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TERRORISM AND POVERTY: A DIALECTICAL DILEMMA

Dr. Hany Ali Nasira, Egyptian writer and political
expert and member of the Egyptian Journalists
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General Supervisor

Maj. Gen. Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi

Secretary-General of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition

Editor-in-Chief

Ashour Ibrahim Aljuhani

Head of Studies and Research Department

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**DR. HANY ALI NASIRA, EGYPTIAN WRITER AND POLITICAL EXPERT AND
MEMBER OF THE EGYPTIAN JOURNALISTS SYNDICATE**

Throughout history, poverty has usually been associated with the absence of social justice on the one hand, and, on the other hand, with the outbreak of revolutions and conflicts in various parts of the world, both in the ancient and modern times. The slogan of social justice and the call for justice has not been absent from any ideology of change or utopia throughout the ages, something we have identified clearly in the socialist and national revolutions since the first half of the 20th century.

However, there has been no direct link between poverty and terrorism in its modern sense. This is perhaps because most contemporary forms of terrorism, whether in their positivist or religious forms, have been dominated by ideological facilitation and justification that requires a longer period of time to ferment and fuel the grievance of poverty until it becomes a driving and steering motive towards violence and extremism.

However, there is a clear link, as we see it, between poverty, whether in its individual or collective form on the one hand, and terrorism on the other hand, for two reasons:

Terrorism meets and corresponds with revolution in many dimensions, whether in the discourse and tools of mobilization, recruitment, incitement to revolution, distortion of the other and the ideological enemy, or in the attempt to employ poverty to affect and be associated with people's lives.

Terrorist activities have witnessed a significant rise in poor environments in recent years. It has been established that terrorist groups have used poverty, whether in their confrontations and wars against governments, their opponents, or against influential international powers, whether as a near or far enemy, or in recruiting the poor and needy as elements in their ranks.

In this study, we provide an analysis of the role of poverty in pushing towards violence and terrorism, by controlling for its conception and analyzing its relationship through different perspectives, as well as through several enlightening models of ideological and religious examples, both eastern and western.

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I. Ancient and Modern Conceptions of Poverty

It may be necessary to control for the conception of poverty, its dimensions, and its various determinants. Poverty is both a private and public issue, in which individual and collective aspects are interrelated, and its effects go beyond individuals and groups. Poverty thus is no longer a purely individual issue as it was conceived in the old times. Undoubtedly, it is now affected by the educational level of the individual himself, as well as his skills and family background, and is related to the economies of countries and global changes alike.

Moreover, the contemporary measurements of poverty are no longer impressionistic as they used to be in the past, but its indicators are subject to a number of determinants which define who is to be considered below the poverty level, and who is to be considered above the poverty level. In this study, we will explain and examine the concept of poverty and its various aspects in the Arabic language and heritage, as well as in modern international literature to control for the prevalence of the term and to limit any sense of vagueness which conceives it in an impressionistic way devoid of scientific scrutiny and control.

In our Arabic language, poverty does not go beyond its superficial meaning; that is, it refers to an individual's sense of want or need for necessities. Language dictionaries find it sufficient to define poverty with its antonyms. Ibn Manzur (died in 711H, corresponding to 1311), author of *Lisan al-Arab* (An Arabic language dictionary), says: "Poverty is the opposite of richness, and a poor person is one who owns nothing."¹ This is commonly understood in old and contemporary literature. Poverty is thus associated with smallness, scarcity, and the need for excess. A person who has poor manners suffers from lack of manners; poor language refers to incorrect and badly expressed language; and to have poor morals means to be badly

behaved, and so on.

However, in the modern times, and along with the developments of sociology and its branches, poverty has become a complex and relative concept, with multiple aspects and features, as well as with different measurements and indicators from one society to another. Generally speaking, we can control for poverty by saying that it refers to an individual's inability to obtain the basic resources and needs for a decent life, such as food, drink, education, health, and the like, as well as a country's failure to provide the basic resource needs of its poor segments. The World Bank has defined the concept of poverty as "the inability to achieve the minimum standard of living,"² which is set by the World Bank at less than \$2.15 per person per day. The World Bank states that this trend continued to decline for a quarter of a century until it was interrupted in 2020, when poverty rose due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 crisis, combined with the effects of conflicts and climate change, which had already slowed down the speed of poverty reduction.³

The definition of poverty in United Nations literature expands to entail more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, along with social discrimination and exclusion from society, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making.⁴

Turning to the Arab world, a study on poverty in the Arab world defines poverty as "the inability to achieve a certain standard of material living, which represents a reasonable and acceptable minimum limit in a given society at a specific period of time".⁵

II. Direct and Indirect Relationship between Poverty and Terrorism

Poverty, in general, and its resentment by society members, constitutes a fertile environment and soil for the growth of violence, and for establishing a sense of oppression. Poverty thus stands as a direct and indirect cause and motive of violence, terrorism, and crime in general, which are well known to be quite common in poor environments.

However, the role of poverty and its motivating influence differs from one case to another. Individual poverty may represent a motive for crime and delinquency, but collective poverty has a crucial role in pushing towards

terrorism. This collective poverty may also be perceived as a direct and indirect motive of terrorism, as it is employed, ideologized, and formulated as to justify the feeling of grievance, hold the other accountable for the current state of poverty, whether this other includes ruling or capitalist regimes or religious or doctrinal forces, and to push towards confrontation and violent terrorism.

In this study, we offer two approaches for interpreting the relationship between poverty and terrorism. The first approach considers poverty an indirect motive of

terrorism, while the second conceives it as a direct motive. Each approach has its own arguments and evidence, as explained in the following pages:

1. First Approach: Conceptions of Poverty as an Indirect Motive of Terrorism

The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism has officially classified as terrorist 68 terrorist organizations and groups in different continents of the world, due to their threat to international peace and security.⁶ These entities exploit poverty as a main tool in recruiting new members to join their organizations, and to spread their extremist ideologies in the societies in which they operate.

a. Stages of Development of Poverty as a Motive of Terrorism

Researchers have set a number of theoretical hypotheses aimed at determining the extent of association between poverty and the inclination to engage in terrorist groups and activities. While there are more than thirty models and theories associated with the radicalization process, experts have identified a common denominator among all of the theories that includes three main elements, as follows:

- **An overwhelming sentiment of grievance:** This point highlights how the poor conceive poverty as an oppressive force, especially when they embrace the idea that the power and wealth organs in their countries deliberately discriminate against them and keep them impoverished. These forces also deprive the poor of their wealth and plunder their resources. This idea becomes more entrenched with the absence of transparency and the existence of clear reasons for discrimination. This stage thus leads to fueling feelings of anger, revolution, and rebellion among the poor in the face of the rich, especially with the articulation of differences, class distinction, marginalization of the poor, and discrimination on inhuman and non-national grounds such as color. Examples of this stage include the Zanj Revolt against the Abbasid Caliphate that broke out between the years 255H and 270H,⁶ and the slave rebellions in the Roman era, which took place in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.
- **Politicization of Poverty:** This stage is initiated by portraying poverty as a public political issue; that is, by ignoring individual responsibility for the phenomenon, and holding political regimes accountable for its emergence and aggravation. This approach alleges that eliminating poverty and improving socio-economic conditions are contingent on confronting these capitalist systems and their rich

and wealthy elites, which are accused of stealing money and wealth from the livelihoods of the poor, and paving the way for revolution and exercise of violence against them. Accordingly, the proponents of this approach have adopted the elimination of feudalism and capitalism as a slogan and a goal, exactly as extremist leftist movements, in particular, have been doing. They would also consider poverty a result of the fact that foreigners and immigrants have had a share in the resources of their countries, the same approach adopted by right-wing populist movements recently emerging in the West. Poverty represents a common ideology and slogan raised by the various nationalist and right-wing revolutions in the world in the 20th century and before. Instigating a sense of the grievance of poverty would lead to violence and confrontation with others.

- **Mobilization and Recruitment:** Mobilization is a higher stage of the feeling of the grievance of poverty and a wish to identify the path to salvation. Mobilization is followed by recruitment, which means joining extremist groups and engaging in their activities, obeying their orders, and seeking to mobilize and recruit others to their ranks. At this stage, any sense of grievance, as well as anger with poverty and revolt against it, is employed to achieve what a specific ideology portrays as a means to eliminate poverty and social injustice, and to accomplish prosperity and development for all.⁷ The eradication of poverty may be a direct goal and declared slogan, as is the case with positivist ideologies, such as Marxism and right-wing populism, or indirectly falls under broader goals and slogans such as creating a utopian city or a new Medina, as is the case with some Islamist terrorist groups.⁸

In light of the foregoing discussion, and as a few researchers believe, the relationship between poverty, extremism, and terrorism appears to influence the first stage only, namely the stage in which a feeling of the grievance of poverty is formulated.

b. Enabling Factors for the Relationship between Poverty and Terrorism

Poverty, in its individual and personal context, may not be a direct motive for engaging in terrorism, but may be a driver towards crime in most cases. However, poverty, in a general or public context or environment, is often employed as a direct motive for terrorism. These are described as enabling factors of terrorism that enhance the impact of poverty.⁹ Researchers and observers have classified these enabling factors of terrorism into three types as follows:



- Necessary factors (such as the presence of a powerful leader and adequate financial resources), an example of which is the case of the Zanj Revolt in the Second Abbasid Era, and its powerful leader Ali bin Muhammad.

- Facilitating factors, which help to engage in terrorist groups (such as unemployment among youth) and lack of job opportunities, and cases in which a terrorist group takes control of and obtains resources directed towards employing these youth. We have noticed that some elements joined ISIS in 2015 in exchange for a monthly salary, ranging between 400 and 6,000 dollars¹⁰ in Syria, Libya and Iraq. Likewise, Hazara minorities and elements joined the “Liwa Fatemiyoun” (Fatemiyoun Brigade) in Syria in return for a similar salary. Until 2018, nearly 2,000 Hazara elements had been killed and 8,000 injured.¹¹ This scenario is also repeated in the same way in many regions in Africa and Asia.

- Precipitating factors (such as communal differences, economic exploitation, intensification of poverty, or unemployment); as well as perpetuating factors (e.g. suitable geographical terrain for nurturing extremist groups).¹²

A number of studies have correlated the level of poverty to both violence and extremist ideologies. For example, Siddharta Mitra’s study discussed similar and representative cases from some Latin American countries (such as Colombia and Ecuador), as well as some regions of India, particularly in the north-eastern region of the country. The study focused on specific periods of time between 1997 and 2005, and reported a lower average per capita income in that period than the global level. Data indicated that most of those low incomes pushed their owners to fall below the poverty line, and prompted some – but not all – to engage in terrorist acts.¹³

The American economist and Nobel laureate, Gary Becker (1930-2014), discussed the relationship between poverty and individual need on the one hand and violence and terrorism on the other, and found that people become more prone to commit individual crimes if they receive low wages or education, but committing societal hate crimes is usually unrelated to economic opportunities. As mentioned earlier, at the scientific and cultural level, terrorist organizations prefer highly educated individuals, especially those belonging to the middle or upper class, because they are more suited to carry out acts of globalized terrorism than poor illiterate people. That is, terrorists must integrate into a foreign environment in order for their operations to succeed.¹⁴

Charles Russell and Bowman Miller conducted a quantitative study of participants in violent operations from several different environments. They collected

demographic information on more than 350 people who engaged in terrorist activities in Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East in the period from 1966 to 1976. It was found that “the vast majority of individuals who engage in terrorist activities are well-educated, and two-thirds of terrorists are university graduates or postgraduate students who belong to the middle or upper classes of their countries”.¹⁵

There is a common tendency to consider poverty as among the indirect causes and motives of terrorism. This approach argues that if poverty were a direct cause of terrorism, billions of people from undeveloped countries would have long since terrorized the world. The indigent poor are too busy ensuring their survival to consider terrorist ideologies or to belong to extremist and terrorist groups. Those in the middle, however, who may stand to gain from protesting, and stand to lose if they do not, are more inclined toward terrorism.¹⁶

We note here a difference with the above-mentioned discussion. That is, the exploitation of poverty focuses on its employment as a general state, not on exploiting the poor themselves. Mostly, extremists use the state and slogans of poverty for their purposes. People of the upper and middle classes may embrace the ideologies of leftist extremism or the like, as was evident in the history of leftist organizations in Egypt and Iraq, for example. Many leftist leaders and activists belonged to wealthy and affluent classes, as was the case with many extremist groups in the Islamic world after the so-called Islamic awakening in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Egypt and the Arab East.

2. Second Approach: Conceptions of Poverty as a Direct Motive of Terrorism

Several observers believe in the existence of a direct and positive correlation between poverty and terrorism. We are inclined to adopt this opinion, based on two main issues:

a. Association between Terrorism Index and Poverty Rates

We have referred earlier in this study to the environment of poverty, poor development, and general state of poverty, not individual poverty. Considering the relationship between developed countries on the terrorism index over the past three years, and the level of poverty therein, we have noticed a sharp correlation.

In the following tables, the top six countries will be reviewed according to the Global Terrorism Index 2022,¹⁷ in terms of the number of terrorist operations and the resulting deaths, injuries, and hostages. These numbers are compared with poverty rates in those countries according

to World Bank data¹⁸ to measure their correlation.

Table (1): Global Terrorism Index 2022

Country	Ranking	Terrorism Index/10	Poverty Rate%
Afghanistan	1	8.822	54.5
Burkina Faso	2	8.564	41.4
Somalia	3	8.463	60
Mali	4	8.412	42.1
Syria	5	8.161	35.2
Pakistan	6	8.16	37.2

Looking at the data contained in Table 1, we find that countries that have high poverty rates also suffer from a high terrorism index, even though terrorist attacks are affected by the political contexts, counter-terrorism efforts, and international cooperation with the relevant countries.

The poverty rate was high in a country like Somalia, at a rate of 60% of the population, especially in urban areas, while in pastoral areas and villages, the percentage increased to about 69%.¹⁹ This has prompted some analysts to consider poverty in Somalia as a main motive for engaging in crime, piracy, and terrorist acts. In addition, the spread of poverty and the low level of development and national income hinder the ability of these countries to combat and confront terrorism and terrorist operations, as is the case in many African Sahel countries, such as Mali.

On the other hand, Syria scored the lowest poverty rate among those countries at a percentage of 35.2%. Although the six countries under discussion here come at the forefront of the countries that suffer from terrorist operations and activities globally, they are not listed among the top poorest countries in the world (with the exception of Somalia). In this context, other causes stand out, such as crises, political and sectarian disagreements, external interventions supporting terrorist groups, and the strength and weakness of the State, which serve as other causes of the rise of terrorism. Poverty, in its general sense, which results from poor development, still remains a suitable environment for the rise of terrorism and a fertile soil and a motive for its emergence. Terrorism thus provides job opportunities for the unemployed poor. Poverty is also a consequence of terrorism, as it hinders state efforts and exercises a continuous drain on its material potentials and community development. It is both a cause and an effect at the local level. Moreover, the internal capabilities of the state and society, as well as the international and regional stances towards them, combine to create and nurture this phenomenon.

Table (2): Global Terrorism Index 2021

Country	Ranking	Terrorism Index/10	Poverty Rate%
Afghanistan	1	9.13	72
Iraq	2	8.524	27
Somalia	3	8.429	71
Burkina Faso	4	8.281	40
Nigeria	5	8.27	42
Syria	6	8.261	90

It is noted in this table that a high terrorism index corresponds with a significant increase in the poverty rate, especially in Afghanistan, which ranked first on the Global Terrorism Index over the last three years. This country has occupied an advanced rank in terrorist operations as well as in the level of the poverty rate. Somalia also maintained the third rank on the Global Terrorism Index, while Iraq and Syria, despite the high poverty rate, always ranged among the top five.

Although Syria is noted to be the highest in terms of the poverty rate, due to the crisis that has been going on for more than a decade, it has not ranked first on the Global Terrorism Index over the last three years, even though it remains among the top five. The reason for this decline goes back to the rise and success of international and regional counter-terrorism efforts in Syria, which culminated in the period from 2014 to 2015. Iraq also maintained its advanced (second) rank on the 2021 Index despite its low poverty rate, due to its troubled conditions and external interventions supporting some sectarian militias, which is exploited by terrorist groups, like ISIS, Al Qaeda and others.

Table (3): Global Terrorism Index 2020

Country	Ranking	Terrorism Index/10	Poverty Rate%
Afghanistan	1	9.056	51
Iraq	2	8.699	20
Somalia	3	8.49	73
Nigeria	4	8.435	42
Syria	5	8.315	93
Burkina Faso	6	8.12	37

In Table 3, it is noted that terrorism was associated with poverty and state stability in 2020 and with the extent to which terrorist groups succeeded in empowering themselves in certain regions, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, which ranked fourth, or Somalia, which maintained its third ranking in that year and the following year. Instability of conditions was also exploited, as is the



case in Afghanistan, which remained in the first place, with the activity of ISIS confronting and fighting the Taliban after the latter's success in taking power in Afghanistan in 2020, and the exit of the US army from the country.

Examining the data of Tables (1) and (2), we find that the countries that occupied the top ranks on the Global Terrorism Index, such as Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and the other above-mentioned countries, all suffer from high poverty rates, even though the decline and rise of terrorist operations was associated with the capabilities of the state and the international and regional support it receives.

It is also worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic increased the economic fragility of some of these countries to such an extent that their ability to counter terrorism was greatly affected. On the other hand, poverty prompted some citizens of those countries to join some extremist and terrorist groups, hoping to get enough money to meet their needs. This model is clearly evident in the cases of Afghanistan and Somalia in particular, which both maintained the first and third rankings on the Global Terrorism Index for the years 2020, 2021, and 2022. Both countries also scored high poverty rates that exceeded 50% of the total population.

b. Role of Finance in Anti-Extremism Programs

Anti-extremism and counter-terrorism programs comprise financial, material and other incentives, alongside other national and international plans to combat these threats. This does not necessarily mean that financial aid directly counters terrorism by alleviating poverty, but it undoubtedly helps to integrate poor people into society, rehabilitate them and relieve their resentment, as well as recover their psychological peace with the ruling authority and with society. Other factors are also included in these programs, such as ideological revisions and corrections, belief in the homeland and the national state, and others. Financial or material incentives certainly are not the main or the only factor in the anti-extremism process.²⁰

However, if these incentives are correlated to cases in which poor and almost destitute elements joined terrorist and violent groups and militias in search for work and a source of livelihood, as we explained earlier, this would support our vision of the correlation between poverty, as an environment and a general state, as well as an individual case, on the one hand, and terrorism on the other.

Perhaps those who find poverty as a direct motive of extremism and terrorism may invoke the case of extreme leftwing radicalism and its terrorist operations throughout the 20th century, which we will discuss later, as evidenced by old models such as the Zanji Revolt against the Abbasid

Califate in the first and second Hijri centuries,²¹ and similar slave revolts in the Roman eras, and many others.²² Likewise, the Mahdist movements in the different eras of Islamic history set another example, as their members were always recruited and mobilized and their bases established at the beginning of their inception from the marginalized and poor segments of society.

We believe that the general state of poverty is correlated to low development levels, low per capita income, poor services and a deteriorating standard of living. These forces always constitute a direct motive and a favorable environment for the growth of ideologies of anger, protest and extremism, as well as involvement in the ranks of extremist and terrorist groups, whether religious or non-religious. Whether they adhere to religious, Platonic, or socialist symbols, these groups exploit their utopian discourses, ideologies and slogans as means of change to create or recover a utopia on earth. For the marginalized, these groups stand as an alternative to their marginalized communities and family affiliations. Indeed, extremist and terrorist groups have often attracted members of these classes by providing them with services, especially in times of crises and disasters, and during electoral and political events. This can be described as a kind of employment of poverty to attract the appreciation and sympathy of poor people to extremist groups.

Those who argue for the popular opinion that there is no direct causal relationship between poverty and terrorism focus on the poor themselves, not on the general state of poverty with its multiple manifestations and features. We have previously covered this point in the section on the determinants of poverty in terms of unemployment, education, level of services and other development indicators, such as shortage of basic services, deterioration of development levels, and abuse of the basic rights of individuals.

These people cite as evidence for their opinion the fact that a number of terrorist organizations use a vetting process to accept only the best candidates into their ranks, especially in leadership positions. If it were not for that vetting process, they maintain, terrorist organizations would accept many poor and uneducated candidates who feel motivated to join, but are not sufficiently qualified or competent. In confirmation of that perception, the researchers discovered that those who came from wealthier backgrounds and had better education received more difficult and more strategically important missions in their terrorist groups. The 9/11 attackers and many other members of al-Qaeda have also gone through a vetting process prior to their training and their implementation of such type of terrorist operations.²³

However, although we agree with the above-mentioned view, we note that it proves our assumptions of the impact of poverty, lack of development and public services, and the crisis of the targeted countries. It also indicates that targeting the United States on September 11 was nothing but targeting the heart and soul of global capitalism and the West. The theorists of this terrorist ideology imputed to Islam view the United States as the creator and sponsor of the Arab and Islamic regimes and governments that these organizations accuse of treachery and collusion, and as the protector of Israel that drains the capabilities and economies of the nation, and hinders the progress of these organizations and the achievement of their primary goal, namely to establish a unified Islamic state. At the heart of this argument, and according to extremist theories, these groups exploit the general state of poverty and the low living standards to hold the state and its allies accountable, and to feature them as the near enemy and the far enemy.

Hence, from the perspective of investing in the general state of poverty and the decline in the standard of living, and since this state is considered a direct cause and motive of protest and anger leading to violence and terrorism, a number of middle and upper class members join extremist groups, through ideologizing and employing

poverty. Accordingly, analysts argue that the politically repressed or overall poorer nations are often the sources of transnational terrorism, and that terrorist operations increase in these countries. From an economic standpoint, it will be easier for a terrorist group to recruit low-income or unemployed individuals, even in lower and grassroots roles, since they have a relatively low opportunity cost of time. In addition, they employ poverty and the low level of public satisfaction to generate resentment and confrontation against those regimes that are hostile to extremist groups.

Hence, some researchers devised the term "relative deprivation" to describe the feeling of public discontent and resentment resulting from the gap between social classes, and the social and legal discrimination between the "haves" and the "have-nots" which ultimately leads to resentment and hatred, then subsequently to rejection and violence.²⁴ They recommended that the economic policy of states should focus on increasing real national income across levels of development, and reduce income inequality that creates gaps which arouse anger and resentment among groups suffering from deep economic and social deprivation, and preclude the use of such gaps as tools for expressing anger and extremist ideological violence.

III. Relationship between Poverty and Terrorism: Models and Examples

In the following sections, we will present a number of examples and cases showing the relationship between poverty and terrorism, and how they are exploited by terrorist and leftist extremist groups in a number of countries, sometimes directly and at other times indirectly. We will discuss how social justice stands at the core of the relationship between poverty and terrorism and its greatest goal. We will also highlight the religious exploitation of poverty as manifested in different ideological and political trends and groups, whether moderate or violent, from liberation theology in Latin America to national and globalized terrorism in the Islamic world. Consequently, the issue of poverty and social justice cannot be removed from the public sphere and sometimes intersects with public life when exploited by the various leftist and religious ideologies in particular, albeit to different degrees.

1. How Leftwing Extremist Groups Exploit Poverty

The leftwing extremist spectrum includes multiple groups and trends that share revolutionary socialism as their main point of reference, such as Leninism, Trotskyism, Proletarian Internationalism, Stalinism, Maoism, Anti-

Militarism and Eco-Socialism. This hybrid scenario has impeded all efforts to combat such trend or to anticipate its threats, which consequently led to its rise and dissemination, particularly in Europe.

Revolutionary extremist groups can be considered as contradictory political movements with anti-system and anti-institutional aims making selective use of violence. This translates into the coexistence of legitimate forms of protest and actual manifestations of violence.²⁶

Between 1970 and 1980, leftwing extremist organizations and affiliated groups carried out 93% of attacks and were responsible for 58% of deaths. Leftwing terrorist operations decreased significantly in the mid-1980s, yet they have had a noticeable resurgence in the EU over the 21st century, with the rise of populism and right-wing extremism. The following table²⁷ shows the rates of terrorist operations carried out by extremist Marxist and anarchist groups in the European Union countries during the period (2006-2020), according to the European Commission's report issued in 2021 on leftwing terrorism.



Table of EU Countries Affected by Leftwing Terrorist Attacks

Year	Number of Terrorist Attacks	Main Affected Countries
2006	55	Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany
2007	21	Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain
2008	28	Greece, Spain, Italy
2009	40	Spain, Greece, Italy
2010	45	Austria, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Spain
2011	37	Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain
2012	18	Greece, Italy, Spain
2013	24	Greece, Italy, Spain
2014	13	Greece, Italy, Spain
2015	13	Greece, Italy, Spain
2016	27	Greece, Italy, Spain
2017	24	Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany, France
2018	19	Greece, Italy, Spain
2019	26	Greece, Italy, Spain
2020	24	Italy
Total	414	Italy, Germany, Spain, Greece, France, Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark

The previous table indicates that terrorist attacks associated with extremist Marxist groups in the European Union during the 21st century peaked in 2006 at a rate of 55 attacks. The numbers gradually decreased in subsequent years, reaching the lowest rate in 2014 and 2015, with an average of 13 attacks per year.

According to a newly published study in 2018 of a sample of Swiss youth, amounting to 8,317 people aged 17-18 years, distributed over ten cantons, a number of observers reported that leftwing extremism was more widespread in Switzerland among young people than rightwing or Islamist extremism.

Despite a high rejection of capitalism (47.1% of respondents in the survey) and the police and the state (21.7%), study authors found that only 8% of the subjects approved of violence against the police. Based on the responses, a total of 7% of respondents could be classified as leftwing extremists, with 5.6% belonging to communist

backgrounds and 4.4% saying they had carried out acts of revolutionary violence in the past 12 months.²⁸

In the European scene, as we will explain later, leftwing extremism emerges through two movements, namely separatists and anarchists. We will also introduce another Asian model and example, namely the Indian Communist Party. All three movements are examples of leftwing extremism and terrorism that employs poverty, poor living conditions, and the absence of social justice as direct motives for violence and terrorism.

a. Extremist Separatists (Supporters of Autonomy)

A few observers consider separatists to be the largest group of violent leftwing extremists. They exist in major cities and university hostels. Each group usually has a central meeting point, giving rise to a network of small groups, individuals, local branches of interregional or national organizations and structures. In Germany, for example, we find larger gatherings in Berlin, Hamburg and Leipzig.

Separatists reject all forms of external control and consider all types of state and governance as a form of authoritarian rule and domination. They believe that it should be replaced by a system free of tutelage and domination. Accordingly, independent separatists try, within their “free spaces”, to adopt alternative ways of life that are in line with their ideals. These beliefs inevitably lead them to reject and exclude officials in charge of law enforcement and public order. For example, the mere presence of the police in a “vacant and safe space” for them can be sufficient cause for them to initiate violent assaults.

b. Anarchists

Anarchists reject the subjugation of human beings by other human beings, and hence all forms of state rule, including those within liberal democracies. They also believe that the values of freedom and equality must exist without constraint in a state and social system completely free of any domination. Unlike separatists, anarchists seek not only to create special “free spaces” within their own particular state system, but rather to overcome nation-states and their entrenched forms of government, including free democracy. The anarchist scene is characterized by a high degree of connection between its elements and individuals in order to achieve its revolutionary and terrorist goals. Anarchists and separatists often commit acts of violence against police officers, politicians and businessmen. They burn cars, construction equipment and buildings, which often leads to great losses.

On the other hand, leftwing separatists are to blame for

a wide range of serious violent crimes against opposition politicians and against police officers, which claimed many lives and caused many injuries.

2. Religious Employment of Poverty: From the Theology of Liberation to the Theology of Violence:

We can say that terrorist ideologies and groups in general, whether religious or non-religious, address the poor sometimes as individuals, but they mainly focus on exploiting the general state of poverty and its manifestations in general, and spreading its grievances to everyone, so that its actors, along with those affected by these ideologies, and those employing them, would move in the face of regimes and owners of wealth and capital, forces considered by these ideologies as their enemies and opponents to various degrees.

Since religious discourse, and religions and utopia in general, was an invitation to the poor and needy and a promise for them to get rid of their crises, they used to be its supporters from the beginning. Several movements and ideas emerged and confirmed the relationship between poverty and social justice. They included sects and groups that pursued justice and equality in face of the discrimination exercised against them, whether on an ethnic or racial basis, such as Shu'ubism (Populism), the Kharijites, and many Shiite sects in Islamic history, and schools of religious interpretation, such as the theology of liberation, which appeared in Latin America in 1968 and which is a mixture of Catholicism and Marxism. Other non-Catholic sects, such as Protestantism, were also associated with these movements. The effects of these ideologies extended to the Arab and Islamic worlds through the so-called Islamic leftist movement in Egypt and the Republican Islamists in Tunisia, even though they remained elitist and not popular.²⁹ These trends were credited to have triggered a kind of renewal or review in the understanding and interpretation of religious texts and messages. However, such interpretation was not intended to call for violence, unlike the interpretations of contemporary religious fundamentalists and rightists.

Islam, on the other hand, advanced poverty a step closer, and provided a remedy for its effects. The Prophet of Islam drew attention to poverty, warned against it, likened it to disbelief and prayed to Allah to guard against it.³⁰ Islamic biography and history dealt with the general state of poverty and highlighted how serious it is. Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Rightly Guided Caliph, suspended the punishment for theft during the year of the Ramada (famine) when people were overwhelmed by poverty. Umar is reported to have said: "A thief's hand shall not be cut off for stealing from a palm tree or during famine".³¹ Islam has sought to address poverty through various

economic resources, such as the channels for spending Zakat and alms, and others.

However, it is crucial to note here that Islam, in particular, and religions in general, have constructed a barrier to eliminate the effects of poverty, and to prevent any attempt to exploit poverty, especially individual poverty, as incitement to revolution. Islam instructs poor people to be patient and promises them of plentiful rewards in the afterlife for they considered the children of Allah. It was reported in the Prophet's traditions that the poor enter Paradise half a day, or, in other narrations, forty years, before the rich. It was also reported that the poor will have their own state on the Day of Resurrection. Other hadiths and narrations warn against poverty and its effects on the poor, which may amount to disbelief, despair, hatred, envy and other evils, through a number of spiritual meanings and financial instruments, such as zakat and alms imposed and encouraged by Islam. This would preclude the direct employment of poverty as a motive for violence or terrorism.³²

In addition, Islam combines respect for the property rights of individuals with their responsibilities towards society and social groups and towards the disadvantaged and destitute. Some theorists expressed this point of view by constantly combining and interrelating the Islamic and socialist ideologies.³³ However, the social issue and the problem of poverty have been addressed by many groups of political Islam and violent extremism in two ways:

Attracting the sympathy of poor people towards the so-called fundamentalist solution and proposition, by providing assistance and aid, establishing institutions and associations for them, and by filling the gap that the state has left behind, especially in times of disasters and crises. Many countries subsequently paid attention to this issue and dried up its resources after 2013, after it was proven that it was used for the sake of power and society.

Employing the state of poverty itself, and stimulating public resentment, both of the poor and others, by holding the regimes, the economic system, and the rich, fully accountable for poverty, and by linking the elimination of poverty with the overthrow of these regimes.

This makes it difficult to try to employ poverty directly for the sake of terrorism which invokes Islam, as this process requires other catalysts.

Extremist groups wearing the mask of Islam have always sought to employ poverty and were convinced that it is a powerful cause of public discontent. Hassan al-Banna used the word "poverty" 15 times and referred to the poor 17 times in his messages. He also highlighted the deteriorated and low standard of living 24 times, and referred to the



realistic social aspect, as the source of desired discontent, as conceived by his Muslim Brotherhood, 124 times. Such frequent references serve as evidence to the fact that poverty and poor living conditions was exploited by the various groups, apart from their religious or non-religious inclinations,³⁴ in an attempt to direct people's attention towards the utopia that they promised to achieve.

Hassan al-Banna claimed that eliminating poverty and other social ills could only be fulfilled by achieving the goals of his group in restoring the Islamic caliphate and the religious state which he used to advocate. He comments on the Egyptian society: "It lacks nothing but good leadership and correct guidance to rectify its bad conditions and eliminate weakness, poverty, ignorance, and vice, which are tools of destruction that can undermine any renaissance. There is no room here for details, but I know that we all feel the weight of the burdens, and the great efforts that must be exerted for the sake of internal organization in all aspects of life".³⁵

In his speech at the 6th conference of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1941, Hassan al-Banna addressed the peasants, whose poor living conditions he had tackled 12 times in his messages, and who had gone through a long journey of suffering with feudalism before the July Revolution of 1952. Al-Banna instigated those peasants

and others, as he said: "We are aware of the horrible state of poverty that the Egyptian peasants are living through, and how much they suffer from the low standard of living". He added, "Four million Egyptians work very hard for 80 piasters per month. If we assume that each person has a wife and three children, as is the average case in the Egyptian countryside, or rather in Egyptian families in general, every individual will have an average budget of two pounds per year, an amount which is hardly enough to support a donkey".³⁶

In conclusion, we believe that the employment of poverty, especially as a general state, has been part of the ideology of terrorism, and an essential motive for engagement in terrorist groups and operations. Poverty has been proposed as a cause and consequence of the struggle of these groups with political regimes and the absence of stability. Nevertheless, the elimination of poverty still remains part of the unfulfilled promise of these groups, which claimed that they were coming with justice, equality, welfare and reform. These issues have not been lost on ideologies of a social nature, such as Socialism and Marxism, or others with religious and spiritual promises, such as extremism and violent extremism imputed to Islam. Nor to various ideological movements of nationalists and rightists, up to the theology of liberation in the West or religious leftism in the East.



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