



الائتلاف الإسلامي العسكري لمقاومة الإرهاب  
ISLAMIC MILITARY COUNTER TERRORISM COALITION

# ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF IDEOLOGICAL EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM: **A PROPOSED MODEL**

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SAUDI IMCTC DELEGATE ON IDEOLOGY

Feb. 2024

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TERRORISM  
ISSUES





## TERRORISM ISSUES

A monthly publication issued by the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition

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## **ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE OF IDEOLOGICAL EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM: A PROPOSED MODEL**

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### **Abstract:**

This study attempts to track and analyze experiences, results of scientific studies, and official reports to anticipate the future of extremist and terrorist ideology and to propose a suitable model for building societies that are almost free of ideological extremism and terrorism. This goal can be achieved through cooperation between governments, organizations, centers and agencies concerned with ideology and terrorism and through building societies that are free or almost free of conflicts and wars, in addition to paying much attention to pure beliefs, values, and constructive human civilized behavior. The study concluded that ideological extremism is an everlasting issue which arose with the creation of humanity. However, the causes and drivers behind the growth and intensification of this phenomenon can be curbed by implementing a model strategy based on project programs that provide humanity with a new perspective to address this phenomenon.







Ideology, Islamic Thought, Atheism, Capitalism, and Mechanistic Ideology.

Ideology in the Holy Quran is associated with the mind and the call to contemplation, meditation, and speculation. The Holy Quran contains more than 300 verses that invite and urge people to think, contemplate, and meditate. These heavenly messages and directions stress man's responsibility for prioritizing thought in all matters of his life and to elevate such life to the highest levels of faith and worship that the Almighty Allah has prescribed.

On a similar note, the formation of ideology is a complex process that is unique to humans other than all other creatures and it keeps developing at the different stages of a person's life until this person reaches the stage of maturity and legal responsibility.

Finally, ideology, as defined by the Academy of the Arabic Language, refers to the highest form of mental activity, including analysis, synthesis, and coordination. Ideology is generally used to refer to a set of mental activities of thinking, determination, feeling, and emotion. Thought and reason thus are among the most distinguished gifts bestowed by Allah upon mankind and instilled in human beings to push them towards contemplation, worship and construction of human life.

### Second: Extremist Ideology

This term refers to the departure of ideology from the usual, accustomed, normal, logical, or accepted form of thought concerning topics, objects, issues, or people to a state of imbalance, deviation from the opinion of the majority, incitement, and thinking of harm and sabotage.

### Third: Terrorist Ideology

This term is defined as human aggression based on ideological foundations, which aims to prevent human beings from being aware of the abstract truth, by using various stressors to control the will of the individual and society for ideological or political goals (Saleh, 2008).

Based on these introductory remarks, it can be said that man's *raison d'être* in this life, as dictated by Allah, Who has appointed human beings as successors on earth, is to think, contemplate, reason, and use his thought and mind in worshipping Allah, constructing the earth, and serving humanity and public benefit. In this respect, the Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran: «Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire» [Surah Al Imran: 191]; and «And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought» [Surah Ar-Rum: 21]. Nevertheless,

when human thought and mind deviate from lofty goals, the expected outcome will be acts of sabotage, conflict, wars, aggression, and terrorism, which contradict human nature. Worthy of note is that the two terms "extremist and terrorist ideology" emerged about three centuries ago, specifically with the outbreak of the French Revolution. However, in terms of behavior and practice, both extremist and terrorist ideology have arisen since the beginning of creation, particularly in light of the dialectic of different beliefs and the varied interpretations of the philosophy of life and the origins of worship and coexistence. The scope of discussion in this study does not focus on the history of extremist ideology and violent extremism because libraries are full of books and research on this topic.

### Psychology of Violent Extremism

The topic of this study is related to the interpretation of violent extremism according to psychology. This interpretation is based on psychological motives, not only doctrinal and ideological ones. Hogg (2014) found that violence can be a response to suspicion, uncertainty, and ambiguous political, economic, or even religious ideas, beliefs, or concepts. Field studies conducted on political violence operations have confirmed this assumption. For example, Gøtzsche-Astrup (2018) found that suspicion and uncertainty related to the individual's position in the world and his future is a major factor conducive to extremism. This assumption supports Hogg's above-mentioned theory of identity and uncertainty. Other studies also found that the depth of the feeling of uncertainty within groups increases the attractiveness of group extremism (Hogg et al. 2007), and that this triggers ideological extremism in the form of religious fervor. This current study also discusses the roots of extremism and whether it has genetic or hereditary origins.

Kruglanski et al. (2022) point out that some people have hereditary genes that push them to ideological and behavioral extremism. This hypothesis is based on the law of balanced distribution of human traits and characteristics in behavior, morals, and thought. To explain this phenomenon, we should first highlight the fact that a very limited number of people adopt extreme traits and ideas. Plomin (2018) confirmed this hypothesis and maintained that as a result of the balanced distribution of human traits, characteristics and patterns, every generation of people comprises a small group of individuals who inherit severe behavior and thought that can lead to extremism. Recognizing this fact also requires admitting that, in line with balanced distribution, the majority of human traits, characteristics, and behavior do not give rise to extremist tendencies or motives, but that their adoption of extremism results from external factors and motives (e.g., peers, relatives, groups, society, and the like).

In all cases, addressing extremist behavior or ideology requires awareness of the entire explanation of this phenomenon in order to succeed in curbing, preventing or eliminating its impacts.

## **Current Situation of Ideological Extremism and Terrorism**

Statistics and statistical indicators show that in 2014, at the height of the expansion of terrorism, 32,685 terrorist operations were carried out, but the number declined in 2017 to 18,814 operations. Statistically, the number of terrorist operations decreased by approximately 57% (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018).

Western Europe and the United States are now experiencing problems in this respect. During the four years 2013-2017, far-right groups carried out 127 terrorist operations, resulting in 66 fatalities in Europe and the United States. A 2018 report prepared by the Institute for Economics and Peace found an increase in the rate of so-called hate crimes, especially in the United States and Canada. This finding was confirmed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which reported that the percentage jumped to 17% in 2017 compared to 2016. According to a report published by the Canadian government in December 2018, the largest percentage was in Canada, amounting to 50%.

On June 28, 2021, the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, remarked at the Second High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, that by exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic, despite progress, terrorist threats persisted and diversified as a result of social grievances and criminal stereotypes”.

The Global Terrorism Index 2023 report (p. 11), published in IMCTC Magazine (Zard, 2023), stated that the number of fatalities resulting from terrorist operations in 2022 dropped by 9%, reaching down to 6,701 compared to 7,142 fatalities in 2021. The report also stated that while terrorism receded in the MENA Region, it sharply moved towards the Sahel region, which has now become a hotbed of global terrorism. The report also shows a decline in the severity of terrorism in the Middle East in general, the political changes in Afghanistan, and the increase in coordination and cooperation in the counter-terrorism field. At the same conference, the UN Secretary-General stressed that terrorist groups used the Covid-19 pandemic for their benefit and that emerging technologies must be reasonably and responsibly harnessed to counter terrorism within the framework of the rule of law and human rights. He further explained that social media, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Snapchat, and others are now used to accelerate hate speech and

violent ideologies. He pointed out that since the spread of the pandemic, there has been a rise in cyberattacks and cybercrimes, as these platforms provide an appropriate environment for various terrorist groups to mobilize enormous potential for propaganda and recruitment.

Overall, we can say that terrorist operations have decreased in the past few years in most MENA countries. This period witnessed a decline in the capabilities of terrorist organizations to carry out operations, in addition to the effective and intensive counter-terrorism measures and programs carried out in light of international cooperation in this field.

Official indicators released by specialized centers mark a drop in the number and size of terrorist operations in the past few years, either due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the necessary closures and bans associated with it, or as a result of the strict measures and updated methods of monitoring and control efforts.

Although the above-mentioned indicators show a drop in terrorist operations at the broad statistical and digital level in the East and West, the so-called extremist right wing groups raise possibilities of a potential increase in terrorist activities in light of the activities of nationalist and communist parties and organizations.

As part of the discussion of the current situation of extremist ideology, we cannot ignore the role of social media networks and websites, especially in promoting ideological extremism. These networks spread false and deviant beliefs that are far away from religion and promote moral decadence and sectarianism. Al-Salem's study (2022) offered an account of social media websites and their engagement in ideological extremism as seen by a sample of Kuwait University students.

Al-Talhi's paper (2022) on the Global Terrorism Index and measuring the impact of terrorism found that the transformations of terrorism during 2021 included the spread of political terrorism. The author argues that political terrorism exceeded ideological terrorism. As a result, the number of politically motivated attacks in 2021 amounted to forty, as compared to three ideologically motivated attacks. Therefore, the researcher believes that any argument that underestimates the impact of ideological terrorism is rather simplistic and devoid of accuracy and deep analysis. Most conflicts, even political ones, arise from different ideological and doctrinal motives. The world has recently seen examples of this phenomenon, namely in the terrorist Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand. A right-wing extremist killed dozens of innocent people in the mosque simply because they were Muslims. Other examples include the burning of copies of the Holy Quran in a number of European countries motivated by hatred. On the other hand, other terrorist incidents were committed by extremist groups



claiming to belong to Islam. All these incidents emphasize that ideological terrorism based on extremism is the basis for most terrorist operations and even armed conflicts. These are eternal phenomena that flourish at certain times and fade out at other times, depending on complex circumstances and factors that explain why it has been a complicated process to analyze this phenomenon throughout history.

In the last two decades, the world has witnessed unprecedented efforts to curb and counter terrorism and violent extremism. However, we must acknowledge that there is an eternal conflict between belief, extremism, and terrorism, as the adherents of every creed, belief or religion claim that they are the bearers of the truth and the carriers of the message and that others embrace deviant and misleading beliefs. Islam and the Islamic message propagated by Prophet Muhammad came to purify and refine any corrupt belief or deviant value.

Islam is in reality a religion of moderation and tolerance. Once this religion was established and its rules and principles understood, learnt, and practiced, it started to spread and its followers increased throughout the globe, thus leading to a decline in extremism and doctrinal and religious conflict. However, when some adherents of Islam misinterpreted and misunderstood the true message of religion, division spread between these followers and the number of pretenders increased, but they actually deviated from the true concept and spirit of religion and its message. The same situation applied to other religions, thus contributing to the continued spread of doctrinal and religious controversy and conflict. The followers of each particular belief often argue that they are Allah's chosen agents on earth and that they are the correct interpreters of religion and beliefs. This is how disagreements and conflicts arose and led to ideological extremism and then to ideological and violent terrorism.

We must acknowledge the fact that violent terrorism, which was born from deviations in extremist ideology, was met by corresponding violent reactions, in which lives and property were lost, both for individuals and countries. Even more, the necessity of restricting and eliminating these misled terrorist groups or individuals has become publicly visible since they engage in anti-social actions, including killing and intimidating people and justify these actions by referring to their mission and directives.

## Anticipating the Future of Ideological Extremism and Terrorism

This review of the status quo of extremism and terrorism makes it clear that the main goal of this study is to anticipate ideological extremism and terrorism. As a reminder, the conflict between religions and beliefs is an eternal one,

even among adherents of the same religion and those who believe in no religion. These conflicts intersect with other conflicts of identity and political, economic, and cultural affiliations. These issues are raised at a particular time and in certain areas with a specific frequency and quality, but then fade out and disappear at other times and periods. This fluctuation depends on the interactions, variables, stimuli and motives that move the adherents and followers of these ideologies towards the directions and goals that they seek to achieve. Other factors include the endeavor of these groups to control the wicked environments where they live or to defeat other groups that compete with them or threaten their existence.

In our present time, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, major and destructive conflicts and wars have broken out on the grounds of beliefs and ideologies of all kinds. At the top of these conflicts was the emergence of ideologically extremist movements that claim to belong to the main religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Some members of these movements, armed with the ideological tools available to them, devoted their efforts to recruit followers and to control others who belong to different religious beliefs. These conflicts, driven by ideological extremism, resulted in many incidents of violence and terrorism and led to the killing and intimidation of innocent people for reasons and goals that are inconsistent with the true substance of religion and its message.

In the past two or three decades of this century, many extremist groups have emerged, claiming that they belong to Islam. They would defend their affiliation and pretend to have lofty goals, while, in fact, they abuse the Islamic religion and its sublime message. Likewise, extremist far-right movements have emerged in the West. They claim that they belong to Christianity, but in reality they spread hatred, incite racism, and commit terrorist attacks against innocent people who belong to Islam (Mukhtar 2023).

The above-mentioned discussions focused on examining the situation of terrorism in the past years, depending on data and information about terrorism in its violent form, which caused deaths, destruction, devastation, and the like. Statistical indicators released by official global centers specialized in crime and terrorism issues also made it clear that these events have significantly declined as a result of the direct security confrontations and regional and international cooperation.

However, the current study is concerned with the reality of ideological extremism. For this reason, the researcher finds it necessary to point out that the foundation and basis of terrorism is ideology, be it political, economic, or religious ideology, even though religious ideology is to blame in most cases. We can safely say that no study characterized by credibility and objectivity can claim that extremist religious ideology has declined

or become weak, nor specify a date for its elimination. As we formerly explained, this phenomenon is eternal and it waxes and wanes in light of various internal and external circumstances and inputs, most notably political, economic, and cultural interactions, and sheer ideological conflicts. Al-Mahmoud (2018) supports this point of view and maintains that ideological extremism is the power that gives impetus to terrorist acts. He further adds that terrorism in the last 20 or 30 years has taken a religious form and that all indicators emphasize that this religious terrorism will have the upper hand throughout the foreseeable future. He cites as evidence the fact that all contemporary terrorist operations can be attributed to a religious cultural reference.

However, the world is now witnessing political and economic conflicts, competitions, disasters, and global crises, as well as corresponding technological and industrial developments that have even exceeded the limits of understanding of the human mind, as is the case with artificial intelligence (AI) and its effects on today's world. These new circumstances have driven the entire world, with all its backgrounds, beliefs, religions and cultures, to start searching for and explaining these changes and developments and to try to figure out how to confront them. Meanwhile, all powers and affiliations are exerting great efforts and are competing to control the destiny and beliefs of others. Historical events and evidence show that religious beliefs and values are the main driver of most political, economic and cultural conflicts and competitions.

For these reasons, the researcher asserts that the influence of religious beliefs and values on the behavior of human nations throughout their history is a universal truth and a divine law, apart from the fact that these beliefs and values belong to pure sources and harbor sound goals and messages. The Almighty Allah said in the Holy Quran: «And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me» [Surah Al-Dhariyat: 56].

However, many human interpretations of religious texts, and even of the essence of religion itself, have been full of abuses and distortions throughout history. Many such interpreters addressed the emotions and loyalties of their followers and led them to the ruins of wars, conflicts, terrorism, and suicide.

Given these facts, scholars, researchers, interested people, and adherents of pure and innocent values have a duty to search for answers to the big question: How can the world be protected from extremist ideology that triggers terrorism and terrorist operations?

There is no doubt that the world has, especially in recent years, mobilized all human and material capabilities to resist and combat terrorism of all forms and sources. Local

and global counter-terrorism agencies, associations, institutions and centers have been established to unify efforts, starting with the United Nations, its organizations, its various arms and others, in addition to security and military efforts. Such efforts, especially in the financial and security areas, have yielded successful outcomes, causing a significant drop in terrorist operations. However, can we just assume, in light of these efforts, that terrorism and violent extremism have been, or are about to be, eliminated? Simply put, the answer can be summed up as follows: As long as there are beliefs, religions, creeds, values, and philosophies, as well as followers of each, extremism and terrorism will never end, and the conflict will continue to exist as long as humanity lives. The Almighty Allah referred to this fact in the Holy Quran as follows: «And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds» [Surah Al-Baqarah: 251].

As far as extremism and terrorism are concerned, we need to distinguish between content on the one hand and means on the other hand. Ideology and ideological extremism are topics associated with people's lives and their philosophies in life. On the other hand, we use means and tools to carry out goals and objectives. The adherents of extremist and violent ideology, as well those who plan and carry out terrorist operations, have developed a range of means and tools throughout history, starting with assassinations and primitive wars, using swords and simple weapons, then moving to armed assassinations and military wars, as well as various suicide operations, then electronic terrorism relying on information technology, and finally to biological terrorism (anthrax). Newer means and tools will emerge in the future, depending on the potentials available to the adherents of extremist ideology, especially in light of the entry into the Fifth Industrial Revolution, with its most prominent manifestation, artificial intelligence (AI). The world will encounter additional challenges and innovative methods since the emerging technologies will be used either to promote extremist ideas leading to terrorism or to brainwash the minds of gullible and innocent people into adopting extremist and terrorist ideologies and actions. Meanwhile, there is a necessity to upgrade and improve the methods and means of countering these ideologies.

Sound ideologies and pure beliefs that call for peace, coexistence, unity, respect for humanity, human rights, and different opinions reflect a normal and healthy human nature, as well as the principles and foundations of divine religions. Since Islam is the last divine religion to be revealed, its constants and the life models that it offered,





especially in the era of Prophet Muhammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs, have established the purity, soundness and truth of religion and the correct and moderate belief which rejects and renounces fanaticism and racism and respects human rights and peaceful coexistence. The explanations and interpretations engendered by many adherents of different religions, beliefs and sects, whether they belong to Islam or to other religions, led to the adoption of extremist ideologies and beliefs. These adherents, in turn, taught such ideologies to their followers and sought to spread them and even to force others to adopt them, as if they were the real messengers and representatives of true religion who possess the right belief and ideology. In this way, they managed to kidnap and brainwash the minds of many ignorant people, especially the needy and the sick, by robbing these people of their will and pushing them towards misguided ideologies, which resulted in violent extremism.

One can safely say that extremist ideology will continue in different forms and methods, taking advantage of technologies and scientific data. In addition, many countries will face problems in the coming decades in the areas of controlling artificial intelligence, which constitutes an unprecedented technological revolution for humanity. Artificial intelligence has affected and is affecting all the different aspects of life and services. It often exceeds the ability of human beings to make their own decisions and solve their own problems. Since we discuss anticipations of the future of extremism, it is worth referring to Al-Amoush's book entitled *The Future of Terrorism in This Century* (1427H/2006). Although it might seem relatively old (published almost two decades ago), this book pointed out that, depending on study results, the face of terrorism may change in this century, although the motives and causes remain the same. That is, societies are exposed to several risks, including unfamiliar weapons of mass destruction and new and emerging patterns of terrorism. Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is organized, renewed, and transnational. The study indicates that the trends of terrorist attacks during the two coming decades refer to a drop in the number of these attacks due to the fact that terrorist organizations have become organized and that they no longer select random targets. Thus, this transnational, targeted and renewed terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century aims to cause huge, painful, and widespread losses that are not limited to one place but may extend over

several countries. Today's world has seen many examples of such terrorist operations that were carried out on a global level and were adopted by terrorist organizers and leaders from distant regions.

On the other hand, many countries will experience problems throughout the next two decades in the areas of controlling artificial intelligence, which constitutes an unprecedented technological revolution for humanity. Artificial intelligence is now affecting all the different aspects of life and services. It often exceeds the ability of human beings to make their own decisions and solve their own problems

### **How to Combat Ideological Extremism and Terrorism? A Proposed Model**

To answer this basic question, the researcher has engineered a global Islamic model for eliminating ideological extremism and terrorism. This model is based on the results of efforts, actions, studies, and conferences carried out by countries, organizations, agencies, research centers, and scholars in addressing this phenomenon. The entire world succeeded in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic, which shook the globe from east to west, by exerting efforts, mobilizing energies, and sacrificing everything in order to eliminate the pandemic. However, addressing the phenomenon of extremist ideology seems more difficult and complicated due to the different origins and aspects of the two phenomena. The pandemic was clearly visible, given its measurable effects and tangible results, but the ideology issue represents a hidden phenomenon that is difficult to measure although its effects can be deduced, and its results can materialize on the ground. Ideology is associated with the mind and emotions and remains latent until it is released into reality in the form of behavior, expressions, or actions. Therefore, it is a very difficult and complex process to form or to change this ideology. A person's ideology is formed as he grows up, and is associated with the level of his intelligence, ability, knowledge, experiences, personality, and environment. Likewise, the process of change is associated with a corresponding or higher level of influencers, which is only available to people endowed with extraordinary abilities or characteristics in shaping a sound and straight ideology, such as messengers and prophets. On the other hand, extremists and adherents of deviant or corrupt beliefs and messages seek to mislead others and distort their ideas.





of and contemplate their surroundings. Quss bin Saidatul lyadi had realized the meaning of life, knowledge of destiny, and Allah's ability through thinking, reasoning, contemplation, and intuition before the emergence of Islam. Then, Prophet Muhammad came with the message of Islam, and called for a change of this environment whose people were influenced by idolatry which they inherited from their ancestors. The Prophet presented the message of truth from the Holy Quran, and it took him years to change the wrong beliefs and corrupt values of his people and to create a pure, moderate environment where he acted as a role model and his honorable companions as followers, until forming a model civilization that influenced and was emulated by generations after generations.

There are many examples from the following eras and from our present era of how environments inherited values and beliefs which were inconsistent with reason or logic and through which fanaticism, extremist ideology, and even conflicts leading to wars and terrorist control were born.

This study thus contains a call to examine the roots of large or small environments through which extremist ideology conducive to terrorism is inherited or created. Identifying the components of these environments provides significant help within the entire strategic system presented in this study in order to eliminate and prevent extremist and terrorist ideology.

## **2. Ideological models and programs for framing moderation and peace.**

One of the pillars that support the previously mentioned foundation of the program is the creation of ideological models and role models that contribute to the success of the strategic plan to prevent ideological extremism and terrorism. Alian (2012) argues that Islam has been a general call by all prophets from the oldest historical eras up to the era of Prophet Muhammad. Islam brings together all issues into one, namely that of monotheism. Islam did not create a new religion from a scratch, but rather it continued what the other prophets had already started (p. 5). The Almighty Allah explained this issue in the Holy Quran thus: «He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein» [Surah Ash-Shura: 13]. Saleh (2008) argues that this task should be undertaken by leaders, established scholars, and agencies and organizations specialized in establishing religious sciences and ideological issues, including knowledge of controversial issues, commitment to the rules of criticism, and development of a spirit of ideological dialogue. It is thus vital to proceed with the ideological dialogue between all followers of different religions and beliefs to explain

and clarify the foundations and meanings of religious ideologies, especially those contained in heavenly religions, from their sources. Indeed, these ideologies aim to make humanity happier and better and to guide all people to the straight path. Any distortion or deviation, however, originates from ignorant or half-educated people or from narcissistic, egotistical, and psychopathic followers of religions. The Almighty Allah said in the Holy Quran: «There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing» [Surah Al-Baqarah: 256].

Examples of models that reinforce this pillar in establishing the principles of good thought, values, and moderation include the efforts exerted by the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue. The Muslim World League also launched the Mecca Document, a huge global project. Some principles of this project were presented by the Saudi IMCTC Delegate on Ideology in the form of an initiative to be adopted by IMCTC. One believes that this project will be an anchor of success in providing an ideal, moderate religious belief and ideology (Muslim World League, 2018).

## **3. Family education is a nucleus for shaping the mind, ideology, and personality**

Studies, research, and observations stress the profound impact of the family on the behavior and personalities of children. The influence of parents remains firm throughout a person's life, especially in the first six years of a child's life. A *hadith* (tradition) by Prophet Muhammad, narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira in the *Sahihain* (The Two Authentic Collections) reads as follows: ["No child is born except on the *Fitra* (the Islamic faith) and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian or Magian (Zoroastrian)..."]. Modern studies and theories have established this fact. Freud's theories in the 20<sup>th</sup> century proved that the first six years of a person's life mark the most significant and effective stage in the formation of his personality, and their impact remains throughout his life. If a child is brought up in a healthy and stable family environment, he will develop a normal personality and healthy ideology. If, however, he grows up in an environment of conflicts or deviant ideology, he will be greatly affected for most of his life. He may develop a complex and troubled personality and may harbor deviant thoughts. Many recent studies and reports have found that many cases of people with extremist and terrorist ideology are attributed to their upbringing in an abnormal and turbulent environment.

## **4. Education: (curricula, activities, and media (teachers))**

Education plays a significant role in curbing ideological extremism and terrorism. The Pakistani scientist, Nobel Prize winner, Malala Yousafzai is reported to have said "With guns you can kill terrorists, With education you can kill terrorism" [news.un.org]. This approach marks the correct employment of education in countering and preventing ideological extremism and terrorism. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime published a series of university modules for countering terrorism, aiming to teach counter-terrorism within the "Education for Justice" initiative. This initiative falls within the scope of the proposed idea to consider education as a basic pillar of the strategy to counter and prevent ideological extremism and terrorism [https://www.unodc.org module-4].

In the Counter-Terrorism Reference Curriculum (CTRC) report issued by NATO, Antonio Missiroli, Assistant Secretary General, Emerging Security Challenges Division, and John Manza, Assistant Secretary General, Operations Division, stated in their introduction to the report that "Understanding the terrorist threat of today and tomorrow requires not only improved awareness but constant learning and investment in the education of future generations. We sincerely hope that this curriculum will serve the wider counter-terrorism community as an insightful reference document and that it can contribute to national educational processes of both interested allies and partners, including through NATO's Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP)."

Education is a fundamental pillar in shaping ideology and behavior. In its basic sense, education comprises schools, curricula, teaching methods and means of knowledge transfer, including the teacher as the cornerstone, as well as curricular and extracurricular activities. Thus, we can safely say that people's characters in today's world, especially the youth, are a reflection of their education and education policies in their countries. The focus of success in any educational and upbringing process is the teacher who can ensure a correct education to his students, which would consequently lead to the creation of healthy nations.

##### 5. Information and ideological security

Over the past years, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed how the world was unaware of the meaning of a normal life. The BBC report issued in 2021 stated that the absence of information security is the greatest danger threatening humanity in the current era. When the pandemic struck, humanity remained powerless for a period of time, trying to search for a cure. This period was accompanied with feelings of anxiety, depression, suicide, deaths, and significant material and moral losses. On a similar note, the absence of true knowledge about correct religious thought has led to conflicts between different ideologies and philosophies. In this respect, we need information security, which is associated with ideological

security, as a means to reduce the ideological gap for purposes of peaceful coexistence, building societies, and dissemination of peace and a prosperous life. Information security can be achieved through major local and international programs and projects that would help to eradicate the religious illiteracy of the adherents of religions and of different ideologies, and to enlighten and teach them about the correct ideology that secures for them a healthy and happy life and coexistence. A major source of providing information and ideological security is to teach people the principles of salvation, by saving them from falling into the trap of ideological deviation and religious and sectarian dispersion. Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of guidance, referred to this rule in a *hadith* (tradition): "The Jews were split up into seventy-one sects; and the Christians into seventy-two sects; and my nation will be split up into seventy-three sects, one of which will be in Paradise and seventy-two in Hellfire." It was said: "O Messenger of Allah! Who is the saved sect?" He said, "Those who follow the very same that I and my Companions follow today" (*Sahih Muslim*).

##### 6. Modern technologies (social media and artificial intelligence)

We must recognize that our present life in this world has become completely different from that of the past generations due to several variables created by man through science and scientific research. This development, called the Fifth Industrial Revolution, has moved humanity to another scale that entirely differs from the previous decades and centuries. New means of communication between people have been invented for the primary goal of facilitating communication and cutting down on the time required for this purpose. These means also provided humans with an easy access to achieving their well-being, meeting their wants and needs, adapting the capabilities of the environment to serve their interests, and developing their world and their material and human surroundings. Any nation that fails to adopt such progress will remain stuck in its past and dependent on the stronger world that will impose its ideas and values on that nation. Therefore, countries and societies that are weak or that lack these technologies will remain lagging behind civilization and advanced nations and will consequently be required to strive to raise and improve their societies and culture so that they do not become a burden on others. These societies will further turn into environments giving birth to shallow-minded people adopting extremist values. It must be pointed out that a new, exciting, important and dangerous variable has been introduced in this decade, namely artificial intelligence and the challenge it poses to ideological security and even to national and global security. Even the inventors and sponsors of artificial intelligence have warned of its threat to humanity and its superiority to human





intelligence. They further warned that it may cause the extinction of humanity due to the speed of its development and its intervention in most aspects of life. Even worse, it is not always possible to control the results and effects of this new technology. Accordingly, one may conclude that current and future ideologies cannot be isolated from this great event in this century, which can be called "the artificial intelligence century." There are several opportunities and possibilities for using AI in terrorism and brainwashing, and there are examples of its use in actual reality in certain cases. In this way, we must be prepared to address this challenge by mobilizing efforts at all levels to be able to harness this new invention and to use it to prevent extremist and terrorist ideologies and to educate the world about sound ideologies, beliefs, and humane treatment that fulfill the purposes of creation. In short, artificial intelligence has become an important and effective means of monitoring, analyzing, and predicting the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism (Awan, 2024).

#### 7. Global cooperation and human transcendence

It is well recognized that today's world is completely different from previous centuries. The distances between countries and peoples have been cut shorter thanks to the means of communication and technology that have brought geographical and even human distances closer together and even eliminated the differences in language and culture through direct technical translations. This great advantage should bring with it promises of giving, goodness, and cooperation among human beings. However, it was unfortunately exploited by whimsical and domineering groups to raise ideological deviations and facilitate the perpetration of terrorist attacks in the future. We are thus encouraged to intensify meetings and conferences between all people of different religions for the exchange of opinions and constructive dialogue to reach the lofty goals of creation and worship. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is considered a role model in establishing global centers for dialogue between people of different religions, correcting misleading concepts and ideas, and introducing correct ideologies and values.

### Conclusion

At the end of this study, one finds it necessary to admit the fact that the interaction between ideology, extremism and terrorism is an eternal phenomenon. The followers of every belief or religion will continue to struggle with others to establish that they are the true bearers of the truth and the divine message and that others are misguided and deviant. Islam and the Islamic message brought by Prophet Muhammad, however, sought to correct and refine corrupt beliefs and deviant values. Islam thus gave rise to the true religion, the religion of moderation and

tolerance. Once this religion was established and its rules and principles understood, learnt, and practiced, it started to spread and its followers increased throughout the globe, thus leading in its golden age to a decline in extremism and doctrinal and religious conflict. However, when some adherents of Islam misinterpreted and misunderstood the true message of religion, division spread between these followers and the number of pretenders increased, but they actually deviated from the true concept and spirit of religion and its message. The same situation applied to other religions, thus contributing to the continued spread of doctrinal and religious controversy and conflict. The followers of each particular belief often argue that they are Allah's chosen agents on earth and that they are the correct interpreters of religion and beliefs. This is how disagreements and conflicts arose and led to ideological extremism and then to ideological and violent terrorism.

This study attempted to answer two main issues concerning anticipation of the future of ideological extremism and terrorism on the one hand, and the appropriate proposals for addressing and countering extremist ideology and terrorism. In responding to the first issue, the study concluded the following simple answer. Extremist ideology, or alternatively ideological extremism, is an eternal issue that came into existence with the creation of the human race and cannot be eliminated as long as there is a conflict between the adherents of different religions and beliefs and due to the different explanations and interpretations of the goals and purposes of these religions. Many conflicts and terrorist activities have arisen from the fanaticism and dogmatism of the followers of these religions who, out of their ignorance and misunderstanding, attempted to control the adherents of other religions simply because they looked different or inconsistent with their own beliefs. With the development of the tools and means of education, several revolutions of extremist ideologies associated with beliefs and doctrines started to break out. To address and curb such revolutions, the human race is in need of responsible efforts on the part of those who embrace humanitarian goals and virtuous morals and who can help to bring happiness and achieve progress and well-being to humanity in a sound and healthy atmosphere of peaceful coexistence.

As for the proposed solutions to address and counter extremist ideology, this study presented a model with seven main pillars and programs that can contribute to limiting or eliminating the effects of extremist ideology at all local, regional and global levels.

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