



## UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE OF IDEOLOGICAL EXTREMISM

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### Abstract:

Terrorism remains the main threat to the West not only from Muslim countries, but from Western homegrown Muslim communities too, turning Islamist Terrorism into an increasingly global phenomenon. Lethal combination of an ideological hub embodied in Al-Qaeda, spreading through new communication technologies like internet, a sophisticated and far-reaching network of media and phenomena, such as immigration in combination with regional nodes of terrorism, increase the offensive potential of terrorist groups. New regional centers in Africa, Asia or Western countries where homegrown communities have been influenced by Islamism, and new potential weapons add increased power projection to these movements. Of capital importance is the fact that most Muslim countries either lack the means to counter this threat or prefer to appease such groups and their breeding educational and training centers. This article assesses the mitigation strategies to counter terrorism, changing focus from target protection, to a strategic approach, combining hard and soft measures, increasing intelligence capabilities and, in particular, mitigating socioeconomic grievances that fuel appeal for extremist ideologies going beyond tactical approaches that only focus on military measures.

**Keywords:** Terrorism; Islamism; mitigation strategies; extremist ideologies.

### Resumen:

*El terrorismo sigue siendo la principal amenaza para Occidente, en proveniencia no sólo de los países musulmanes, sino también de las comunidades musulmanas de origen inmigrante, lo cual convierte al Terrorismo Islámico en un fenómeno global. La combinación letal entre un eje ideológico encarnado en Al-Qaeda, extendiéndose a través de las innovaciones tecnológicas de la comunicación como internet, una red de medios de comunicación sofisticada y de largo alcance y fenómenos como la inmigración en combinación con núcleos regionales de terrorismo, aumenta el potencial ofensivo de los grupos terroristas. Nuevos centros regionales en África, Asia y países occidentales donde sus comunidades musulmanas están bajo la influencia del islamismo y el potencial de nuevos armamentos añadiendo mayor proyección a los grupos terroristas son elementos que auguran un buen futuro al desarrollo de esta amenaza. El hecho de que la mayoría de los países musulmanes bien carezcan de los medios para oponerse a su amenaza o prefieran apaciguar a tales grupos y sus centros educativos y de entrenamiento revierte una importancia capital. Este artículo evalúa las estrategias de mitigación para oponerse al terrorismo, cambiando el énfasis desde la protección de objetivos a un enfoque estratégico, combinando medidas duras y suaves, mejorando los medios de inteligencia pero sobre todo mitigando los agravios socioeconómicos que alimentan la atracción hacia las ideologías extremistas más allá de las medidas meramente tácticas que sólo implican acciones militares.*

**Palabras clave:** Terrorismo; Islamismo; estrategias de mitigación; ideologías extremistas.

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## **Introduction**

In the spectrum of national security threats, terrorism and ideological extremism will pose the most dangerous threat in the foreseeable future. The world will witness politically motivated violence from politico-religious, ethno-nationalist, left and right wing, and single-issue groups. Politico-religious and ethno-nationalist groups will conduct about 80% of the attacks.

Driven by militant interpretation of Islam, the global jihadist ideology will present the most significant and enduring threat both to Muslim regimes and to Western societies. Al Qaeda, the spearhead of the Global Jihad Movement, will guide the ideological and operational agenda. With increased pace of globalization, Al Qaeda's philosophy and methodology will continue to spread. Its philosophy urging Muslims to fight their local governments [local jihad], the US, and its Allies [global jihad] is gaining acceptance. Its methodology of suicide to conduct mass fatality and casualty attacks is gathering momentum.

With Al Qaeda transforming from an operational to an ideological organization, the threat will de-centralize. Al Qaeda will remain a global organization providing ideology, strategy and structure, but the groups and individuals co-opted by Al Qaeda's philosophy and methodology will conduct the frontline fighting. By penetrating conflict zones, Al Qaeda will nurture groups and produce cells worldwide. The traditional lands of conflict - Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, and Mindanao - will be vital but Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia in the heartlands of Asia, Middle East and Africa will produce the narrative, operatives, technologies and organizations threatening the world.

Iraq and Afghanistan will be the defining conflicts shaping the future global threat landscape. Iraq and Afghanistan, a lightning rod and a magnet for Muslim youth, will be the main crucibles of jihad. Unless Pakistan dismantles the robust jihadist infrastructure in its tribal land, the violence in Afghanistan is likely to surpass the violence in Iraq. The US invasion of Iraq increased the global threat of terrorism many folds. Worldwide Muslim suffering and resentment has translated into support and sympathy for jihadism and anger and hatred against the US. If the US-led coalition forces withdraw from Iraq in the coming year, they will be forced to return and stabilize Iraq within the next five years.

With youth spending more time on the Internet, the Global Jihad Movement will increasingly reach out to Muslims both territorial and migrant/diaspora. Propaganda on the net has self-radicalized Muslims catalyzing homegrown Jihadism, a phenomenon threatening the fabric of multicultural societies.

## **1. Background**

After the end of the Cold War, the contours of threat changed. The threat of international conflict receded and the threat of internal conflicts advanced. Except Iran and to a lesser extent North Korea, no other government poses a threat to international security. At a global level, terrorism has emerged as the tier one national security threat. Despite sustained investment by the international community to reduce and manage the threat, terrorism remains the predominant challenge to the West. Both ideological extremism and its vicious by-product terrorism are becoming more wide spread. Extant and emerging ethno-nationalist and politico-religious groups especially of the Islamist variety are dominating the global threat landscape.



The single biggest threat stems from the Global Jihad Movement. Consisting of Al Qaeda, its operationally associated groups in Asia, Africa, Middle East, and the Caucuses, and the self radicalized homegrown cells, the Movement is resilient and the threat is enduring. In the coming years, the Global Jihad Movement will continue to challenge mainstream Islam and Muslims and secular states. Sustained propaganda is radicalizing both territorial and émigré Muslim communities. The territorial communities live in the Middle East, Sub Saharan Africa, Asia, the Balkans and in the Caucuses. The émigré -diaspora and migrant communities - live in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. More than the territorial Muslims, the émigré Muslims are susceptible to radicalization.

The nature of the threat has changed today. Although threat groups are puritanical in their ideologies, they are harnessing the forces of globalization. With globalization of communication, both terrorist and extremist groups are able to reach and communicate effectively to their potential support bases. What is different about the threat today than during the Cold War is the successful terrorist ideological penetration of their communities. As a result, terrorist groups enjoy support both from their territorial and migrant/diaspora communities to different degrees. At the extreme end is the terrorist control of territory and influence on the people: Hamas in Gaza, Fatah in the West Bank, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Tareek-e-Taliban in Tribal Pakistan, Afghan Taliban in Southeastern Afghanistan, Tamil Tigers in northeastern Sri Lanka, and the Kurdish Workers Party in northeastern Turkey. As a consequence, governments and societies are today suffering not only from traditional type of group terrorism but also from homegrown terrorism.

To reduce the threat, governments focused on the threat groups not the vulnerable communities providing the recruits and finance. Governments failed to take into account the need both to counter the terrorism of threat groups and counter the extremism in the communities. To win the fight, governments and their leaders will have to work closely with community organizations and their leaders. After al Qaeda's attacks on America's most iconic landmarks on September 11, 2001, the US-led coalition failed to take this calculus into account. As the threat has not been prudently managed, terrorism has emerged as the main threat to international security.

## **2. The Context**

Today, the terrorist threat is from structured groups and self radicalized homegrown cells. About 90-95% of the threat groups originate in the global south of the Middle East, Asia and Africa. As such, the bulk of the attacks are staged in the global south largely against domestic targets.

As Western countries host large migrant and diaspora communities, terrorist and extremist groups have invested time and energy building state of the art support networks for recruiting, fund raising and procurement. Some of these networks have mutated to attack networks. The West suffers from spectacular attacks periodically from groups in the south and homegrown cells in the north.



Of the different terrorisms, the threat from the Global Jihad Movement, will present the most diverse and lethal threat. Focusing on both the far and the near enemy, the Global Jihad Movement has both a global and a local reach. The Global Jihad Movement will grow as the most formidable threat to international, regional and national security of states. While the Global Jihad Movement seeks to replace secular regimes in the Muslim World with Islamic states, the U.S. and their Allies will remain its principal target. For Al Qaeda, the US is “the head of the poisonous snake” protecting and shielding the “false Muslim rulers and the corrupt Muslim Regimes.” Attacking the US at home and abroad is central for Al Qaeda.

Due to decentralization of the threat, both the extremist ideology and terrorism will spread. Failure by the International Community either to operationally or ideologically neutralize the core, has created multiple operational centers in Asia, Africa and Middle East and ideological hubs in North America, Europe and in Australia.

### **3. Developments in the Next Five Years**

(1) Decentralization of Threat: As the most hunted terrorist group, Al Qaeda will transform from an operational group to an ideological movement. Rather than conduct most of the attacks, Al Qaeda will remain in the background both providing the training and inspiring and instigating its associated groups influencing their targeting trajectory. Influenced by al Qaeda ideology and operational practice, the greater operational threat will stem from regional groups. The regional groups will conduct the bulk of the attacks, especially suicidal attacks. Al Qaeda’s subsidiary associated groups will emerge as the class of most operationally capable and active groups. Regional groups include Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Tareek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). In place of Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda, with the transfer of ideology and practice, there will be many Al Qaedas.

(2) New Threat Configuration: Despite severe losses, Al Qaeda seeks centralized and decentralized control of the Global Jihad Movement. As the Zawahiri-Zarqawi exchange of letters demonstrated, Al Qaeda seeks to guide the Global Jihad Movement. Of its configuration of enemies, Al Qaeda has framed the US as the main enemy. With US Allied participation in Afghanistan and Iraqi campaign, Al Qaeda included Canada, Europe and Australia to its list of enemies. With the threat moving from center to the periphery, Europe will come under greater threat. The mutation of European support networks feeding Iraq into operational networks will lead to attacks on European soil. As Europe border’s the Middle East, the fall out from Iraq, will impact on European security. With the integration of threat groups from mainland and tribal Pakistan and Uighur groups (ETIM) from Xingjiang in Western China with Al Qaeda in tribal Pakistan, the threat to its immediate neighbors, India, Russia and China, will enhance.

(3) Dominance of Al Qaeda: As the proclaimed spearhead of the Global Jihad Movement, al Qaeda will continue to set the global agenda. After Abu Musab al Zarkawai was killed, Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda has replaced the leadership of Al Qaeda in Iraq with Abu Ayyub al Masri, a former EIJ and Al Qaeda member. Although the stated mandate of Al Qaeda in Iraq is to oust US led coalition forces, Al Qaeda in Iraq is fully controlled by Al Qaeda. Having created a forward operating base 1500 Km closer to the West, Al Qaeda will work with Abu Ayyub al Masri to develop Iraq as a staging pad to attack Europe and beyond. With the withdrawal of US led coalition forces from Iraq, the domestic Iraq support and



sympathy for local Iraqi insurgent groups will diminish. However, with support from overseas, especially from Saudi Arabia, the strength, size and influence, the power of the Global Jihad groups, such as Al Qaeda in Iraq and Jamiat Ansar Al Sunnah, will grow. The sights of the Global Jihad groups located in Iraq are not limited to Iraq. Al Qaeda leadership in tribal Pakistan will use the Global Jihad groups in Iraq notably Al Qaeda in Iraq to operate outside Iraq. Like in the erstwhile jihads, even Iraqi local insurgent groups that have tasted the jihad may join the Global Jihad groups and travel to new theatres. Over time the operational range of the multi-national Global Jihad groups will expand to strike its enemies in the Middle East, Europe and North America.

(4) Globalization of Threat: Globalization merges the North and the South, shrinking the world. Like Western culture, film, fashion, music, and dance, has great appeal in the east, politico-religious and ethnonationalist ideologies will penetrate the Western World. With migration, travel, and communication, extremist ideologies from the South will move even rapidly and infect the North. From the Middle East, the traditional epicenter of terrorism, virulent ideologies and violent practices will spread westward and eastward. Among vulnerable segments of the population, especially migrant and diaspora pockets, such virulent ideologies will create sympathy and support for aims and objectives of the terrorist and extremist groups. With greater interconnectivity, threats will migrate from conflict zones to the West. Indoctrination is followed by operational activity. With threat groups harnessing new media technologies, terrorism will become even more networked. Despite huge investments by the international community to contain the threat originating in conflict zones like Iraq and Afghanistan, multiple epicenters of international terrorism and extremism will be created. The terrorist threat will largely emanate from structured groups in conflict zones but, as long as conflicts in Muslim lands persist, threat formation at a global level will persist. With the westward and eastward spread of virulent ideology from the conflict zones of Muslim heartland, the demography, geography of terrorism will shift and the profile of the terrorist will change.

(5) Changing Profile: Conflict zones in the South like Iraq and Afghanistan will remain the main battlegrounds but their impact is galvanizing Muslims worldwide. Especially after the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, terrorist and extremist groups have access to recruiting an ever-widening cross-section of Muslim communities and society. Since the beginning of the contemporary wave of terrorism in 1968, most threat groups, their ideologues, operatives, supporters and sympathizers originated in the Arab World. Only 10% of the Muslim population, Arabs influence the rest of the Muslim World. With the spread of ideology from the Arab heartland, more threat groups from Asia, Africa and the Caucuses will join the fight. In the next five years, Urdu, Pashtu, Bengali, Bahasa, and Malay speaking terrorists and extremists will join the fight. In addition to a shift in the demography and geography of terrorism, the socio-economic profile of the terrorist will also change. The terrorists will recruit from the rich, the poor, the educated and less educated. More intelligent, Western educated youth like Khalid Sheikh Mohamed or Dhiren Barot are increasingly joining and playing roles as sympathizers, supporters, facilitators, experts and leaders. Interested in developing technical capabilities in CBRN, aviation, or IT expertise and skills, terrorists will enlist technically competent, better-educated university graduates.

(6) Rise of Asian Terrorism: The geography and demography of terrorism will change. The Middle Eastern and Asian groups will dominate the international landscape of terrorism. With the developments in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, the specter of Asian terrorism will rise. Al Qaeda working together with TTP will provide training for both Muslims and Muslim groups on the Afghan Pakistan border. Global Jihad groups will co-opt



local and tribal groups creating safe havens and sanctuaries from Tribal Pakistan. By co-opting groups from both tribal and mainland Pakistan, Al Qaeda in Tribal Pakistan will provide the crucial ideology and training, and the fighting experience for threat groups worldwide. While Middle Eastern threat groups will continue to pose a threat, there will be a comparable threat stemming from Asian groups.

(7) Rise of African Terrorism: The threat by Asian groups will be followed by the rise of African Terrorism, a new actor on the scene. Threat groups from Sub Saharan Africa will emerge as an appreciable threat. Influenced by the Maghreb and Iraq, groups in the Sahel and both West and East Africa will pose a threat to their countries as well as to Europe and beyond. With the co-option of GSPC by Al Qaeda and its transformation into the Al Qaeda Organization of the Islamic Maghreb, the North African groups are posing an unprecedented threat. In every North Africa state, there are attacks – Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Furthermore, all the North African groups are either operationally linked or influencing the groups in the Sahel. Likewise, using Somalia as a launching pad, Al Qaeda is influencing the threat groups both in the Horn of Africa and in East Africa. Over time, even Sub-Saharan Africa will not be immune to Jihadist propaganda and proselytizing. With the spread of ideology by Al Qaeda from the north and the east, existing jihad groups in Africa will become violent and new groups will form. The groups in conflict zones in Africa will recruit from outside the conflict zones. Moreover, African émigré communities especially those in Europe and Canada will become susceptible to Jihadist penetration.

(8) Rise of Homegrown Terrorism: Al Qaeda has invested in a propaganda campaign directed at ordinary Muslims creating nodes and cells globally. Driven by Al Qaeda's ideology that Islam is under attack and Muslims are being deliberately killed, the segment of the Muslims believing that the West is purposely targeting the faith and the faithful will grow. In return for "martyrdom," more Muslims will believe in the promise by jihadist ideologues to Muslim youth of entry to heaven, an audience with God, pardon for sins and vices, the company of 70 relatives, and 72 vivacious virgins. While structured groups will pose the most dominant and lethal threat, a more sinister and insidious threat will stem from these self radicalized homegrown cells. While Al Qaeda and its associated groups will still pose a threat, the Al Qaeda inspired home grown threat will grow. The horizontally organized homegrown cells will increase in lethality after coming into contact with the vertically organized threat groups notably Al Qaeda and its associates. While groups such as Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda in Iraq will seek to mount attacks in the West, a greater threat will stem from their supporters either born or brought up in the West.

(9) Convert Muslims: As much as cradle Muslims from territorial, migrant and diaspora communities pose an enduring global threat, convert Muslims are susceptible to an even greater threat. Jihadist ideologues often exploit the vulnerability of converts by calling them to prove their loyalty to their newfound faith. No longer living in their organic society, most converts tend to become even more radical. Devoid of culture and tradition, they tend to get carried away. For instance, Cain Deliosa, a Filipino convert, killed 120 crew and passengers by bombing Super Ferry 14, the world's worst maritime terrorist attack. An overseas foreign worker in Saudi Arabia, he joined the Rajah Solaiman Revolutionary Movement, a Balik Islam movement. With increased proselytizing and propaganda directed at communities in the West, there will be more conversions of blue-eyed blond westerners like John Walker Lindh. With more Muslims joining Al Qaeda and its associated groups, Jihad propaganda will increasingly be produced, summarized, subtitled or translated to English and European languages. Converts will contribute appreciably to the existing pool of Muslims radicalized in Europe, North America and Australia.



(10) Threat Migration: Like ideology, technology too will migrate and proliferate. The divide between occasional spectacular attacks in the West and the frequent smaller attacks in the Muslim World will even. With more associated groups in the Muslim World building expertise, their operating range will slowly and steadfastly extend to the West. On a global scale, the overall trend will be towards attacks with greater lethality. The technical capabilities of the threat groups will move towards greater sophistication using dual user technologies and other commercially available material with military application.

(11) Threat Escalation: Determined to escalate, over time, more groups will express an interest to use CBRN. The gap between terrorist intention and capability to use CBRN, a force multiplier, will narrow. Guns and bombs will constitute the mainstay, but more groups will acquire, develop, and use CBRN. Only a few countries in the world have developed a capability to effectively counter a CBRN threat. Attacks using such unconventional agents will create widespread fear and panic.

(12) Threat Diversification: While terrorists will continue to conduct land, sea and air attacks, they are likely to move into other media. Although terrorist preference will always be land attacks, the threat will spread ground up. With terrorist recruitment of scientists, engineers and other technical specialists, future terrorism will threaten information, communications, computers and even satellite systems. The attacks on information infrastructure will affect the safe and secure functioning of utilities infrastructure – gas, power, IT etc. The terrorist denial of service attacks against diplomatic missions by the LTTE and plans to take control of Becton Complex's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) by global jihadist cell are indicative of evolving abilities and intentions.

#### **4. Challenges to Governments and Leaders**

Enhanced Threat to the Muslim World: Global Jihad and other radical and violent Islamist groups will pose a threat both to the Muslim World and to the Western World. As none of the threat groups are physically located in the Western countries, radical and violent Muslim groups will pose a much greater threat to the Muslim World. On a daily basis, both radical Islam and their operational groups will challenge the Muslim way of life, mainstream Islam, and secular Muslim regimes. Despite Islamist groups posing a common threat, there is no real partnership between the West and the moderate Muslims. There is a grave need to build a common platform and develop a common program between the West and moderate Muslims. The Middle East, particularly the Levant, will remain in turmoil. In the neighborhood of Iraq, a number of violent and radical Islamist groups unfriendly to the West will come to power in the next five years. The most likely locations are in the Levant spurring a domino effect in North Africa and in the Arabian Peninsula. Even today, if there are free and fair elections, Hamas will be in power in Gaza, Fatah in the West Bank, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and in Jordan. Although they are non-global jihadist groups, they will permit or will be forced to accommodate the operation of global jihadist groups. For instance, Asbat ul Ansar and Fatah al Islam, both Al Qaeda associate groups, are operating in Lebanon. Similarly, Iran, another adversary of the US is sponsoring Shia and Sunni groups are establishing a robust presence in Iraq, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. The threat within and the threat from these Muslim countries will escalate. The US obsession to democratize Muslim countries will lead to Islamic parties coming to power at least in the mid



term. In countries where Muslim populations are already politicized and radicalized democratization will contribute to further anti-Americanism.

**Control or Dominate Territory:** Threat groups control or dominate stretches of land in countries such as Somalia, Yemen, Philippines and Pakistan. In tribal Pakistan, one of the two epicenters of global terrorism, there are areas where the terrorists dominate and control territory. These areas have become no go zones for the Pakistani military even for their elite forces. In areas such as Mir Ali in North Waziristan, where multiple foreign terrorist groups have established their headquarters, they face no serious opposition. Large groups such as the constituents of Tareek-e-Taliban Pakistan that command several thousand fighters operate in strength. In other conflict zones groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines, control land through peace agreements. Non-Muslim threat groups such as the LTTE and FARC too control vast stretches of land. They have their indoctrination centers, training camps, and quasi-government. With vested political and financial interests, these groups are unlikely to relinquish their control and domination of territory to governments easily. With limited public support, poor language skills, no robust CMO initiatives, and other operational inadequacies, government forces are either weak or incapable of enforcing government writ.

**Resilient Propaganda Machines:** Terrorist and extremist groups have established propaganda machines in the Muslim World breeding a new generation of jihadists. Terrorist ideology is spreading through the media. Unlike before, threat groups can reach a wider constituency generating greater sympathy and support. Realizing the importance of public support, terrorist and extremist groups seek to influence their ethnic and religious communities using dedicated newspapers, radio stations, TV broadcast, or websites. To shape public opinion, threat groups have established their own radio and television stations and penetrated even established mainstream media organs. Global Jihad groups established, owned and operated several platforms including TV and radio stations. The terrorist media fronts include [www.alzawraa.tv](http://www.alzawraa.tv) by Al Qaeda, Al Manar by the Lebanese Hezbollah, Mediya by the PKK and Nidarshanam by the LTTE. Commercialization of communication technologies enabled threat groups to gain access and use modern media platforms. For example, of all countries, the LTTE used Israeli satellite providers to uplink broadcast their propaganda demonstrating both the lack of vigilance of governments and the private sector.

**New Media Technologies:** After the fall of Taliban in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda and associated groups have invested in the World Wide Web turning it into its principal propaganda machine. After the authorities in Saudi Arabia raided and confiscated the extremist propaganda used in the schools, mosques and the associations, the extremist ideologues uploaded their material on to the web. The new media technologies - especially the Internet, email, and websites - are an effective medium to reach out to the youth that are computer savvy. Today, most live in two worlds – real and virtual. With extremists and terrorists seeking to influence both the worlds, the threat in the West is primarily spreading through the Internet. Western educated Jihadists trained in the sciences, law, and international relations use the web to indoctrinate a new generation of leaders, members, supporters and sympathizers. Highly motivated, they can comfortable working with individuals and groups both in the west and east. Terrorists - but more the extremists - have shown enthusiasm to use other platforms such as Second Life, Warcraft etc. These innovative and powerful tools are used to communicate ideas, facilitate communication and energize believers spurring recruitment and fundraising.



**Regulate Community Institutions:** Keen to retain political support from Islamist parties, there is reluctance among Muslim governments to fight radicalism. They are unwilling to undertake unpopular decisions to clamp down on radical schools, Mosques and associations. These schools either call for or actively promote violence. For instance, Pondok Pesantaran Al Mukmeen, the Indonesian boarding school that produced more than 50% of the Bali bombers, is permitted to function. The Indonesia school and its satellites continue to mentor a new generation of jihadists in the world's most populous Muslim country. Likewise in Yemen, Lebanon, Pakistan and other countries, the political mainstream is under threat by the extremists. Leaders such as Musharraf were determined, but lacked widespread political and public support to dismantle threat groups. Many governments are politically incapable to take decisive and sustained action against various groups promoting hatred, division and violence.

**Operation of Front, Cover, and Sympathetic Groups:** As much as the threat is evident in developing world, a significant proportion of houses of worship, schools and associations located in the West too preach violence. Using community institutions, threat groups originating in the Global South have penetrated the migrant and diaspora communities and their community institutions in the West. To prevent the creation and strengthening of ethnic enclaves and ghettos for exploitation, it is necessary to promote religious and cultural inclusion. As migrant and diaspora communities are vulnerable to external extremist and terrorist influences, host governments must work closely with host societies to actively counter such influence and promote host values and norms. In many Western countries, threat groups exercise significant control over segments of their diaspora and migrants as well as their institutions. Operating through front, cover and sympathetic organizations, taking the face of human rights, humanitarian, welfare, political, educational, social, cultural and religious groups, they have politicized, radicalized, and militarized migrant and diaspora segments in the West. These émigré communities in turn act as bridgeheads for terrorist and extremist groups in the South to recruit, raise funds, procure supplies and operate globally. While Western security and intelligence services watch front, cover and sympathetic organizations either controlled or influenced by terrorist groups, governments lack legislation to disrupt and dismantle them. This includes several non-Muslim threat groups such as the LTTE, PKK, IRA, and the BKI. As these groups were able to exercise constituency pressure, some political parties and individual politicians even supported these groups in Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

## **5. Mitigating the Threat**

**Getting the Strategy Right:** As demonstrated throughout human history, violent actors will always use terrorism and guerrilla warfare as a tool. As an extreme form of political expression, killing civilians and combatants has been used through the ages. The political, social and security environment will determine the nature, form, and scale of threat. Governmental and societal measures and counter measures will determine its resilience, adaptability and flexibility. For effective response, law enforcement, military and intelligence services should consider the terrorist group as its mentor, take the long view, and respond strategically. To manage extremism and reduce the violence, it central for government to closely shadow the threat groups. By protecting targets most governments believe that the threat can be reduced. By target protection, the threat is displaced not reduced. Terrorists will search for new targets. By investing in target protection, the threat will protract prolonging the defensive and offensive fight. The most practical strategy is to work on reducing intent. Unless governments review their current policies and develop a strategic approach to



combating the current threat, both the threat of violent extremism and operational terrorism will grow significantly in the immediate (1-2 years) and mid (5 years). If leaders recognize the real challenges and their governments develop a strategic approach, both the threat of terrorism and extremism can be contained in the long term (5-10 years).

**Best Practice:** Terrorism can be contained at a tactical level but it can only be defeated at a strategic level. As such, the strategy to reduce, manage and terminate the threat should be at both a micro and macro level. At the micro level, the military, law enforcement and intelligence services can reduce the threat through kinetic and lethal action. At the macro level, government can address the legitimate grievances and aspirations, and socio-economically and politically empower the affected community. To meet the challenge, governments should integrate their instruments of national power rather than emphasize on the military dimension. Most governments fight terrorism and insurgency using military force. While it may produce temporary results, it will not help to reduce the long term and strategic threat. It necessary to restructure military capabilities designed to fight conventional campaigns to fight both terrorism and insurgency. The most effective strategy is to integrate soft power with hard power. Instead of a military heavy response with temporary gains, western countries should seek to develop a full spectrum response.

**Threat Appreciation:** Since Al Qaeda attacked America's most iconic landmarks seven years ago, the West failed to reduce the terrorist and extremist threat. The failure stems from the inability of the US-led counter terrorism community to better appreciate terrorist intent or motivation. Understanding the three key components of the threat matrix – intent, operational capability and opportunity – is central. Western designed and developed approach is to target the operational capabilities not to reduce intent. When governments fail to reduce operational and conceptual infrastructures in parallel, there is a boomerang effect. That is if a government only attacks terrorist operational capabilities, the terrorist intent will grow. Overtime, terrorist groups will rebuild the operational infrastructures and attack when they are ready and opportunity presents. It is necessary to educate government that reducing threat is fighting both operational capabilities and intent. Only by protecting targets most governments believe that the threat can be reduced. By target protection, the threat is displaced not reduced. Terrorists will search for new targets. By investing in target protection, the threat will protract prolonging the defensive and offensive fight. While operational capabilities can be dismantled immediately, reducing intent takes time. The most practical strategy is to work on reducing intent or motivation.

**Operational Effectiveness:** The overwhelmingly kinetic approach has created an erroneous impression in the Muslim World that the West is against Muslims and Islam. A notable failure in GWOT has been the lack of focus on the threat groups and excessive use of hard power on the population. As a result of government overreaction, since 9-11 the threat has progressed and not diminished. For instance, Iraq was a distraction from the real campaign to neutralize the Al Qaeda leadership. Even in the US, the number of threat specialists that know Al Qaeda is small. With divided resources, the US failed either to stabilize Afghanistan or Iraq. After the disastrous US invasion of Iraq, the Muslim World in general perceives the term “counter terrorism” as “anti-Islam” or “anti-Muslim.” It is important to calibrate the use of force to ensure that public support is retained. There is no standard textbook to fight terrorism. Reviewing past successes and failures should help develop best practice. Maximizing successes and minimizing failures is key. As counter terrorism is an emerging discipline, it is necessary to identify gaps and loopholes in the existing systems and invest in new initiatives. Constantly, governments should explore new frontiers to combat the changing threat. Developing an effective strategy in a fluid



environment is complex. There has been a notable failure to kill or capture the Al Qaeda leadership in tribal Pakistan. With this exception, most weaknesses are in the non-kinetic/non-lethal realm.

**Primacy of Intelligence:** As the threat is dynamic, the response must be dynamic too. As threat groups learn, innovate, adept and strike back, governments must shadow the threat closely. To be effective in targeting, intelligence should be the spearhead of counter terrorism. To conduct effective operations, they must be intelligence driven or led. Governments must invest in building platforms to generate high-quality and high-grade intelligence. As terrorism becomes globalized and networked, the security and intelligence services must work closely with their sister and counterpart services. Due to lack of sound and timely intelligence, the US failed to dismantle the leadership structure of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan before September 11, 2001 and thereafter in tribal Pakistan. As intelligence is often partial, flawed and absent, it is necessary to orient both security and intelligence services and frontline law enforcement officers to detect tactical, operational and strategic indicators.

**Paramount Importance of Ideology:** As terrorism is a by-product of ideological extremism, the approach of tolerating ideological extremism and fighting operational terrorism has been a grave failure. Radicalization follows the spread of virulent ideology. Militarization follows heightened extremism. As the world becomes flat, there will be a geographic dispersion terrorist and extremist ideologies. Both from the West and the East, extremist and terrorist groups will co-opt more individuals, cells and groups. But, staying ahead of terrorism has not been the strength of Western counter terrorism approaches. By limiting the ability of terrorists to disseminate propaganda, the terrorist cycle - recruitment and fund raising - can be disrupted at an early stage. However, Western governments have focused on developing the tools to disrupt terrorism in a more advanced stage of surveillance, reconnaissance and the attack phases. By their nature, politically motivated terrorist groups are resilient to a pure military approach. Similarly, politically motivated ethnic and religious conflicts are intractable. As long as the ideology is intact, they will replenish their human losses and material wastage and continue the fight. Under pressure, they undergo a cycle of factionalization and merger until the appeal of their ideology is neutralized. Taking into account the ideational dimension, a full spectrum response is the most intelligent strategy to neutralize the threat. Western leaders lack an understanding of the nature of the ideological threat. Only by developing multiple platforms to counter the ideology can the international community break the global power of Al Qaeda. As they feed off each other, to be successful, the ideological campaign must be fought in the real and in the cyber worlds.

**Regulate the Web:** Today, the threat groups posted their propaganda or managed 5000-6000 websites. In contrast, the counter extremist and counter terrorist sites were less than 100. The interactive terrorist and extremist are very appealing to the youth but the counter threat websites are boring. Those individuals and groups posting messages on the web and service providers should be held accountable and responsible for their content. With the WWW becoming the principle means of terrorist and extremist communication, governments and private law firms should prosecute the content creators, providers, and facilitators of violence. Almost all these sites are located in the West, most notably in the US, where freedom expression is constitutionally guaranteed. The web has other features that make it attractive to the threat groups. For example, the web guarantees anonymity. As terrorists and extremists that post messages can use their nicknames, there is no accountability. As such, the Global Jihad groups and individuals extensively use the Internet. Some eight years after September 11, 2001, the Global Jihad Movement is still winning on the Internet. An effective global counter-ideological campaign to challenge propaganda in the cyber world is much needed.



**Community Engagement:** The bedrock of counter terrorism is community engagement. With the exception of dedicated police units such as the Muslim Contact Unit in the UK, the focus of the West has been to use law enforcement. The emphasis has been to arrest, charge, and prosecute terrorists but not to engage the community and prevent the spread of extremism. Under the influence of Al Qaeda, Jihad is becoming a way of life. The threat is stemming from within the Muslim community. As the threat is flexible, adaptive and resilient, the existing enforcement policies and practices implemented from the top have failed to tackle societal extremism. Rather than continue with the top down harsh response after 9-11, it is necessary for governments to develop a community-oriented bottom up response. Without Muslim public support, cooperation and collaboration, can Muslim societal extremism be isolated or marginalized? Instead of demonizing and isolating the community, engaging and giving ownership of security to the community and to its leaders had made a difference. Rather than to legislate, there is much to be gained by engagement. Today, most counter terrorism intelligence pre-empting attacks have come from Muslim communities that have been engaged rather than isolated. Western and non-Muslim majority government must build bridges and work with both the Muslim and the non-Muslim communities.

**Muslim Leadership:** The Muslims face a generational fight. But in the Muslim World, there is no Muslim Gandhi. Why have no telling Muslim voice convinced the Muslim masses that Osama bin Laden does not speak for the Muslims and Al Qaeda does not represent Islam. Many great Muslim leaders from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iraq have been brutally murdered or threatened into silence. Leadership is central in any fight. However, Muslim leaders alone cannot confront the threat of extremism and terrorism. In such a time of crisis, Western nations and other non-Muslim majority governments should help the Muslim community in this hour. Unless the West and Muslim majority governments work with Muslim leaders to reform the existing educational systems, the Muslim community will continue to breed radicals and radicalism. By working in partnership, every community institution can be encouraged to propagate the message of peace. For instance, every school can be an effective vanguard against violence. Similarly, every mosque can sow the seeds of peace. Muslim secular and religious leaders can play a concerted role to condemn terrorism and other forms of violent actions. Unwillingness of governments to correct the ground reality in conflicts such as Palestine and Kashmir has prevented Muslim leaders from condemning violence to achieve their goals. Fear of retaliation and events such as the US invasion of Iraq, where millions of Muslims have suffered, it is a challenge for Muslim leaders to moderate their own communities. Terrorist seeks to legitimize their politically motivated attacks using religious. They can highlight key texts from the Koran such as “Do not be extreme in your religion.” By repeatedly stating that violence and extremism is not compatible with true Islamic practice and belief, they can promote moderation as a way of life.

**Terrorism, an Unattractive Option:** Terrorism works in the short term but not in the long term. Despite their ability to inflict large-scale violence, terrorists are unlikely to come to power. Except in Palestinian territories, no terrorist group has come to power. To make terrorism unattractive, one of the key strategies is to meet legitimate political demands. To deter transformation of political organizations into terrorist groups, recognize and work with political organizations. To isolate violent groups, create avenues and platforms for public to express themselves non violently. Educate the constituencies of threat groups that using violence especially terrorism as a tool will criminalize both the groups and their struggles. Case studies can convince the constituencies of threat groups that violence has not helped to achieve the political aims and objectives.



**Stabilize Conflict Zones:** Ethnic and religious conflicts will dominate the international security landscape. Conflict zones will be the crucibles for producing human suffering, virulent ideologies, internal displacement, refugee flows and terrorism. Operationally and ideologically infiltrated by Al Qaeda, Muslim conflict zones will be the primary producers of terrorists and extremists. The human suffering in the arenas of conflict - such as Iraq and Afghanistan – will continue to produce terrorists, terrorist supporters, and mobilize Muslims worldwide. As long as these conflicts are alive, there will always be a flow of recruits and finance to fight. Ideological extremism, a by-product of suffering will contribute to sympathizer and support base. Many of the conflicts that breed resentment, anger and hatred cannot be resolved in the short term. The conflicts such as Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq are intractable and will likely continue in the foreseeable future. Even after the fighting has stopped, such as Bosnia, the stabilization forces are compelled to maintain a robust presence.

**Negotiate with Groups:** A proven strategy to fight terrorism and insurgency is to divide the threat groups, negotiate and co-opt some groups, and pitch them against the uncompromising groups. In a period where communities are evolving into multi-cultural societies, the Jihadist call to fight for the establishment of Islamic states is not practical. However, there are some reasonable demands for religious, linguistic and cultural autonomy that can be accommodated; government cannot meet many of the utopian demands. In Southeast Asia, Jemaah Islamiyah is fighting to establish an Islamic state. Majilis Mujahidin Indonesia is calling for the institution of Shariah law. Both the Pakistan and Afghan Taliban is calling for the withdrawal of US-led coalition in Afghanistan. The Al Qaeda controlled Islamic State of Iraq is demanding the complete withdrawal of US-led coalition forces from Iraq. In the Middle East, the Palestinian Hamas is demanding the dismantling of the state of Israel. Through negotiation, addressing reasonable and legitimate demands can prevent political groups from becoming extremist and extremist groups from becoming terrorist.

**Build a Norm and Ethic against Violence:** The current thrust is to kill or capture operational terrorists. There is no real focus in preventing the next generation from falling victims to extremist ideology. The status quo must change. While seeking to invest in community counter ideology targeting the current generation, it is necessary to focus on the next generation. To build a norm and ethic against violence, it is necessary to focus on formal and informal education, initiatives to regulating the net, and building partnerships with Muslim community institutions. Within the Muslim World, especially in the Arab World, it is necessary to normalize moderation. Of the student body at the International Islamic University in Malaysia, the Arab students were the most radical. The traditional Middle Eastern worldview of the West was borne out of anger, humiliation and hatred of the Israeli-Palestine dispute. However, today, it is based on the exposure of Muslim publics to daily media coverage of events in Muslim conflict zones - from Afghanistan to Iraq. By comprehending the narratives and counter narratives of extremism, Muslims will abhor violence and seek peace. The fight must be waged wherever it can be fought with whoever is willing to work together without waiting for perfect conditions to emerge. The multi-pronged strategy is to counter the contemporary wave of extremism through the mass media, community institutions, and leaders. Conducting a point-by-point Koranic rebuttal of radical ideologies originating in the Arab World can restore the beauty of Islam as a religion of peace. The Koran is the best text to break the rationality of terrorist groups – their moral social and religious justification to kill, maim, injure. A global network of scholars, clerics and teachers can be created, nurtured and supported to counter the radical texts, doctrines and



mindsets developed in the Middle East with implications for the rest of the Muslim World. Muslims should seek moderation as a way of life.