was an important initiative that did help set up programs targeting returnees from the hotbeds of extremism and terrorism, including children and women. Governmental institutions participated in this program to reintegrate the returnees.

The said alliance successfully completed a range of activities for adults, including vocational training, providing psychological counseling to individuals and families, organizing religious discussions, educating and sensitizing the community, and conducting dialogue with various community components.

KENYAN EXPERIENCE

Advocacy for Women in Peace and Security Africa (AWAPSA) was founded in Kenya in 2016. One of its pioneering programs was to strengthen the resilience of women and girls in the face of violent extremism. AWAPSA was able to conduct workshops to educate women, which well contributed to introducing the threat of extremism.

Supported by AWAPSA, thankfully, 100 women were able to return to school and start businesses. Many of the women as stakeholders and beneficiaries of the "Police Booth" program were able to build bridges of trust with the community and the police.

NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

In Nigeria, "Al-Amin Foundation for Peace and Development" supported returning women and girls, helping them integrate into community and avoid stigmatization; the said foundation directed the parents and the people concerned to take back their daughters, in cooperation with community leaders and influencers.

The activities of the Al-Amin Foundation included four categories of returning women and girls, namely, women who joined Boko Ha-

ram and adopted its ideologies and became leaders therein, women who were married to Boko Haram men and were kidnapped by this organization, and girls under the age of 19 who became soldiers. The Al-Amin Foundation sought to restore ex-combatant wives from Borno State from extremism, integrate them into community, reduce social stigma and restore the community's confidence in such women and girls.

PAKISTANI EXPERIENCE

PAIMAN Alumni Trust was established in 2004, which developed "sustainable peacebuilding" programs involving women and youth from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

The said program seeks to create peace groups (TOLOMAS; i.e., together, in Pashto), groups that work with the police and religious leaders to understand and confront the culture of extremism, and to restore a number of jihadists from extremist groups after their increase since 2015.

The program also involved women in the awareness campaign, emphasizing the importance of their engagement in combating and preventing extremism. PAIMAN Alumni Trust supervised the delivery of training courses, the production of media materials and a television series.

Equally important, PAIMAN Alumni Trust successfully persuaded many women to abandon extremist groups after being supportive of them, in addition to ceasing to collect money and fundraising for them, or helping them to recruit more women. Many women once engaged in such terrorist activities no longer sewed suicide belts and became active in making a decent living and halal livelihood. It is reported that PAIMAN Alumni Trust cooperates with about 400 youth to transform them from extremism into volunteers for peace.

UGANDAN EXPERIENCE

The Kitgum Women Peace Initiative (KIWEPI) between 2005 and 2015, during the civil war with the Lord's Army in Uganda, received more than 600 women returning from the jungle after serving the terrorist organization. KIWEPI provided psychological treatment for returnee women and helped them integrate into community.

KIWEPI pursued a set of goals, including educating the community in peace building and conflict resolution, providing comprehensive psychological and social support, seeking the recovery of women, girls and children impacted by war, treating trauma, increasing women's ability to participate in income-generating activities and engaging women in reviving positive cultural practices.

LEBANESE EXPERIENCE

RESCUE ME was established in Beirut in 2011, which provided assistance and psychosocial support to criminals in prisons, including members of ISIS and other extremist groups. RESCUE ME believes that understanding the root causes of extremism and crime as early as possible can well protect society from crime and violence. To this end, female social workers from RESCUE ME conducted research in these centers with prisoners, such as Jabhat Al-Nusra, Fatah Al-Islam and ISIS along with their families.

It is abundantly evident from such experiences that local counter-extremism organizations that adopt various approaches are ubiquitously made available. The grassroots contribution of people in Nigeria and Mali is noticeable. It is equally evident that the global civil society seeks to establish networks of local organizations interconnected globally, seeking cooperation and complementarity in confronting extremism and terrorism. Beyond a shadow of doubt, these activities well contribute to narrowing and bridging the existing governmental and global policy gaps. ■

VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES IN WEST AFRICA FEATURED BY THE IMCTC MONTHLY SYMPOSIUM



IMCTC held its eleventh monthly symposium in Riyadh, November 26, 2020, featuring "Violent Extremism and Development Challenges in West Africa". On his side, Maj. Gen. Mohammed Saeed Al-Moghedi, IMCTC Secretary-General, emphasized that development per se is one of the most important bedrock pillars in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism, while development-driven investment produces long-term impact that whittles down violent extremism and curbs conflicts leading to terrorism. Maj. Gen. Al-Moghedi also explained that the said symposium accurately featured and objectively discussed a critically important reality, attaching a special attention to the soft treatment approach of countering extremism and terrorism. To this end, social and economic development methods that would contribute significantly to limiting the spread of fragile environments are accordingly adopted, which in turn unnerved the terrorist groups that feed on such breeding grounds to achieve their malicious and despicable goals.

SOCIAL PEACE AND TERRORISM

Dr. Mansour Saeed Al-Qarni, Director of the Ideology Department at the IMCTC Center, highlighted the significance of the said

symposium as it discusses avenues to better contribute to holistic development in peace-building, promoting social peace, settling conflicts, and countering extremism. Taken together, peace then prevails and harmony burgeons, immaculately. In a similar vein, Dr. Al-Qarni pointed out that West Africa has witnessed social, political, cultural and religious transformations glaringly visible in recent decades, which have contributed to transforming the Western African communities from traditional to post-traditional, accompanied by a shift in consumer patterns, social, cultural, ideological, religious and political manifestations. Such transformations have been notoriously marked by the spread of violent extremism of different manifestations across the region, overburdened by the consequences of economic failure alongside other factors related to the African society and salient characteristics.

The raging conflict mounting between the government and its apparatuses on the one hand, and extremist and terrorist groups on the other hand, has become a new obstacle to achieving comprehensive and productive development across the region; the cost of counterterrorism has become exorbitantly high, and West Africa

has become a vast arena for the struggle raging between terrorist groups, organized crime and the confrontation of the government and the tribes concerned.

Dr. Lassana Diarra, researcher at the Strategic Center for Security in the Sahel and Sahara, highlighted the importance of local development in strengthening social peace in West Africa, especially in light of the enormous challenges, coming into play following the independence of the relevant countries. The specter of violent conflicts, usually termed "low-intensity conflicts", is among the most notorious challenges. Technically, such low-intensity conflicts lead to practical violence based on a type of social hostility, which soon develops into violence and intimidation based on differences of identity or ethnic differences.

Dr. Diarra defined local development as the capacity of local actors and influencers to unite together to achieve a common development goal by mobilizing the capabilities and resources available in the region. The foregoing definition draws on three main aspects: emphasis on the local and regional nature of activities and actions, strengthening the timeframe for actions and the interaction among actors within a collective approach. Dr. Diarra

ra also defined social peace as an ideal social and political model, characterized by tranquility and the absence of conflict, unrest or upheaval.

SOCIO-POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION

Dr. Diarra presented the most glaringly marked features of the current situation, manifested by the overlapping political-ideological issues of identity, the recurrence of political violence following electoral engagement, the recurrence of conflicts in local communities, independence and liberation tendencies, and the steady and rapid growth of terrorism across several countries in the region, such as Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Niger. This also was marked by the attempts of extremist groups for their terrorist operations to snowball, the most notorious are BOKO HARAM, JAMA'A NUSRAT UL-ISLAM WA AL-MUSLIMIN, and ISIS in the Greater Sahara.

In the face of these factors and causes that truly threaten stability and social peace in West Africa, pose major challenges to local development, and enfeeble the impact of development in preventing, addressing and settling conflicts, Dr. Diarra recommended strengthening cooperation between decentralized entities in West Africa, supporting the enactment of laws, setting regulations and training the officials of the communities, depoliticizing

community leaders and strengthening the resources and bolstering administrative independence of communities.

OPPORTUNITIES GOING AWRY IN COMBATING EXTREMISM

Dr. Mustafa Abdullah, researcher at the Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Center, addressed development and violent extremism, exploring the future challenges, highlighting that development in general leads to improving the quality of life, increasing job opportunities, protecting human rights and empowering women in addition to environmental sustainability. These are preconditions for maintaining peace and stability among peoples and countries. Although West Africa is rich in natural resources, such as oil, gold, diamonds, cocoa, wood and undoubtedly essential resources to advance socio-economic development, we find that the region is still largely helpless to address development-related issues, such as grinding penury, widespread youth unemployment, marginalization of ethnic, religious and cultural minorities and many others. This bitter reality has favorably brought about a breeding ground for extremist groups and terrorist activities that challenge the authorities of West Africa.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGE

Dr. Abdullah explained that to better address this reality, two main challenges

should be confronted. The first challenge is the unequal distribution of national resources in favor of political elites and external partners, which brought about extremist groups in West Africa.

The second challenge is glaringly the misinterpretation of the religious concept of jihad by extremist groups, and putting such misconception into practice to make matters worse. That is why extremist and terrorist groups are active in carefully recruiting followers from vulnerable groups and decoying them to slip into and join extremist terrorist groups.

Dr. Abdullah emphasized that the threats related to more violent and horrific attacks are notoriously marked among the vulnerable groups across the region for financial gains and opposing the political elites responsible for corruption rife in governments and mismanagement of national resources.

These threats will remain a major challenge to maintaining stability and consolidating peace in the region, if the methods of governance are not radically changed to address the concerns of the people, especially the youth.

Dr. Abdullah concluded that the youth bulge snowballing into reality has become like a time bomb, threatening the entire region, if large investments are not made to advance development. ■



CENTER ON TERRORISM, EXTREMISM, AND COUNTERTERRORISM: AWARENESS-RAISING AND UPGRADING COMPETENCIES



The Center on Terrorism, Extremism and Counterterrorism (CTEC) was established to better provide insights for the public and private institutions into the threats of extremism and terrorism, alongside counter-measures and approaches. CTEC published various research papers in which researchers and students used analytical tradecraft, data science and linguistics.

CTEC is affiliated with MIIS's Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies (NPTS) Department, employing faculty and students, directing the students of international studies to acquire the necessary skills, by communicating with government agencies, international organizations and others. CTEC enables students to acquire practical experiences that qualify them to assume positions as research assistants in Master Degrees in Terrorism Prevention and Spread Studies and Financial Crime Management.

AREAS OF FOCUS

CTEC has five foci:

1. Online Extremism

CTEC analyzes the contents of the media platforms; its research well contributes to enhancing the understanding of the public and the private sector of the methods of recruitment and fundraising for terrorist purposes. CTEC assists technology companies in developing their policies and tools to address online extremist content.

2. Threat Finance and Sanctions

In cooperation with the Institute's Financial Crime Management Program, CTEC conducts studies and investigations, providing specialized policy guidance on terrorism, criminal financing, and counter-terrorism financing.

CTEC research addresses issues relating to sanctions evasion, examines the feasibility of terrorist deterrent sanctions and develops research in cooperation with financial technology companies and cryptocurrencies to understand the terrorists' methods of fundraising.

3. Qualitative Confrontation

CTEC has a database of special operations that helps create relevant research, understand learned lessons, improve future policy and develop public awareness of special operations counterterrorism forces.

4. Countering Violent Extremism

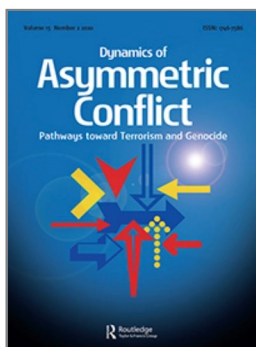
Digital literacy is an important factor in combating extremism, CTEC seeks to better build digital educational capacities in local communities, training in the use of modern digital technologies, and raising efficiency. CTEC cooperates with experts in countering violent extremism to understand prevention efforts, and the reintegration of extremists and terrorists.

5. Emerging Technologies

CTEC is focused on analyzing different approaches and keeping abreast of new technologies such as artificial intelligence to understand the effects of terrorism and counterterrorism. ■

Periodicals

DYNAMICS OF ASYMMETRIC CONFLICT



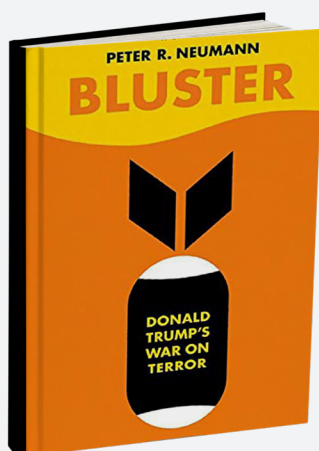
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The Dynamic Asymmetric journal published in English places a special focus on pathways toward terrorism and genocide. It publishes authentic, well-referenced and peer-reviewed research on conflict and terrorism from different perspectives including psychology, economics, politics, history, criminology and sociology.

The Journal aims to establish approaches that denounce, prevent or mitigate violence, reject wars among countries and condemn terrorist practices. The research published by the Journal is of high

quality and quantity, as it includes the results of field interviews in conflict areas, research experiences of those suffering the horrors, evils and scourges of wars. Different perspectives are widely welcome by the Journal in anthropology, communications, criminology, economics, history, political science, sociology, and more. It provides researchers with the opportunity to engagement in a cultural trend that includes policy makers, analysts, police, army and intelligence officers, and employees of non-governmental institutions on peace and war issues, inviting scholars for more support. ■



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BLUSTER DONALD TRUMP'S WAR ON TERROR

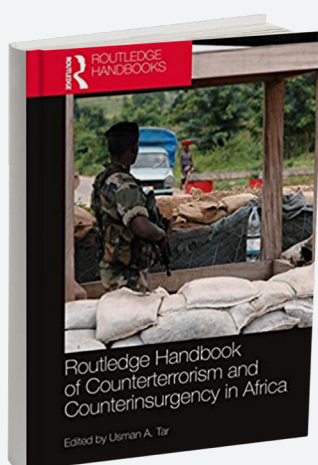
One of the most ostentatious promises made by US President Trump's election campaign is to entirely eliminate terrorism. Were these promises purposefully made to garner more votes or to induce a radical change in US policy that contradicts the policies of previous administrations?

Since Trump has taken up office, the US counterterrorism policy has become more militarized and less concerned with causes and consequences, relations with foreign partners have deteriorated and the power of the far-right has ballooned into prominence, undermining the confidence of minorities of immigrants in the US that claims freedom and peaceful coexistence.

Peter Neumann assesses Trump's counterterrorism approach; Neumann argues that Trump's war on terror looks strong in the short term, but will cause damage over time. The President has not just failed to provide a strategic framework for defeating terrorism; his entire approach has made the world much less safe and undermined America's greatest soft power asset. David Fromm, columnist for

The Atlantic and a former speechwriter at the White House, explains that Neumann's judgment of the Trump administration boils down to two key ideas: myriad of angry instincts and a fuzzy strategy. Daniel Byman, professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and author of *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israel's Counterterrorism*, believes that Newman's publication is an excellent assessment of the change in counterterrorism under Trump's administration.

Neumann emphasizes Trump has undermined counterterrorism efforts by mixing up terrorism with immigration, while enticing the far-right at home, stoking the soft power of the US around the world. Neumann's publication is a well-documented, logical and smooth, objective critique of the Trump's administration counterterrorism approach at home and abroad. Notoriously, Trump has vehemently rejected all the policies of his predecessors, but the change during his administration was minimal; what changed did not pay off much for the Americans; rather, it contributed to their destabilization, charging the atmosphere with fear and mistrust. ■



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ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF COUNTERTERRORISM AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN AFRICA

Given its rich natural resources that make it coveted for several powers, especially investment in energy, Africa still trudges through terrorist threats. It is also threatened by extremists and terrorists, especially in the West Coast Region. Boko Haram of Nigeria is one of the most notoriously dangerous groups threatening security and stability across the region.

Against a backdrop of precariousness, brutal and savage terrorism threatens the security of the region; the entire world is reduced helpless to understand the true intention of terrorist crimes, explosions and threats. Whatever intentions are announced, humanity strongly condemns every terrorist act that targets the lives of innocent people. Equally important, the traditional counterterrorism approach, which relies on militarization and security approach, cannot produce the results desired. This is evident in the large number of terrorist attacks in Africa, at the rate of three attacks per day.

As such, this handbook, the editor of which is Usman Tar, Professor of Political Science and Defense Studies at the Nigerian Defense Academy, well explains how to radically change the defense and security environments in Africa, according to the new changes in global politics

and local implications. The publication discusses the transnational counterterrorism dimensions and counterinsurgency in Africa, while revealing the efforts made by African countries and regional organizations in support of global counterterrorism efforts.

It critically assesses the emerging regional counterterrorism structures, counterinsurgency and organized violence in Africa, adopting the African Union Counter-Terrorism Framework (AU-CTF) and Regional Security Councils (RSC).

It also examines the structures, tools and methods of counterterrorism and insurgency established by African countries to contain, reduce, and eliminate all manifestations of violence across Africa. Finally, the non-state actors such as civil society, volunteer groups, private security companies and defense contractors are highlighted as they have come into play at the counterterrorism and counterinsurgency scene in Africa.

The publication is of great academic interest and makes up a knowledge-based reference for students and researchers in security and terrorism-related studies. ■

TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR SAFER MEDIA CONTENT: STRATEGIES FOR MORE SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA



IMCTC held an awareness workshop for the delegates of the IMCTC member countries and the IMCTC Center personnel on cyber-security information, on 12-22 October 2020 at the IMCTC Center in Riyadh, which was presented by Ali Al-Shinaif, Director of Information Technology Department at the Center and Hanan Al-Shehri, a specialist in information security.

The said workshop aimed at enhancing awareness of information security, highlighting potential security threats, minimizing their effects and adopting best security practices. The course provided activities and programs, such as password protection, data protection methods, e-mail security, smart phone security, privacy, protection from malware and cyber-attacks.

A digital awareness platform was created to display visual content on key topics in facility security alongside awareness publications on cybersecurity. ■

IMCTC AWARENESS SYMPOSIUM ADDRESSES COVID-19 PANDEMIC CHALLENGES



IMCTC held an awareness symposium, featuring “COVID-19 Pandemic, One-Year Harvest, and Upcoming Challenges” at its headquarters in Riyadh on 16 November 2020. The said symposium addressed the second wave of COVID-19 Pandemic, and countermeasures taken to protect the IMCTC Center and personnel.

The symposium, which was presented by Col. Abdullah Alghuwairi, Mr. Turki Al-Ahmari, and Dr. Amjad Abdulrahman, reviewed the action plan developed by the COVID-19 Pandemic Management Committee at the IMCTC Center alongside the achievements of the Committee and its efforts to develop plans for managing the pandemic, putting into action analytical studies on preventive measures, identifying cases and the risks to which some employees can be exposed, collecting and analyzing data and issuing recommendations.

The symposium reviewed the efforts put in by the said committee in implementing follow-up and monitoring action. The committee has successfully conducted 26 meetings and workshops, developed 19 recommendations, issued 50 publications, sterilized the IMCTC Center and provided all the employees with the necessary preventive tools. ■