

# مناخ القلوب

MONTHLY BULLETIN ISSUED BY IMCTC

## MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION BETWEEN IMCTC AND THE UNION OF NEWS AGENCIES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION



**IMCTC**, represented by Major-General Mohammed Saeed Al-Moghedi, IMCTC Secretary-General, signed a memorandum of joint cooperation with the Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation News Agencies, represented by Assistant Director-General, Mr. Mohammed Abd Rabbu Al-Yami, on 20 January 2021.

Major-General Al-Moghedi emphasized that this memorandum will build a strategic partnership between IMCTC and the Union of OIC News Agencies to better enhance cooperation between the two sides in various media fields. 🌸

## SECRETARY-GENERAL RECEIVES DELEGATES OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES



**Major-General** Mohammed Saeed Al-Moghedi, IMCTC Secretary-General, received delegates of the Republic of Maldives to IMCTC, on 24 January 2021, bringing the number of the IMCTC member countries that have sent their delegates up to twenty-five. His Excellency, Ambassador of the Republic of Maldives to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mohammad Khalil, and Director-General of the National Center for Counterterrorism at the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of the Maldives, Brigadier Zakaria Mansour, attended the meeting.

IMCTC Secretary-General welcomed the delegates of the Republic of the Maldives to IMCTC, wishing them success in performing the great roles with which they are entrusted in countering terrorism. 🌸

# THE ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK SUPPORTS THE RESILIENCE OF FRAGILE STATES IN COUNTERTERRORISM



**Counterterrorism** pundits almost agree unanimously that state fragility is one of the basic conditions favorable for terrorist groups. The Working Group on Extremism in Fragile States formed by the US Congress in the 2019 Report, featuring “Preventing Extremism in Fragile States: A New Approach.” It concluded that terrorist attacks launched every year around the world have multiplied five times since 2001 despite all global, regional and national counter terrorism efforts. This is true in that extremism per se preys on fragile states and contributes to bringing chaos, conflict and coercion. As such, this dilemma can be solved only through adopting a preventive approach based on strengthening communities prone to extremism.

In the same vein, a research study, featuring “The Relationship Between Fragile States and Terrorism” by Peter Tikuisis concluded that there are measurable relationships between state fragility and terrorism, as “fragile states bear a higher percentage of terrorism vis-à-vis other countries, regardless of the main terrorist groups; 50% of the fragile states have sustained fatal terrorist attacks, which accounted for about three times vis-à-vis other countries.

Equally important, a research study featured “How Do International Terrorists Benefit from State Fragility?” called for a long-term counterterrorism strategy based on “sustainable strengthening of state structures”, as this is more helpful in making it tight maneuverability on terrorist networks, clamping down in their emergence and expansion, restricting their scope of action, paralyzing operational and recruiting capabilities, supplies and ideologies are more than what direct warfare does against terrorist structures. Attention should be focused on fighting the conditions that support such terrorist groups.

Ahead of the said research studies is the Islamic Development Bank; ever since its establishment, it has evinced robust engagement in improving the quality of life for more than 1.7 billion people in 57 against terrorism.

Dr. Bandar Mohammad Hajjar, President of the Islamic Development Bank Group, presented the Bank’s experience in a keynote lecture “The Role of the Islamic Development Bank in Supporting Development and Peace in the Member Countries Afflicted by Fragility and Instability”, hosted by IMCTC in Riyadh, on 31 January 2021.

Dr. Hajjar addressed three topics: (1) the map of fragility and instability hotspots in some member countries; (2) the Islamic De-

velopment Bank Group role in supporting development and peace in the member countries that suffer from fragility and instability; (3) reviewing the Bank’s role in combating COVID-19 pandemic in more than 30 countries affected by fragility and instability.

## FRAGILITY AS A FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE

Dr. Hajjar explained that fragility, which means the inability of states to withstand political and social unrest, the inability to resolve conflicts and cope with natural disasters, has escalated significantly since 2010 and has become a major development challenge threatening efforts to end abject poverty. By 2030, it is expected that up to two-thirds of the world’s population trapped into grinding poverty will live in fragile and violent conditions. More than 1.5 billion people in extreme poverty live in fragile and unstable states. Development becomes more difficult to realize in fragile states, as poverty rates rise by 20%, weakening economic performance, hence instability increases. Consequently, the cost of aid provision increases and becomes more notoriously complex in such fragile conditions, while the chances of peace and stability in these communities become glaringly thin.

Forced and internal displacement of refugees is one of the main factors that lead to fragility and instability; conflicts and natural disasters resulting from climate change contribute critically to increasing forcibly displaced persons around the world. According to the UNHCR Report 2020, the number of refugees and displaced persons in the world has reached more than 79 million, which is the highest number since World War II; most of them live in the member states of the Islamic Development Bank, with more than two-thirds of the number of refugees worldwide (68 %) of only five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Myanmar, while 8 out of the 12 largest refugee hosting countries are member states of the Islamic Development Bank.

Climate change is another factor that may lead to fragility and instability, which is a major challenge to the environment and sustainable development. Many of the Islamic Development Bank member states are vulnerable to the impact of climate change, including extreme heat waves, floods, sea level rise, severe storms, droughts and other natural disasters that affected more than 800 million people in the member states of the Islamic Development Bank since 1970, of whom more than 50 million people have been affected over the past three years.



The "Framework of Fragile States" issued by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2020 identified fifty-seven countries as fragile, twenty-eight of which are member states of the Islamic Development Bank. 30 out of the 50-armed conflicts that the world sustained in 2015 occurred in the member states of the Islamic Development Bank; leading to severe humanitarian crises and displacement throughout the Muslim world. More notoriously, about 80% of all new waves of internal displacement, diaspora and stampede in the world in 2014 and 2015 occurred in member countries of the Islamic Development Bank.

### THE ROLE OF THE ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK

Dr. Al-Hajjar spells out that the Islamic Development Bank's approach helps the member states to be more resilient, provides opportunities for growth, reduces poverty, supports peace and stability in the long term and creates economic, financial and social opportunities to enable youth and the most vulnerable groups to participate effectively and contribute to reconstruction and recovery efforts.

The Islamic Development Bank Group's interest in addressing fragility and poor development is focused on prevention and proactive steps on the one hand, and on developing remedial measures on the other hand. Therefore, the Islamic Development Bank has developed a comprehensive strategy to address the drivers of fragility and instability in the affected countries. Dr. Hajjar also reviewed the pillars of the Bank's 'Fragility and Resilience Policy', which can be highlighted in the following foci:

- Investing in prevention to address drivers and root causes of fragility and instability.
- Shifting from relief to supportive development for the member states to manage the transitional phase and to better link human development and peace.
- Supporting recovery and resilience.
- Mobilizing resources for resilience.

### STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP

Dr. Hajjar emphasized that raising the effectiveness of development aid requires better coordination of donors' efforts, improving

cooperation between donor countries and international financial institutions; this is why one of the main components of the new business model of the Islamic Development Bank Group is to strengthen the partnership vertically with global, regional and bilateral development partners, and horizontally with the private sector, civil society organizations, NGOs, philanthropists and academic and research centers.

One of the main pillars of the Bank's ten-year strategy is concerned with increasing regional cooperation, integration and interdependence among the Bank's member states. The funds of the Islamic Development Bank realized in the regional cooperation and integration amounted to about \$ 4.5 billion.

### SUPPORTING PREVENTIVE EFFORTS AGAINST COVID-19

Dr. Hajjar reviewed the efforts of the Islamic Development Bank Group to help the member states to enhance their response to COVID-19 pandemic. The Bank launched a response package of \$ 2.3 billion within the framework of the Bank Group's strategic program for the preparedness and response to COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to many joint initiatives with other international development partners. Dr. Hajjar stated that COVID-19 pandemic has set back the progress achieved in years of development and poverty reduction, and pushed millions of people into poverty again. This increases extreme poverty in the world for the first time in more than 20 years, with all its psychological and social consequences.

Taken together, Dr. Hajjar called for immediate measures to be taken to better adapt to the changing needs of the post COVID-19 world, which requires more international concerted cooperation than ever, uniting efforts to address global business issues, coordinating any potential international travel restrictions and monitoring the spread of diseases based on reliable and comparable data.

Dr. Hajjar also affirmed the commitment of the Islamic Development Bank to supporting the global efforts aimed at strengthening the interdependence between peace and human development and exploring innovative methods to support economic and social development efforts in the member states, and Muslim communities in non-member states in a comprehensive, integrated and sustainable manner. 🌸





## SMALL-DOLLAR TERRORISM: ALTERNATIVE TECHNIQUE FOR TERRORISTS



**Akeynote** lecture, featuring “Low-Cost Operations” was delivered by Brigadier-General Rashid Mohammed Al-Dhaheri, Head of EAE Delegation to IMCTC, and Brigadier-General Nawwaf Nasser Al-Jutaili, Kuwait Delegate to IMCTC, at the IMCTC Center Headquarters in Riyadh, on 28 January 2021, in the presence of Major-General Mohammed Saeed Al-Moghedi, IMCTC Secretary-General, along with the delegates of the IMCTC member states and staff. Two main topics were addressed thoroughly.

It first approached the definition of low-cost operations, the reasons that lead terrorist groups to carry out such terrorist acts, the impact of some of those low-cost operations in countries and the cost estimated. Second, it addressed the risks resulting from these low-cost operations, the impact of low operations across the four areas of counterterrorism and appropriate remedial solutions.

At the outset, the two speakers spelled out that the economic cost of terrorism is estimated at about 750-870 billion dollars annually, incurred through direct and indirect losses. Despite the confirmation of strategic and economic specialists, it is difficult to quantify the costs borne by the global economy as a result of the increase in the frequency of terrorist operations. However, there are indirect effects, especially those related to stock market losses, as a result of the increasingly growing concern about political instability.

### DEFINITION OF LOW-COST OPERATIONS

The first research paper addressed the definition of low-cost operations, highlighting that no specific definition of such operations has so far been developed; yet, they are all low-cost operations with sources and tools made available from the local market for the purpose of carrying out a terrorist operation such

as an attack on a hotel as the case of Mali, or an assassination of a prominent politician or a renowned scientist, as happened to Professor Jalil Al-Khafaji at the University of Babylon; Professor Al-Khafaji passed away in mysterious circumstances, after revealing dangerous information about the nature of the gas used by the pro-Iranian militias to suppress peaceful demonstrators in Iraq. These terrorist operations can also be carried out using explosions, such as the Oklahoma City bombing, which is a local terrorist act manifested in a car bomb attack on Alfred Mora’s Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma, USA on April 19 of 1995. The said bombing was planned by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols. Nichols killed 168 people, injured about 680 others, destroyed one third of the building, brought about damage to about 324 other buildings, destroyed 86 cars and caused losses estimated at \$ 652 million. Another telling example is the London bombings, on 7 July 2005, which was a series of simultaneous suicide attacks, targeting citizens at prime time, killing 50 people and injuring about 700 others.

### METHODS OF CHEAP OPERATIONS

In a similar vein, the lecture also addressed the different methods by which cheap operations are carried out, such as being run over by vehicles. This method was used in France, Britain and America; personal attacks with light and white weapons, as happened in France, America and Yemen; the use of electronic attacks on many vital sectors, leading to great damage to the economic sector of countries; the bombing of cars and bicycles and the use of explosive belts; attacks on mosques, churches and places of worship and the use of drones.



### WHY TERRORIST GROUPS USE THESE OPERATIONS

The lecture highlighted a number of reasons that lead terrorist groups to resort to the use of cheap operations, such as the poor financial resources of terrorist groups, security difficulties, insufficient time, financial control and new recruits.

### IMPACT OF LOW-COST OPERATIONS ON COUNTRIES

The disastrous effects of low-cost operations and the great material and human losses were also addressed. A telling example is the bombings of the 9/11 Attacks, 2001, which is the most notorious event in the history of the United States, which is a group of terrorist attacks that targeted the United States by means of four civil aircraft, led by four teams affiliated with Al-Qaeda, which were directed to collide with targets; three planes hit the targets, while the one crashed.

The cost of Al-Qaeda's attack on the United States was estimated at about \$500,000, including the cost of living, a flight training plan, identifying the targets, as well as compensation for the families of the perpetrators. In contrast, the losses estimated were between \$10 billion and \$100 billion, in addition to a comprehensive change in the security system and the effects on tourism and aviation.

Another telling example is the London bombings, on 7 July 2005, plotted by four suicide bombers who used four explosions, three on the London Underground trains, and the fourth on a public transport bus; 50 people were killed and 700 were injured, in addition to other losses estimated at about \$2.5 billion, and public transportation and tunnels were suspended for three days. The total cost of these operations was \$4,200. Another example is the bombing of a mosque in Kuwait in Ramadan in 2015, which killed 27 people and injured 227 others, causing appalling insecurity, tightening procedures in all outlets, leading to a massive campaign of arrests. The financial cost was only \$300.

### RISKS OF CHEAP OPERATIONS

Although the direct losses are often limited, post-effects are of high-cost, such as disrupting development and the economy for a limited period; such disasters will have future effects, including the impact on tourism and business, tightening the security measures and bringing about consequent fears and tension in the region.

As for the impact of low operations in the four areas of counterterrorism, the lecture addressed the research efforts and investigation of political and ideological motives, internal media and exploitation of counter-media, as well as combating terrorist financing, along with the investigation into the financing sources, and the costs of security measures.

The two speakers highlighted the challenges facing the competent authorities in tracking these operations, as their tools are made available in the local markets, and their ease of use, as they can be financed without making banks or security entities suspicious and doubtful; the terrorists in charge of the implementation of such operations are still new and keep low profiles.

### SOLUTIONS AND REMEDIAL APPROACHES

Some solutions and remedial approaches were provided to better address these cheap operations, including fostering awareness as the best security measures, by educating and sensitizing society about the threats and destructive events, educating young people about the true goals of such terrorist groups, monitoring student behaviors, and educating parents about the need to monitor the behavior of their children and make them aware of the threats of terrorist groups. International cooperation was also highlighted by sharing information, encouraging society to cooperate with the competent security authorities, the availability of political will, cooperation to dry up sources of terrorist financing, taking strict measures against charities, and increasing international cooperation to combat drugs and prohibited activities. 🌸





# COUNTER-TERRORISM SPEECH IN THE MONTHLY IMCTC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



As part of the annual scientific, awareness-raising and educational activities program, IMCTC held a lecture entitled "Counter-Violent Rhetoric Development Methods," presented by Dr. Mohammed bin Suleiman Al-Subaihi, Delegate of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to IMCTC in the Communications domain, on 17 January 2021. Dr. Al-Subaihi addressed the whole gamut of rhetoric or discourse of violence in the media of violence in the digital environment.

## CONCEPT AND COMPONENTS OF DISCOURSE

Dr. Subaihi explained that the meaning of discourse in general is "a codified and controlled expression system," which means an organized knowledge of a specific aspect of reality or a specific phenomenon. The analysis of discourse aims to define the point of view of discourse and contradictions, highlighting what was neglected, muffled or concealed, discovering speech from behind silence, and realizing context-based meaning in such a manner that enables the understanding of the components of the discourse, transformations, social and historical conditions.

Dr. Subaihi keenly analyzed the elements of discourse, horizons, and sources of composition, noting that discourse is complex, multiple and onerously labyrinthine in entirety. It consists of three elements that contribute:

- 1. Effectiveness:** it is related to the "rhetorical agent"; it is not the producer of the official discourse; rather, the one in charge of reproducing the discourse, represented by a body of experts, intellectuals and specialists in media and psychology.
- 2. Space:** Media discourse has a perceptual space that has the ability to communicate directly, perceive discourse components through partial units, while still allowing specific transformations.

- 3. Temporalism:** It does not mean the intensification of the temporal aspect only; rather, in its most prominent and broadest form, it means the gradual process of building the media logic to place the future of the discourse in a specific intellectual position through the reality of technology with new qualities that do not really express it.

## FEATURES OF VIOLENT SPEECH

Dr. Subaihi noted the features of violent speech in the digital environment, stating that it is a divisive discourse that leads to the dismantling of the structure of social cohesion; the producers of such speech claim to be the victim to gain sympathy and reframe the grievances that their potential supporters may suffer. It is a speech that calls for recruitment and the commission of acts of violence by stripping their opponents of their humanity, which justifies their brutality, while turning a blind eye to their crimes and intimidating their opponents. The rhetoric of violence, extremism and terrorism is aggregated versions of ideas and perspectives shared by violent extremists, potential supporters and defending sympathizers.

Extremists and those drumming up for violent speeches use forums, chat rooms, social media, and video game platforms to find and recruit sympathizers. Terrorist groups allocate work teams of several skills to deal with various online platforms and applications. Perhaps the five-step model for developing collective hate is one of the most important theoretical references to explaining the discourse of violence that clarifies the strategies of construction and interpretation of the body on which some people see themselves, while they insult, mock, compete and incite; they may even kill others sometimes, but they are motivated by what can be described (building the virtue of evil). This model includes five steps:

1. Building a good identity for the ego, as opposed to building a bad, misguided and corrupt identity for the other.



2. Emphasizing difference and excluding others.
3. Promoting the other as a threat to identity; everyone who is not of us is an enemy for us; even if he is not, he should appear as such to the recipient, and here the hostility should be generalized, collective and threatening.
4. Declaring advocacy and support for the new identity.
5. Celebrating the activities of eliminating the bad identity, as these activities are a manifestation of collective virtue.

The rhetoric of violence and advocacy, the attraction of sympathizers and the recruitment of its followers are based on a number of psychological, social, economic, political and religious approaches to expand the grassroots base, and increasing the number of members belonging to extremist and violent groups. Among the most important factors employed in formulating this discourse are factors that fall into two main groups:

1. **Push Factors:** frustration, marginalization and lack of empowerment, pushing such people to adopt extremism, violence and terrorism.
2. **Pull Factors:** Attractive forces towards joining extremist and terrorist organizations and groups, such as kinship, heroism or adventure, or obtaining material economic gains, or self-actualization.

### COUNTER-NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The lecturer presented the starting points for drafting a speech counter to the speech of violence, which are reflected in the following:

- Adopting a methodological approach because counter-extremism and violence policies and programs are most helpful when built on applied research based on strong evidence, which requires analyzing and deconstructing the discourse of violence to create a better understanding as a prelude to building an elaborate speech to confront it firmly.
- Integration of more than one discourse to confront the speech of violence, whether at the level of prevention and immunization or at the level of treatment and disengagement, which requires expanding the range of stakeholders and partners, expanding available tools, building a common understanding and putting into action communication between partners: institutions, media activities, and schools and educational environments, religious institutions, activities, cultural institutions and sporting events and programs.
- Benefiting from youth, at the level of policies and practices and at the grassroots level to contribute to empowering youth to participate effectively in all fields and decision-making.
- The inclusion of educational curricula that provide students at different educational levels with the skills they need to lay bare and refute extremist propaganda and make educated people more resilient against violent extremism and terrorism.
- Inclusion of a media education subject in the educational curricula, aimed at empowering students with the necessary skills to identify sources of information, and how to use them to direct their opinions, influence their thinking, avoid spreading fake news, develop their capabilities to withstand speech of violence and give them the necessary immunity.
- Adopting a comprehensive, integrated and multidisciplinary

campaign according to discourse models in which these attacking, defensive and rational discourses are integrated through the various media outlets and digital environment platforms, in a central discourse consistent in time with real efforts.

### PILLARS OF COUNTER-NARRATIVE

Dr. Subaihi reviewed the three professional communication practices to counter violent speech:

- A. **Alternative Discourse:** It provides a more non-violent understanding of grievances and treatment approaches by adopting an objective constructive criticism, and strengthening the cohesion of society towards social values.
- B. **Counter-Narrative:** it provides an objective refutation of the speech of violence, by laying bare the flaws of their beliefs, ideas and practices, and the flaws of their formulations, the features of the conflict or local issues, and exposing their lies.
- C. **Governmental Strategic Communications:** It seeks to dismantle the structure of the discourse of extremism and violence, by explaining government procedures and policies in such methods that refute misinformation used by extremist and violent groups.

Finally, Dr. Subaihi called for a review and development of media practice to formulate a media discourse against the speech of violence, based on a number of pillars, including:

- Setting a clear-cut strategy for how the media addresses extremism, violence and terrorism to avoid improvisation, spontaneity and mistakes.
- Emphasizing the spread of awareness, highlighting tolerance, coexistence and peace, while affirming a media discourse that rejects exclusion and excommunication, based on spreading the values of citizenship and acceptance of others.
- A systematic deconstruction of violent discourse in the digital content, and an analysis of the characteristics of such discourse based on an understanding of what terrorist groups present in their violent discourse. Putting into action media observatories for the interaction of media outlets and digital platforms with violence, hate speech and armed conflicts to give a picture of the violations committed.
- Interpretation of the concepts that terrorists seek to establish and propagate, such as caliphate and jihad to deconstruct such concepts and purify them from the distortion brought about by extremists.
- Striking a balance between the right to access information and legal prohibitions, by strengthening the environment of understanding and agreement on best practices governing the relationship of media professionals to their sources, by adopting a common vision between the various parties to enhance trust and transparency.
- Addressing rumors and fake news that lack accuracy and professionalism, initiative and immediate interaction to correct and clarify and address the chaos.
- Terrorist events should not be approached as isolated from their contexts; differentiating between religion in its authentic and established texts of reference, and the different readings of religion as misinterpretation, substitution and distortion. 🌸

# PSYCHOSOCIAL AND SOCIETAL FACTORS DRIVING YOUTH TO JOIN VIOLENT EXTREMISM ORGANIZATIONS



**IMCTC** organized and hosted a keynote lecture by Dr. Mansour Al-Qarni, Director of the Ideology Department at the IMCTC Center in Riyadh, on 12 January 2021, featuring “Psychological and Societal Factors Driving Youth to Join Violent Extremism Organizations”, in the presence of Major General Mohammed Saeed Al Moghedi, Secretary-General of IMCTC, along with the delegates of the IMCTC member countries and IMCTC personnel. Among several other events, the said keynote lecture is part of the continued programs and initiatives hosted, organized and conducted by the IMCTC Center to realize the objectives of the mandate it is entrusted and tasked with across the four key domains.

Dr. Al-Qarni addressed the factors leading to extremism through two main areas: psychological factors (internal motivations) and societal factors (external stimuli). Dr. Al-Qarni divided the psychological factors of extremism into five elements: personal disorders, superiority vis-à-vis inferiority, sense of belonging, deprivation and conflict-fueled feeling. He, moreover, divided the societal factors into six elements: political factors, ideological (religious) factors, social factors, economic factors, educational factors and media factors.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF EXTREMISM

Furthermore, Dr. Al-Qarni analyzed the five psychological factors of extremism, explaining that some key pathological manifestations lead to violent extremism when the external influences triggered by societal factors respond. Then he addressed the second type of psychological factors of extremism which is manifested in superiority shown in certain characteristics, explaining how feeling superior is an expression of self-purification; such snobbery is adopted by many young people who joined violent ex-

tremism organizations, marking themselves with purity of faith.

Dr. Al-Qarni highlighted how many young people joining violent extremism are desperately looking for the sense of belonging; they are more likely to find it in extremist groups, where they feel that they have more security and play an important role in life. Deprivation is also ubiquitous among some violent extremist young people; their personal lives reveal signs of wrongful deprivation that drives them to look for compensation, manifested by many acts, such as violence and hate. Dr. Al-Qarni, furthermore, explained how conflict-triggered feeling produces in a state of internal psychological conflict and imbalance, fueled by certain situations, emergency circumstances, or new events, in which some young people find themselves trapped in psychologically unbalanced situations, hence they may not be able to act or interact normally. Overwhelmed as such, such young people become ideologically deviant.

The presentation was not limited to theory and analysis. With a deep-dive made through the keynote lecture, Dr. Al-Qarni cited telling examples from true stories of individuals who had been deceived and joined violent extremist groups. He also quoted some compelling evidence retold and narrated by those returning from areas of conflict. Such stories when retold and narrated have greater impact on the vulnerable groups that may be potential targets anywhere and anytime all over the world.

## SOCIETAL FACTORS OF EXTREMISM

Turning to the second part of the presentation, which is to explain and analyze societal factors of extremism, Dr. Al-Qarni highlighted the six types of those factors: political reasons, which are among the most notorious triggers that fuel psychological motives for embracing extremism and violence, hence joining



groups of violence and terrorism. It should be noted that politics is a large umbrella, under which many terrorist acts are perpetrated; as such, it is termed political terrorism, which feeds and capitalizes on highly tactical strategies and actions for political agendas and interests. Dr. Al-Qarni also explained (religious) ideological factors; beyond a shadow of doubt, religious ideology comes at the forefront of the root causes that trigger extremism and violence in that one's actions are driven by one's beliefs; which produce either good or bad actions. Therefore, terrorism is in fact a translation of ideology espoused by practitioners. Dr. Al-Qarni stressed the need to differentiate between religion per se, hence Islam, which has no association with extremism and violence and its adherents who exercise extremism and violent behaviors under its umbrella. This is critical lest others misunderstand truth and misinterpret reality.

Providing an in-depth analysis and holistic explanation of the other key factors, Dr. Al-Qarni also addressed the social causes, noting that those following the social problems that bring about extremism and violence well understand that many social factors assist in snowballing and ballooning such thorny problems, leading to individual or collective involvement in extremism and violence as a stepping stone or springboard for more notorious actions. Dr. Al-Qarni emphasized that given the social decadence in the current time, extremism coupled with terrorism has come into play.

In a similar vein, Dr. Al-Qarni further explained the economic reasons that constitute one of the main factors that may push individuals to practice deviant behavior, emphasizing the strong relationship between the economic situation and social security, as they catalyze almost the same corollary when brushed aside or when prioritized; when a given society is riddled with inability to make any progress and development, then it can be under-

stood that poverty, unemployment and economic failure are manifestations of contributory factors. When a special attention is attached to them, threatening temptations can be staved off both in ideology and behavior.

Akin to economy, politics and ideology is education, which is another key factor that should not be downplayed or diluted. Dr. Al-Qarni also approached the educational reasons, noting that education per se is among the factors or causes that have a direct or indirect impact, among other factors, on the individual's readiness and preparedness to swallow extremist ideologies and beliefs. Although other factors related to the immediate social environment contribute to the first formation of ideologies, beliefs, and behaviors in which the family and the social environment play a major role, education still has a major role in shaping the mindset, ideological, emotional and behavioral education, as well as moral and value-based orientations, as well as being heavily instrumentalized for economic empowerment and social mobility. It stands to reason that the failure of education is the most infamous reason for reducing the ideological immunity, because it creates an ideological, emotional and moral vacuum that incentivize the minds of young people to be ready for recruitment and extremist ideological polarization by extremist and violent organizations and groups.

More importantly, Dr. Al-Qarni explained how various media outlets play a vital role that cannot be underestimated in feeding extremism, violence and terrorism through programs, movies, news and interviews and terrorist acts live streamed, or communicating and publishing messages of terrorist groups in audiovisual format, turning them into a link with groups of extremism and violence in disseminating their news, regardless of whether it was done in good faith or not, and whether it was done directly or indirectly, and whether it was directed at home or abroad. 🌸





# CYBER SECURITY THREATS AND CHALLENGES



**IMCTC** organized and hosted a keynote lecture on 27 January 2021 in Riyadh, featuring “Cyber Security: Threats, Challenges and Protection”, presented by Dr. Basil Abdullah Al-Sadhan, Associate Professor of Cybersecurity at King Saud University.

Dr. Al-Sadhan has pointed out that cyber threats are snowballing across all areas of life: economy, money, national and military security, media, industrial control systems and other areas; cybersecurity protects three things: confidentiality, integrity and availability of information, and service is always available and accessible. As such, institutions face a real challenge due to the great acceleration in the development of technologies that need to be protected, and the threats that arise with these technical developments, along with the large number of security solutions developed to meet these challenges that require a thorough and deep understanding of their technology-driven applicability for security purposes.

Cybersecurity issues, such as data breaches, piracy and phishing, have been an exponentially growing threat to organizations of all sizes. In the same vein, more than 15 billion cyber-attacks were detected in 2019 alone, which is an increase of 284% vis-à-vis 2018. Unfortunately, it got worse in 2020 because of COVID-19 pandemic that increased online fraud by more than 400% in March of 2020 vis-à-vis previous months.

It has become true! Forget about the traditional warfare we have known for years, and prepare for the theatre of cyber-based wars, waged at companies, factories, armies and individuals, causing substantial losses. Notoriously enough, telling evidence of such cyber-attacks are looming large; it is possible now to sabotage a factory or a nuclear reactor (the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant is a case in point) or hack into a banking system without the need to use an aircraft or a cannon.

Some countries prepared to face this imminent threat. General Patrick Sanders, Head of the British Army’s Strategic Command, highlighted that his country possesses the necessary capabilities to carry out cyber-attacks that could destroy the

infrastructure of the potential opponent. The British Army has launched “Cyber Regiment” that will be used to carry out offensive operations in cyberspace, confront hostile states and domestic and foreign terrorist groups, provide a digital shield for foreign operations and provide protection for the country’s infrastructure and industrial sectors.

The cyber-attacks and piracy that swept through many countries caused the volume of spending on information security to jump to about 96.3 billion dollars in 2018, which is an increase of about 8% over the volume of spending in 2017. With the level of connectivity between more elements of the business infrastructure is on the increase, cybercrime caused companies a cost of more than \$2 trillion in 2019, and cyber-crime is expected to cost the world \$10.5 trillion annually by 2025.

The CEO of the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA) revealed that SDAIA thwarted more than 2.3 million cyberattacks, targeting the G20 platforms, while it was being held virtually in Riyadh in November 2020 with the special protection systems developed by SDAIA. Confronting cyber threats has become a top priority for the security of states and communities. Terrorist groups always rush into using them in light of the communication technology revolution all over the world.

## ATTACKER-BASED TYPOLOGY AND MODELS OF CYBER ATTACK

Dr. Al-Sadhan divided those who exercise cyber-attacks, seeking to pool information or disrupt, prevent and sabotage such technological infrastructure, into types according to their motives:

### ► SCRIPT KIDDIES

They use ready-made tools, inexperienced, seeking to destroy websites, gain admiration and self-actualization.

### ► HACKTIVISTS

This type is similar to the Script Kiddies; their motivations are



mostly political (such as Anonymous), seeking to steal data to embarrass the victim.

#### ► **CYBERCRIMINALS**

They are interested in commercial companies such as banking and credit cards to make illicit money.

#### ► **GOVERNMENT-FUNDED ATTACKERS**

They represent the greatest threat to governments and can employ the best talent to carry out advanced attacks in a stealthy manner; they launch advanced attacks designed to target, thus have no protection.

Dr. Al-Sadhan cited examples of cyber-attacks, referring to the attack on the systems of the Iranian Shahid Rajai Port overlooking the Strait of Hormuz; the Israeli destruction of a nuclear reactor in Syria by penetrating the radar systems before the site was bombed; the US Secretary of State's announcement that Russia had infiltrated federal agencies and American companies; the hacking of the electricity company in Johannesburg; the hacking of the Kuwait News Agency; the publication of statements by the Minister of Defense about the withdrawal of the American Forces from Camp Arifjan; the attack on the Israeli water pumping and sewage control systems to increase the chlorine level in drinking water, reducing many terribly sick.

#### ► **TYPES OF CYBER-ATTACKS**

Dr. Al-Sadhan explained the types of cyber-attacks, including:

#### ► **TROJAN HORSE**

It is a program that is seemingly harmless to convince the victim to download it on their device, the hackers would be granted permission on this device, enabling them to steal information or damage the device.

#### ► **DDOS ATTACKS**

This makes device or network resources unavailable to legitimate users; it is similar to someone who calls constantly on a phone line to keep them busy, and to prevent others from calling them; these attacks have the ability to disable the service for a long time.

#### ► **PORT SCANNING**

Port Scanning is harmless, and network operators also use this type for administrative purposes, but attackers use it to find an active port and exploit a known vulnerability, with messages sent to each port. It is an easy and fast way for hackers to discover which services can be hacked.

#### ► **VIRUSES / WORMS**

Viruses spread from one file to another on a single device, and they need human intervention, while worms spread from one device to another on the network, and they do not require human intervention.

Among the virus and worm attacks in the Middle East are the Stuxnet Worm directed at the Iranian Nuclear Program in June of 2010 and was used to bypass the air gap that isolates the nuclear program from the outside world; the Shmoon Virus

Attack, in August 2012, aimed to erase the memory of computers in Aramco's network to disrupt the operations of oil and gas production, and its new version in December 2018, and the WannaCry Virus attack that targeted the Windows in computers and encrypted their data, then requested a ransom for decryption.

#### ► **BOTNET**

It is a network of exploited devices under the control of a remote attacker; it consists of a huge army of exploiting devices called bots (short name for robots), which is a device hacked by a Trojan Horse to exploit it.

These attacks pose a major threat to network applications and communications. They amplify the damage and devastation from distributed denial of service attacks and erase Windows and cause theft, phishing and intrusive email messages.

Botnet attacks first search for the device by scanning Windows, then gain access to using the Trojan Horse method, downloading the bot control software, and then receiving orders and actual execution of malicious activities.

#### ► **PHISHING MESSAGES**

Through phishing, the hacker tries to appear as if it is from a trusted party to obtain information via e-mail, websites, or any other means to deceive the receiver of the message, giving the information directly, or taking action that enables the hacker to obtain the information.

### **PROTECTION FROM CYBER THREATS**

Dr. Al-Sadhan presented some methods of protection from cyber threats, such as attacks, phishing messages, or hacking, summarized in the following bullets:

- Detecting and troubleshooting vulnerabilities through scheduled updates to operating systems.
- Installing an anti-virus program, updating definitions frequently and using other protection methods such as firewalls.
- Exercising caution when installing programs of unknown sources.
- Disabling unused services.
- Establishing policies requiring a strong password.
- Applying multi-stage validation.
- Using a strong password, changing it frequently, not sharing it with others and using a password and username for each account.
- Avoiding access to unsecured wireless networks.
- Exercising caution when posting personal details on social networks.
- Deleting immediately anonymous messages or anonymous links, and avoiding messages requiring the recipient to provide one's personal information.
- Activating the message filtering feature to protect from unwanted messages.
- Avoiding opening files with extensions unless the recipient is waiting for such messages. 📧

## IMCTC CELEBRATES THE NATIONAL DAY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN



The delegates of the Republic of the Sudan at IMCTC held a celebration, marking Sudan 65 National Day Anniversary, on 1 January 2021. The ceremony was attended by Major General Mohammad Saeed Al Moghedi, IMCTC Secretary-General, delegates of the IMCTC member countries and the IMCTC Center personnel. Brigadier General Musa Omar Ahmed Saeed, delegate of the Republic of Sudan expressed the great symbolism that the people of the Republic of the Sudan attach to this glorious day, aspiring for a better future and continued progress. 🌟

## ANNUAL PROGRAM FOR IMCTC ACTIVITIES APPROVED FOUR MONTHLY ACTIVITIES COVERING IMCTC DOMAINS



IMCTC in Riyadh approved its annual program of activities, including symposiums, presentations, courses and workshops, through four monthly activities, covering the IMCTC domains. Major-General Mohammed Saeed Al Moghedi, IMCTC Secretary-General, remarked that the program would be implemented at the IMCTC Headquarters and in some of the IMCTC member countries, and the delegates would also participate, within clear criteria in the priority of such activities, selecting the target countries and selecting highly renowned and seasoned keynote speakers. The said program aims to:

- ▶ Clarify the concepts of extremism, issues, historical developments, violent actions and legitimate treatment approaches.
- ▶ Exposing the characteristics of organizations of violent extremism, ideological activities and military plans.
- ▶ Learning about the scholarly methods that contribute to de-linking and disengaging the ideology of extremism and adherents, and extremist ideology and society.
- ▶ Developing skills that help prevent, limit or reduce the attractiveness of extremist ideology and the associated behavior. 🌟