

Introduction

The Winter 2006 and supplement issues of *Connections* feature a collection of presentations and articles that were prepared as part of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies' ongoing initiative to develop approaches for countering ideological support for terrorism. Through a series of conferences, courses, and research projects, the Marshall Center has sought to enlist the broadest possible participation in terms of professional experience and regional representation in order to explore the "hearts and minds" dimension of the overall global counterterrorism effort.

Officials throughout the United States Department of Defense and the broader U.S. government's interagency community have repeatedly acknowledged the central importance of the ideological aspect of the effort to counter the global terrorist threat, and have stated that winning the ideological battle is a crucial element of long-term success. At the same time, it is widely recognized that developing and coordinating effective strategies to counter ideological support for terrorist movements across different cultural and geographic contexts will continue to present daunting challenges.

Consistent with the mission of the Marshall Center, we have approached our investigation of this issue by encouraging candid discussion that we hope will enhance existing methods and capabilities to de-legitimize terrorism. We have created an international forum to promote dialogue between the defense communities of Western and Muslim countries committed to securing their societies against the threat posed by contemporary terrorist groups. This dialogue contributes to the cultivation of an international network of counterterrorism professionals, all of whom share a determination to create a more secure world.

This issue contains keynote presentations offered at both the Senior Executive Seminar (24 April–4 May 2006) and the Alumni Leadership Seminar (17–21 July 2006). We have included papers that were prepared for an OSD/SOLIC-funded conference, *Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism (CIST)/Lessons Learned and Future Policy: Interdisciplinary, Theological, and International/Regional Perspectives*, held at the Marshall Center in September 2006. The conference featured exchanges of opinions, sharing of research findings, and discussion of actual practical experience in combating extremism among more than fifty participants, representing thirty countries from North America, Europe, Russia/Eurasia, the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia. The selected articles illustrate the broad scope and depth of discussion that took place in the conference lectures and seminars. Topics included exploring strategies for de-legitimizing terrorism; roles and responsibilities for traditional religions in promoting dialogue and conflict resolution; comparing approaches for countering religious extremist violence among several regional contexts/case studies; defining implications for international cooperation; policy; and assessment. This issue and its forthcoming supplement include studies by leading academics representing different nations and disciplines as well as perspectives from policy analysts, counterterrorism professionals, clerics, religious scholars, and leaders of both Islam and Christianity.

It is our hope that this collection will help to advance discussion—both within the United States counterterrorism community and among our partners throughout the world—concerning ways to improve global strategies to defeat the ideologies that fuel terrorist violence.

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* The views expressed in the following collection of presentations and articles are those of the speakers and authors, and do not reflect the official policy or position of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the U.S. European Command, the U.S. Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.