What is Radicalization and Extremism

There is no universally accepted definition of both terms, because there is no consensus among many parties on defining what is seen as radicalization or extremism, therefore, both can mean different things to different people, but I can say in general, radicalization is the process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly radical views in opposition to a political, social, or religious status quo, while extremism is when a person or group uses fear, terror or violence to try and achieve change, radicalization refers to a process whereas extremism refers to a person's beliefs.

I don't want to go into details of what is the deferent between both terms, because one of the difficulties with the terms is that the result is not clear, even in Arabic languages there is no deferent between both terms, today I will use either expression with the same meaning.

Radicalization & Terrorism

Differentiating between terrorism and extremism is a thorny issue, because the general impression among people is that extremism and terrorism are two sides of the same coin, and many researchers consider extremism as the "ideological" umbrella on which terrorist organizations depend, but the difference between them are:
1- Extremism is linked to thought and terrorism is linked to action.
2- Extremism is linked to political, social, or religious beliefs and ideas.
3- Terrorism is linked to violent material behaviors in the face of society.

Radicalization, Extremism, Terrorism, and Islam

Radicalization and Terrorism have no linked with any specific religion or ethnicity, rather, terrorism and extremism are human behavior, spreads in different societies, practiced by Muslim and non-Muslim.

Radicalization and Terrorism are a phenomenon that crosse borders and ideologies, but the western media linked terrorism with Islam to distort the image of Islam, at the same time ignore other practices committed by non-Muslims, unfortunately, ISIS gave them the justification when they slaughtered innocents and crying Allah Akbar.

Thousands of terrorist acts were carried out by white racist who became radicalized through the Internet, killed and injured thousands of innocent people of their societies, leaving behind evidence documenting their extremist views on the Internet.

The American terrorism database has proven that the percentage of crimes that occurred in the United States by Muslims does not exceed 12.5%, while the rest of the operations were committed by the extreme right, nationalists and skinheads', in the name of nationalism and racism, contrary to what is reported by the Western media, which accuses Muslims as soon as the crimes occur and then becomes silent when it becomes clear the criminal is not a Muslim.

Ethnic and religious diversity in the Arab region

The Arab region, like other geographical regions of Asia, has diverse religions, cultures, sects and races, so the differences between these parties are natural and even necessary, but the problem is the absence of the language of dialogue sometimes between these components, which leads to intolerance, that turns into radicalization and over time ends with violence and counter-violence

Religious' and Ethnic groups in The Arab Region

In the Arab region there are five religious' groups, Sunnis %80.8, Muslims Shiites %6.6, other Muslims minorities %3.88, Christians %4.62, other religions %1.09, and five different ethnic groups, namely the Arabs, about 356 million, the Kurds, about 27 million, most of them live in Iraq and Syria, the Berbers or Amazigh, up to 50 million, most of them live in

North African countries, the Turkmens are up to 7 million, most of them live in Iraq and Syria, and the Circassians and Chechnya are about 50 thousand, most of them live in Jordan

Why are youth targeted by terrorist organizations more than others?

Many wonders and ask, why terrorist groups and radicals focus on young people and not others?

The answer is that young people have enormous and varied capacities and capabilities, and to make the picture clearer, let us see the importance of youth in all societies.

But let me first emphasize that the use of the term "Youth" in this presentation means young persons of either sex, "male and female".

1- Statistics of the UN shows that more than half of the world's population nowadays are young people under the age of thirty years.

2- The largest number of young people are living in the third world countries, because the fertility rates in these countries are the highest in the world.

3- World bank Statistics shows, the number of young people, aged between 15-24 years, in the whole world estimated as 1.2 billion, accounting 16% of the global population.

4- By 2030, the target date for the sustainable development goals, the number of youth projected to be to nearly 1.3 billion.

6 – Youth are the most influential at the present and the future, and they are the most capable for change, because of their enormous energies.

7- Youth have mental and technical capabilities, that can be invested in the implementation of development programs for the entire community.

8- Youth are the most active and interactive on social networking sites and using modern technology.

9-Youth are the main driver of innovation, a force to initiate and spearhead changes, that help realize development and growth, hundreds of innovation hubs, accelerators, incubators, and science parks, are full of brilliant young people.

10- World Bank statistics indicate that the number of unemployed youths worldwide is estimated in 2021 at about 74 million, with an unemployment rate of approximately 5.6%.

11- At the same time, the same data showed that the unemployment rate among young people in the Arab region reached about 27%, raising the number of unemployed youths to about 14.5 million citizens

12- On the other hand, the poverty rate in the Arab region rose in 2021 to about 32%, bringing the number of poor people who receive social assistance to about 116 million Arab citizens, and these are the highest rates in the world.

what are the factors that make young people tend towards radicalization and violence?

Although there is a debate among experts and specialists about the nature of the reasons that push young people to extremism.

But experts and specialists' have classified these reasons into two types,

Pull "Attraction" and Push Factors

In fact, when we start talking in detail about these factors, we will find that there is a clear overlap between some of these factors.

Pull "attraction" Factors

A- Deception and misinformation campaigns

B- Benefits and economic rewards

C- Ideological factors

D- Moral Factors

E- Humanitarian Factors

Deception and misinformation campaigns

1- Terrorist organizations and leaders of religious extremism in the Arab world practiced many methods of deception and misinformation, in order to delude young people of the sincerity of their intentions and ideas.

These groups conducted intensive campaigns in which they used every possible means, based on Machiavelli's principle "the end justifies the means" to attract young people towards extremism as a step to recruit them.

2- These groups used all kinds of modern technology and social media in an attractive and impressive way, which aroused the curiosity and admiration of young people.

3- The video clips that were published in a distinctive cinematic style in terms of directing, sound and image, which showed the luxurious life that the members of these organizations lived in, had a great impact in attracting young people towards the thought presented by these organizations.

4- In addition, to the videos and songs that glorified the young fighters, who carry out terrorist acts, and blow themselves up in public places, as superheroes who sacrifice themselves for freedom, peace and justice, had a great impact on the hearts of young people.

5 - Promoting in the media and through their supporters in mosques and schools that ISIS and Al-Qaeda are at the gates of establishing the Islamic

Caliphate, and that they have the administrative capabilities with which they can manage the state efficiently and effectively.

6- Deceive the viewer that they have advanced military capabilities and equipment using wooden and cardboard models of weapons and tanks, indicating that their fighters seized this equipment from the armies that are fighting them.

7- Using the optical illusion technique to inflate the number of fighters and youth joining these organizations, in addition to exaggerating the number of prisoners who surrendered to them, and the large number of weapons and military equipment in their possession.

Benefits and rewards

It is well known that ISIS and other terrorist organizations have great financial capabilities that they obtained through the financial donations made to them to help the poor and the needy, and from the commercial activities they practice, such as drug trafficking, human smuggling and antiquities.

ISIS is the richest among terrorists' organization in the world, and it has achieved great financial revenue due to its control over oil and gas wells in Iraq and Syria for a period, in addition to robbing Iraqi banks after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

For that, ISIS offered a range of temptations to Arab youth, such as job opportunities with high salaries, a financial grant for the unemployed youth, an opportunity to marry ISIS girls, and adequate housing for them.

Because of these advantages, working with ISIS has become a golden opportunity for many Arab youth.

Ideological Factors

We talked at the beginning that extremism is an "ideological" umbrella for terrorism, and for this reason terrorist organizations have always been

looking for an ideology that would enable them to convince young people of their goals.

ISIS and al-Qaeda found in Islamic thought a means that enabled it to achieve its goals and declared that jihad against dictatorial regimes in the Arab region is a demand from God and presented itself as an alternative to the secular state in the Arab world, and promised the Muslim masses that Islam is the only solution to their economic and social problems.

On the other hand, ISIS and al-Qaeda portrayed jihad against Arab governments as a sacred duty as stated in the Holy Qur'an, and terrorist operations were a "national necessity" and a "noble heroic act."

Moral Factors

Some may be surprised if we say that some young extremists enjoy medium or high standards of living, and live in stable and democratic societies, most of them are from European countries, and their number is estimated around 50 thousand young people.

But they tend to extremism and joined ISIS, in Syria and Iraq due to various factors, including:

1- Getting rid of boredom, weariness, monotony and the routine of life they were living.

2-Searching for excitement, thrilling, adventure, and self-realization.

3- Some of them were looking for fame, lights, and appearing in the view of the legendary hero that appears on the cinema screens, as some psychologists and sociologists say that those young were influenced by the actor who plays superhero roles in films.

4- In addition to that, some of these young people failed to integrate into European societies and were unable to solve the problem of dual identity

and coexistence with an environment and culture different from their own, so they decided to join ISIS.

Humanitarian Factors

The human dimension was one of the causes of extremism among young people, especially in the Arab region, after the leaders of extremism deceived the youth, by saying that the responsibility of helping needy people in the fighting areas in Syria and Iraq is a religious, moral duty.

That is why the number of young people decided to go to Syria and Iraq with the motive of aiding orphaned children and widows whose homes were destroyed and lost their fathers and families, and taking care of elderly, sick and wounded.

Considering that some Arab governments were urging young people to go to Syria through charity society to provide such humanitarian aid.

Pushing Factors

A- Economic Situation

B- Political exclusion and marginalization

C- Social Marginalization

D- Political issues in the region

E- Psychological manipulation technique

H- Using social media in attractive way

Economic Situation

There is no doubt that difficult economic conditions have a role in pushing young people towards extremism, especially when unemployment rates in some Arab countries reach 20-27%, and poverty rates rise to about

30%, and when 20% of the population controls about 80% of the state's resources, while 80% lives on less than 20% of these resources.

This situation leads to feelings of marginalization, frustration, despair and anger among the youth, this frustration and anger will generate hostile behavior towards the state and society, which will develop with time into feelings of extremism, then the search for a solution begins, here, terrorist organizations are ready to help and provide solutions to the problems of young people.

Marginalization and Exclusion

In fact, a large percentage of young people in the Arab region feel that they are marginalized and excluded politically and socially, for ethnic, religious, sectarian or security reasons.

Politically, there is a feeling among a large segment of young people that conservative politicians and businessmen have a monopoly on politics and decision-making, and they prevent young people from participating in political life, by enacting laws that disrupt their participation.

That is why we always notice the low rates of participation of young people in parliamentary elections in these countries, because they believe that the results of these elections are settled in favor of those who possess wealth, money, political power, and social and clan status.

As for social marginalization, the reality is more difficult than one imagines because the individual feels in this case that he has no value, because he is not part of the society in terms of political, economic, professional, or social.

When family problems exacerbate, the role of schools weakens, the level of educational curricula deteriorate, religious, cultural, and intellectual institutions weaken, the language of dialogue between individuals is absent, and people live in a neighborhood that lack the minimum requirements for a decent life.

This will inevitably lead to a feeling of oppression, social hatred, and discrimination, here, terrorist organizations appear as a savior for young people from this marginalization and offer them effective participation in their life that restores their dignity and social status.

Political issues in the region

The long-standing unresolved disputes, the interference of some states in the internal affairs of other states, the authority's violations of human rights, persecution by some security agencies, financial and administrative corruption, the monopoly of civil service appointments by some officials, and the failure of governments to achieve justice and equality And participation in governance, all these issues pushing young people towards extremism and violence.

Several Security Council resolutions have referred to these factors and their danger to international peace and security, at the same time demanded the need for a peaceful settlement of these conflicts, so as not to give terrorist organizations an opportunity to exploit these crises and drag young people towards extremism and violence.

Psychological Manipulation Technique

ISIS did not leave any means but used it to recruit new supporters, and one of these methods is the psychological manipulation technique.

This technique is based on passing information and opinions to convince someone of certain ideology, ideas and principles, so that the targeted person feels that by adopting these ideology and ideas he is doing a noble and humane work, such as achieving justice Social services, helping the oppressed, the poor and the needy, and providing humanitarian services to children and the elderly, and at the same time.

In this case young people do not feel that they are committing acts of murder, looting and violence against others.

H- Using social media in attractive way

Reports indicate that 80% of terrorists was recruited through Internet and social media, the number of websites affiliated with terrorist groups estimated as 50,000 websites, and more than 45,000 accounts on Twitter and and thousands of account on Facebook .

ISIS has demonstrated a superior ability to exploit technology to serve its goals, and has used social media in a fun and attractive artistic way as follows:

1- Photography style:

ISIS was able to broadcast high-tech and distinguished images in a joyful, interesting, attractive, and exciting.

2- Language style:

ISIS used strong, engaging, and emotional language to encourage users to read and interact and publish content in more than one language.

3 - Develop smart applications:

ISIS was able to develop its own version of Facebook called "Caliphate Facebook", and version of mobile application, and version of Twitter platform called "The Dawn of Glad Tidings", which was removed from the Google Play Store in 2014.

4- Develop children's games:

ISIS has succeeded in producing copies of video games for children and youth, the most famous game called "Silil Al-Sawarim", which based on the principle of killing American soldiers.

Procedure Adopted by Arab Governments to Fight Radicalization

Acts of terrorism and radicalization cannot be prevented or countered through repressive or military measures alone, but we need for a comprehensive, whole-of-society, human rights compliant and gender-sensitive approach.

Combating radicalization must be done through a holistic approach at the local, national and international levels, includes legislative, intellectual, educational, cultural, preventive and media dimensions.

By following up the measures that Arab governments have taken to confront radicalization, and terrorism, I can say that Arab governments, without exception, have developed national strategies and plans in line with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and with international laws and standards, among these measures are the following:

1 - Criminalizing all forms of extremism, violence, and terrorism by amending relevant national legislation and laws and enacting new legislation condemning any activities related to terrorism, including combating terrorism crimes, cross-border crime, discrimination and hate, cybercrime, money laundering and financing terrorist organizations and others.

2 - Amending all penal and criminal legislation to include severe and deterrent penalties for anyone who deals with extremists, sympathizes with them, provides them with any form of support and assistance, or incites violence and extremism in word and deed.

3 – Many steps have been taken to develop a moderate religious discourse consistent with the reality of Islam, a religion of tolerance, justice, love, and coexistence, these steps include, holding specialized training courses to train and qualify "imams," to enhance their capabilities and religious

knowledge, to distinguish between tolerant Islamic teachings and extreme opinions, and to preach their follower in a proper manner.

4- It also called the media, writers, and journalists to correct religious misconceptions broadcast by extremists, promoting a culture of tolerance and coexistence, and monitoring extremist religious discourse in the media and social networking sites.

5- The Arab governments have included the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and all international resolutions issued by the Security Council and the General Assembly, on the issue of terrorism and dialogue among civilizations and cultures, in the national legislations, policies and laws of these governments.

6- They have also supported the efforts made by the United Nations and the Executive Directorate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, in combating extremism and violence and drying up the financial sources of terrorism in accordance with international standards for the protection of human rights.

7- Arab governments have begun to conduct a comprehensive review of school and university curricula, especially books of Islamic culture and history, deleting any content that incites violence and hatred, and replace them with concepts that promote peace, tolerance, coexistence, despite the opposition of some conservative forces in society to this process.

8- Amending financial legislation to comply with international standards, to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, central banks have taken strict measures to monitor bank transfers and the source of transferred funds, and have strengthened control mechanisms over financial exchange offices

9 - With the aim of helping young people to engage in political life, governments have taken practical steps in this regard, as they have amended legislation that allows them to participate in decision-making on national issues, and facilitates the process of their participation in parliamentary elections

10- Many religious, intellectual and cultural institutions and centers have been established to educate citizens about the dangers of extremism and terrorism, correct false religious concepts broadcast by extremist groups, hold international intellectual and educational conferences and seminars, and train religious and educational cadres to educate young people and alert them of the dangers of extremism, the most important of these institutions are:

Institutes of Tolerance

Several tolerance institutes have been established in the Arab region to spread the culture of tolerance and coexistence, and to prevent discrimination, encourage dialogue between religions and civilizations, to highlight the true image of Islam as a religion of peace, tolerance, justice and respect for the beliefs and cultures of others.

Partnerships with international and regional institutions working in the same direction, has been established.

International awards and Prizes

Number of countries launched international awards and prizes, with the names of countries and influential personalities in Arab societies, for those who contribute to spreading the culture of peace, through writing books or studies, publishing articles in newspapers and magazines, and producing artistic content such as films, series and songs that contribute to spreading the culture of love, tolerance, and coexistence.

Arab Youth forum

The Forum was established in 2018 with the aim of enhancing the role of youth in peace and development in the Arab region, The first meeting of the Forum was held in the Kingdom of Morocco in 2018.

The strategic framework for youth, peace and security in the region was adopted, and partnerships were established with many international institutions, include, the Regional Office for Arab States, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia "ESCWA", the United Nations Development Program, the World Food Program, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization "UNESCO", and the World Council for Tolerance and Peace.

Regional Platform for Arab Youth

"My platform"

It is a digital platform established by the Arab League, with the aim of bringing Arab youth togethers to strengthening their relations.

It is the backbone of the Arab youth forums, to involve young people in sustainable development issues, linking them to decision makers in the Arab countries, and with various organizations. working on sustainable development issues.

The platform gathers Arab youth to exchange ideas and information and collect data related to youth, for the purposes of study and work.

On the other hand, the platform is used to hold conferences, seminars, and sports and artistic activities, during which opinions and ideas are exchanged on the dangers of extremism, violence, terrorism, and discrimination, and it is an online permanent forum.

The "Shabab it" Platform

The platform was established in 2019 to meet the needs of young people for information and knowledge in the fields of education, health, media, entertainment, arts and culture, employment, entrepreneurship, and skills.

Youth Platform for Peace Building

It's a national Arab youth platform consisting of 12 civil society organizations, led by youth, and aims to activate the role of Arab youth in promoting community coexistence and peace building, to spare young people from falling into the clutches of violence and extremism.

Salam Center for Studies of Extremism

It is a research, scientific center, working under the supervision of the General Secretariat of the Egyptian Fatwa institution, concerned with monitoring, dismantling, and analyzing the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism in the name of religion.

The center is considered an advisory body to the fatwa bodies in the world, providing them with recommendations and action programs on how to confront extremism and violence, the center also holds training courses for imams in mosques, to enhance their skills and experience in dealing with issues of terrorism and extremism.

It is considered as a global academic and intellectual reference in confronting extremism and terrorism.

Manarat Electronic Program

This program was established in 2019 by Egyptian government.

Contains a huge database about the elements of extremism and terrorism, in the field of ideas, personalities, extremist groups and terrorist operations, and it is constantly updated through artificial intelligence techniques, to meet the needs of young people for information and knowledge

Global Forum on Youth, Peace, and Security

It is a Jordanian initiative launched by Jordan's Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah in 2015, the first meeting was held in Amman in 2016 with wide international participation, that included 500 young men and women, from 100 countries, the meeting focused on how to face the challenges faced youth in the Middle East.

Based on the Forum's recommendations, the Security Council Resolution 2250 on "Youth, Peace and Security" was adopted, the resolution highlighted the role of youth in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation, and the importance of their participation in peacemaking and conflict resolution in the world, the resolution include five main pillars:

1 - Giving youth an opportunity to participate in peacebuilding processes and put forward their concerns and problems.

2 - Integrating youth into societies, listening to their problems and needs, and providing them with the necessary protection in conflict areas.

3- Raising the level of political, technical, and financial support for youth organizations, to enable them to carry out their role to the fullest.

4 – Consider the participation and views of youth during the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements, as their marginalization would be detrimental to building sustainable peace in aspects such as repatriation, resettlement, and reconstruction.

5 - This is the first resolution in the history of the Security Council adopts an approach recognizes youth as a major partner in issues of security and peace, and that security, peace and development cannot be achieved without real investment in youth

6 - Finally, the Security Council commissioned the Secretary-General of the United Nations to conduct a periodic review to assess the extent to which Member States have implemented this resolution

Several questions might be raised regarding this subject.

1- Have these procedures and policies achieved the goal for which it was established?

2- Are Arab societies immunized from Radicalization?

3- Has terrorism and Radicalization defeated in the Arab region?

The Answer No, because no one can claim that eliminating Radicalization ideology and terrorism can be achieved easily and permanently.

- However, it can be said that the last three years have witnessed a marked decline in terrorist acts and operations.

- Terrorist operations carried out by ISIS decreased in 2019 to about 1,800 terrorist operations, and Al-Qaeda to 24 terrorist operations only, compared to more than 19,000 operations that took place during the period 2014-2017, based on US State Department reports.

- The Terrorism Index in the Arab region also showed that during the year 2021, ISIS adopted nearly 206 terrorist attacks only.

- The index showed that more than 10 Arab countries witnessed terrorist operations more than others, while 11 Arab countries maintained their record free of any terrorist operations.

- Reports published by the Shurafat Center for Globalization and Terrorism Studies and Research, based in Amman, Jordan, showed a decrease in the global terrorism index for the third year

Although the Corona pandemic has confused terrorist organizations and disrupted the movement of terrorists due to the tight closure policies that countries have taken for a while, several other factors have contributed to limiting terrorist operations, namely:

1 - The comprehensive approach taken by all governments in combating radicalization terrorism, including the security, political, economic, cultural, media, educational and religious dimensions.

2 - Strict legislative and legal measures taken by all governments of the world to combat radicalization and terrorism.

3 - The killing of most of the historical leaders of the organizations, such as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Osama bin Laden, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and many others.

4- Tens of thousands of fighters of terrorist organizations were killed in military and security operations.

5- Drying up the sources of funding for these organizations, through strict financial policies adopted by countries to prevent the flow of funds to terrorists.

6- Preemptive strikes launched by the security and military agencies on terrorists in their hideouts.

7- The return of tens of thousands of terrorists and extremists to their countries and rehabilitate them intellectually and culturally.

8- The success of the preventive and defensive security and military efforts in combating terrorism.

9- International cooperation and coordination through the exchange of information between the intelligence services and the criminal police specialized in counter-terrorism operations.

10- Implementation of the United Nations counter-terrorism strategy and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Future of terrorist

On conclusion, in this subject, it can be said that terrorism experts and specialists differ in their assessment of the future of terrorist organizations, and we can monitor three views in this regard:

First: terrorists' organization is almost finished or on its way to the end because most of its historical leaders were killed or in jails, as for those who claim the leadership today, they are unknown, inexperienced have no popularity.

In addition to that, the national, regional, and international efforts, has achieved tangible results on the ground in weakening the terrorists, and it is still working efficiently to eliminate all the different aspects of terrorism, but it needs time.

Second: saying that, despite the painful and fatal strikes that took place against terrorist organizations and their fighters, but they are still struggling to survive, and it is too early to declare victory over them.

More than that they believe that these organizations will return to practicing their terrorist activities, through sleeper cells in the Arab and African region, especially since the major conflicts in the region, which fueling these organizations, have not yet been resolved, rather it is getting more complicated.

In addition to that the continuation of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and Chinese American conflict will help these organizations to continue its activities.

Especially since there are mutual accusations between Russia and the United States, accusing each other of transferring mercenaries and terrorists to conflict areas, including jihadist groups from Syria, which will enhance the influence of these organizations.

Third: Supporters of this view believe that ISIS and Al-Qaeda have been defeated militarily, but they are still able to attract supporters, and their

final defeat depends on the success of national and international efforts in eliminating the causes of extremism and resolving long-term unresolved conflicts, promoting sustainable development, reducing the marginalization of some social groups, promoting social integration and political participation, empowering youth and women and enhancing their role in society, and protecting human right.