



IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN COMBATING EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

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Education per se, in its overarching denotation and connotation along with its elitist and populist subtle nuances, comes at the forefront of the means that can best counter terrorism efficiently; which cannot be otherwise achieved through rough and tough methods, rushing into resisting terrorists and cordoning their harm off desultorily; such methods do not undermine the deeply ingrained ideas they are imbibed with, which are one of the most compelling reasons that drive them to perpetrate violence against the government and society.

Education goes beyond merely padding information out and inculcating data into one's mind by rote, or regurgitating the ideas of others as if numbly unaware of how to consciously piece these pieces of information together. Education is rather building one's cognitive, mental and intellectual capacities to look critically into the commonly accepted ideas, while developing one's vision to articulate one's ideas about the self, community and the entire world. It will always be either a central point from which to start understanding and interpreting, expressing opinion and taking a position and making a decision, or a framework as a term of reference. With this in mind, one will not slip into confusion between perceptions and visions, and will not be vulnerable to the invasion of radical and extremist ideologies that conquer an empty mind.

THOUGHT TREATMENT

Terrorism as an action starts with ideas or theoretical concepts that seem coherent and plausible to the mind that does not have the ability to examine, investigate, criticize and analyze, nor a mind that can meditate and look at each matter reflectively and meticulously, and nor an experience that provides one how to mull everything over once heard and seen, making him or her suspicious and doubtful until everything is well settled and certain.

The world of ideas, whether crazily crackpot or deeply rooted, is not the only reason that causes an individual to slip into extremism, as this may be due to mental disorder, or a financial driver that lures and entices such an individual to get involved in whatsoever can achieve protection, or a social support he or she misses, or a pleasure he or she desires, or money he or she looks after, or a social status he or she pines for. These reasons still can consolidate the survival of such an individual among extremists only after stuffing one's head with their ideologies; regardless of the reasons for being involved with extremist and terrorist organizations and groups, the value and the ideological side cannot be denied and brushed aside; rather, it may have the greatest impact on the making of extremism, as evidenced by the fact that the terrorists who falsely attribute themselves to Islam belong to different social classes, various educational backgrounds, different countries, and multiple life experiences; they all are plagued with the same ideology.

For this reason, education always has an important and profound function in confronting extremism, not only extremists, but also combating terrorism and terrorists. This is a very important issue in perceptions and procedures that desultorily rush into confronting violent, organized or sometimes reckless behavior of terrorists in a security or military pathway that may be urgent in order to repel terrorist attacks, or to nip them in the bud, by collecting information about the target people to be terminated, and raiding them in their strongholds before they carry out their crimes. This is never a definitive solution. There are always the gateways that new extremists get out afresh from the incubators.

CULTURE AND ASSOCIATED CONCEPT

Education is a complex concept that combines literature, arts and a rich body of relevant interdisciplinary human knowledge. Natural sciences are also subsumed under education according to some schools. education also includes the traditional and folkloric proverbs and sayings, maxims, adages, epics, myths, mental images, and everyday life rituals. If all of these are availably displayed in one way or another to the public, an educated person is not the one who picks one piece of information from each and every knowledge center as does a florist when picking one flower from each garden to make a bouquet of flowers, nor does he cherry-pick a snippet from each and every discussion; rather, an educated person is the one who readily

welcomes into one's mind all that is seen, heard, felt, understood and received for better interaction, through which he or she develops a vision and makes a position and builds one's own intellectual abilities in criticizing the self and the other.

According to the dictionaries of the Arabic language, 'education' is etymologically derived from 'educate' (verb); 'to acquire an education' means that someone has become intellectually smart and sagacious. In addition to the linguistic denotation couched in semantic subtle nuances, an educated person has a conscious critical mind, and an exquisite taste, which makes him or her immune from a possible invasion of any abnormal ideologies whose owners claim to possess the absolute truth.

Folkloric education (folklore), with its artistic depth, including poetries, novels and music, represents a wall against a great response to extremism, and this is why extremists always encircle and undermine it, describing it as a "pre-history" that boomerangs on them, drumming up for this concept into people's minds persistently, making such a concept convincingly appealing to people. In some areas controlled by extremist organizations, extremists prevented people from performing and practicing their customs and rituals in joys and sorrows.

By the same token and to the same extent, extremists reject the arts and literature produced by the elite of educated people, literati and intellectuals, unless they are compatible with their perception. Cinema, theater, poetry versification, fictional, narrative and music production is categorically rejected by them, claiming that they are acts that are steeped in and riddled with lies, and are designed to distract people from supplicating to God, or they are manifestations of debauchery. Extremist groups made efforts to produce their art, which fell flat, dry and tasteless, superficially without any meaningful depth, and perfunctorily preaching without observing any aesthetic or stylistic conditions; it is merely a spiritless speech. In addition to criticism and accountability, real education makes diversity, as it is attracted to all that can generate benefits, and thus it is not overwhelmed by one group or derives its power from one source; rather, it is generated by various cognitive and human sources, and calls for this rich diversity.

The third element that characterizes education is the perpetual movement driven by its ability to provoke an internal debate, then heated discussion and regeneration. This also makes extremists in conflict with it, as they tend to stagnant ideologies that constitute a closed system, on which they depend without scrutiny; otherwise, their power becomes too poor to shore up, and their cohesion fades away, let slipping from their hold the most important thing they always seek, which is building an impervious organization based on the principle of (absolute obedience and submissiveness).

INVINCIBILITY OF EDUCATION

Many extremist and terrorist groups alienate those who offer new, alternative ideas, and covertly believe in the principle of “organizing rather than theorizing”. As long as they edge out intellectuals, not allowing them to join their groups, while antagonizing everyone who has a wealth of literature or art; such groups have not produced in its history any great writer or a talented artist, even if they sought to have their own literary and artistic context, they will practice predominant and overbearing preaching on such people, forcing them to be cuffed by subordination to extremist ideology, making them lose the basics of art and literature and associated freedoms. On the other hand, we feel and sense the extremists’ hostility to education; this is glaringly visible in a statement, whether in their prophetic rhetoric or their publications directed to society, or the books and brochures that develop and even beyond.

Based on the foregoing, it becomes necessary to pose a question mark on the following: How can education in our communities be put into action to act as an impermissible wall against extremism? Ideas need to be firmly established and applied on the ground and embraced by people to be translated through institutions, otherwise, they loom large on the horizon. Therefore, I suggest the following:

1. Building small complexes of education, or enhancing the activity of existing ones, and such complexes will be the center of residential places in order for young people to find them easily within their reach and immediate vicinity.
2. The foregoing requires that reading or extended reading be an essential part of school curricula, starting from the first primary

grade and ending at the secondary stage, provided that the teachers are prepared to perform this task.

3. The “Al-Jarn Theater” experience in Egypt can be applied; it was used to confront extremist ideologies, a project that aims to revitalize arts, literature and folklore. When the project was implemented in schools of villages known for the presence of radical Islamic groups, it was a resounding success, despite the presence of resistance at first from students, claiming that all arts are prohibited. Over time, however, these people started to draw and play music, write poetry, stories and articles, perform plays, and create popular art derived from and reflecting their environment.
4. Attention should be paid to educational product of children. Some members of extremist religious groups have relied on this method to attract children, or accept their ideas and show sympathy for them. Facing them should be in this context, and at this early age, and education-based magazines alone do not pay off in this regard. Rather, writers who write for children should be encouraged along with the publishing houses.
5. Producers of arts and literature should be encouraged and presented as persons worthy of celebration; what they write is an essential pillar in strengthening the (soft power) of the state.
6. It is necessary to organize competitions in creative writing for school students and youth, on specific issues that promote “enlightenment” and raise the importance of religious moderation.

In any case, education should not be treated as necklaces for decoration; rather, it is a means of building the human being, building his and her knowledge, values and directions, and hence the renaissance of society as a whole. Extremism and terrorism should not be treated as a purely security issue; rather, they are based on values and ideologies that are false and incompatible with those adopted by the main social trend; it is imperative to address them ideologically in the short term and the long term, and address them from security and military perspectives as they transform from mere black ideologies to measures and violent actions to impose their

perception on people forcibly.