

TERRORISM EXPERTS CONFERENCE 2017

DEALING WITH THE CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

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CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE DEFENCE AGAINST TERRORISM

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CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Significant changes have been taking place in the profile of terrorism over the last decade

Unlike most commonly acknowledged terrorist groups whose headquarters, zones of operations, cadres of leadership, hierarchical structures, capabilities and intentions were more or less certain to the experts until recently, today terrorists and terrorist networks are not that easily identifiable

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Terrorists are organized in small cells composed of very few people as nodes of a large network all around the world

Their zone of operation is the entire world

There is no identifiable cadre of leadership, with few exceptions as spiritual leaders who, however, do not issue orders for every operation

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

There is no clearly traceable top-down hierarchical structure where decisions are taken concerning where to attack, or when, or whom to attack

Since terrorists can transform civilian airlines to ballistic missiles, in light of their creativity, it is very difficult to have an estimate about their capabilities

Even though some aspects of their intentions are known, their limits cannot be fully anticipated

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

They do not necessarily need specific sponsors such as states or sub-state groups from which they can get logistical or material support

Interesting “fund raising” models exist based on voluntary contributions and donations from individuals in almost all societies in the world

They recruit new members from a very large pool of volunteers all round the world based on adherence to a common value or belief system

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Such characteristics of this type of terrorist organizations make it extremely difficult to deal with them, or with their supporters by resorting to classical counter-terrorist strategies, operations or tactics

Because of strict obedience to their spiritual leaders and to their value or belief systems, providing them incentives as material gains has no impact on stopping their attacks

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

By the same token, it is extremely difficult to deter them by way of threat of or use of force as they have nothing to lose in this material world

Only preemptive action may prevent their attacks or diminish the degree of fatalities and destruction

Availability of accurate and timely intelligence, in the broadest sense of the word, is extremely vital in achieving such a goal

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

However, collection of intelligence concerning this type of terrorist cells is extremely difficult and, above all, requires intensive and continuous cooperation and collaboration among intelligence services across the globe and within the states

NATO may very well serve such a purpose with its established capabilities, connections and its credibility regarding the need for protection of sensitive information about the sources

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Even though deterring this type of terrorists seems to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, finding ways to convince them that their attacks will eventually damage their value or belief system may have an impact on them

Such an argument must definitely be founded on a very solid ground and be based on a very comprehensive research and study by high caliber experts on various aspects of the subject matter

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

In this respect too, NATO can be a venue for bringing together experts as well as for sponsoring such a study, which requires, among others, intensive and high level coordination, collaboration, and resources of all sorts

Only then NATO, which is transforming from a collective defense organization to a collective security organization, encompassing a wide-range of states around the globe may effectively tackle global terrorism whose profile keeps changing

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

The threat posed by the changing profile of terrorism is not limited to the type of terrorists or terrorism discussed above

There is also a serious threat posed by “individual” or “scientific” terrorism which does not necessarily involve a collection of people across the globe gathered around spiritual leaders, common values or belief systems

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Regarding the fact that there is almost no limit to what science can do, due attention must be paid to the possibility of staging extremely lethal attacks by those who have access to scientific knowledge as well as the necessary tools and equipment

There may be no clear-cut (or readily existing) motivation, or a cause that may be somehow detectable in the course of the preparation of such an attack

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Those who have access to sensitive scientific knowledge, expertise as well as equipment may, either because of personal defects, a trauma, or extreme pressure from outside factors including the demands of terrorist groups, may wish to use their capabilities to inflict an unprecedented damage to the mankind and the environment

Anticipation of such occurrences is extremely difficult, which renders deterrence, let alone prevention, of such attacks almost impossible

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Regarding such contingencies, which may very well involve the use of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction, proper ways and means of protection must found

These ways and means of protection must be adequate in terms of quality as well as quantity

NATO, again, may serve as the most appropriate platform for such an heavy-duty undertaking in dealing with the changing profile of terrorism

WORKSHOP

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

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CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

It is unfortunate to say that, over the past ten years, since I made this presentation before a similar audience, the global fight against terrorism has not been able to bring the level of comfort to the lives of peace loving peoples

Terrorist groups have even expanded their zones of operation on all over the globe as well as added new methods and tactics to their attacks, such as kidnapping school children or driving vehicles into the pedestrians in crowded areas, just to cite a few

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

On top of everything, in the name of dealing with the threat of terrorism posed by the non-state actors, came the threat of “state-like actors” or, shall we say, “quasi-states”, such the self-proclaimed “Islamic State” also known as ISIS

Dealing with ISIS, required time for adaptation to the new dimensions of the threat, such as the proclamation of the “Caliphate” that resonated well with some members of the Islamic faith

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Moreover, the whole world was appalled with the extent of the territories that ISIS occupied and the degree of violence and horror that their members have committed for years

Hence, it became obvious that counter-terrorism operations that have been carried out against non-state actors, such as Al Qaeda, would not be sufficient in countering ISIS.

More would be needed to be done, such as mobilizing sufficient combatting capability

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Allocation of some intelligence units or a limited number of special forces by the peace loving states to the coalition of states conducting the global war on terrorism has not been easy, but was finally achieved at a certain level

But, this time, the need for allocation of large numbers of troops that would have to confront head on thousands of violent ISIS terrorists on the territories of Syria and Iraq, however, stalled the pace of measures that had to be taken against the new threat

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Several years have passed with limited response to ISIS' atrocities, which claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people and caused enormous physical destruction of modern cities as well as cultural heritage spanning thousands of years

Mobilization of "ground troops" has been finally possible and the large territories, once occupied by ISIS, such as Mosul and Raqqa, have been "liberated" by the Coalition!

But, at what expense?

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

Before commenting on at what expense the Coalition has defeated ISIS, I would like to remind that Turkey and the Turkish people have been among those who seriously suffered the most from ISIS terrorism since it emerged in the region

Yet, Turkey's efforts to convince its allies to conduct a combined ground operation that has now been proven to be the decisive method to defeat ISIS have not been sufficiently well-received, despite its repeated attempts

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

It is, therefore, a kind of a mixed-feeling that one would express by looking at the current situation in the fight against ISIS

Shall we be happy to see Mosul and Raqqa liberated and ISIS defeated in its strongholds?

Or shall we be sad to see that Turkey's major NATO ally has formed substantial coalition with a terrorist organization, namely YPG, an extension of the PKK, to fight another terrorist organization?

CHANGING PROFILE OF TERRORISM

To me, the answer is clear and simple!

What about You?

I would like to leave you with this question and I would also like you to think about what kind of a message has been given to the NATO allies as well as the whole world with the way the fight against ISIS was carried out

Thank you for your attention

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