

IDEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM

The Ideological Battle

Terrorism as an act of violence has been committed by people from all religious and political backgrounds. Several groups who called themselves Jews, Christians or Muslims, have used terrorism to force their agenda, issues or beliefs. None of these groups represent the true religion of the Jews or the Christians as much as these terrorists represent Islam.

Attacks on the civilians and the least expecting people around the world by these groups is the kind of strife that cannot be justified by any religion or under any cause and is strongly condemned in all religions including Islam as clarified by the words of God in the Quran and the Final Testament. Thousands of women, children and men, young and old have been killed in attempts to achieve or hold on to special interests whether political, social or "religious".

Terrorism occurs when ideological motivation meets with operational capability. The way in which a terrorist group shapes its radical worldview and disseminates it to audiences worldwide plays an important role in the public interface between the group and its target audience. The war on terror is ought to be called the ideological battle against radical extremists who happen to use terror as a weapon to disrupt the conscience of the free and peaceful world.

Counter Terrorism Approaches

An effective multi-pronged approach is needed for us to combat terrorism in the long run. Technically, counter terrorism can be divided into 2 approaches, namely Operational and Strategic. Operational Counter Terrorism aims at reducing the immediate threat by targeting the terrorist cells and disrupting their attack plans. On the other hand, Strategic Counter Terrorism aims at changing the mindset and to create a hostile environment for the terrorists. In other words, we can say that it aims at changing the hearts and minds of the terrorists

Why Ideology is Important for Terrorists?

Let us look at the significant role that ideology plays for terrorists' organizations like Al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Southeast Asia. Firstly, ideology is the organizing principle of the terrorist organizations. It provides a motive and framework for their actions. Secondly, as demonstrated by the World Trade Centre, Bali 1 and 2, Marriott and Australian

embassy bombings, it provides justification for their acts of violence. Thirdly, ideology is a language of mass mobilization. Calling for jihad in the name of Islamic duty has enabled Al-Qaeda and JI to continuously indoctrinate and recruit terrorist members. Fourthly, in the guise of a social program, ideology can generate Muslim public support whether as supporters who provide financial, logistical assistance or as sympathizers who do not morally condone these acts. Finally, over time, the ideology will further radicalize Muslim communities by indoctrinating them into a culture of violence and radical interpretations of Islam.