The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a reframed view to the reality, benefit and utility of violent extremism and terrorism. As restrictions on people’s movement have brought about a decrease in recruitment activities, terrorist organizations have started to redeploy their tactics to exploit the situation.

At UNITAR, we have looked into facts and figures and identified the following trends and how the crisis can also play into the hands of violent extremist and terrorist groups.

**IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM**

Increased spread of disinformation, conspiracy theories and propaganda:

- As COVID-19 has brought restrictions on the movement of people, a decrease in recruitment activities has been observed.
- One main objective of terrorism and violent extremism is gaining outreach by spreading fear. Due to a greater focus on COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings, travel and movement, one can expect a decrease in recruitment activities in the public sphere.

**NEW CHALLENGES IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

**NEGATIVE TRENDS**

- New ways of financing terrorist groups.
- Halting and reduced international security assistance missions.

**IMPACT**

- Many extremist groups have been forced to adapt their financing strategies to the new circumstances.
- A decrease in training initiatives for terrorist organizations has been observed.

**NEAT COULD BE DONE**

- Develop and implement online resilience building initiatives.
- Continue to support countries throughout the pandemic in peacebuilding efforts.

**NEW CHALLENGES IN COUNTER-TERRORISM**

**NEGATIVE TRENDS**

- Halting and reduced international security assistance missions.
- New ways of financing terrorist groups.

**IMPACT**

- With the further unfolding of the crisis, violent terrorist organizations may try to take advantage of any possible opportunity to erode the confidence in the government and also as an opportunity to exploit the COVID-19 crisis to spread conspiracy theories and disinformation.
- As the pandemic was ongoing, and has urged followers to keep their distance from authorities and development actors. By reinventing themselves as service providers and providing food and basic goods to ‘at risk’ populations, some violent extremist and terrorist groups have maintained their support base.

**NEAT COULD BE DONE**

- Develop online solutions to replace or reinforce local training and capacity building, where possible.
- Continue to support countries throughout the pandemic in peacebuilding efforts during the pandemic.

**THREE TRENDS IN DETAIL**

**NEW WAYS OF FINANCING TERRORIST GROUPS**

- Leaders and affiliated groups to take advantage of the situation by creating by the crisis can also play into the hands of violent extremist and terrorist groups.

**MODERNIZING STRATEGIES FOR VIOLENT ATTACKS**

- As COVID-19 has brought restrictions on the movement of people, it is shaping tactics in a similar way to terrorist attacks in the past.
- Member states have to adapt strategies to the new environment and focus on what they can do to mitigate the risk.

**RESOURCE**

- Contending with ISIS in the time of coronavirus. New ways of financing terrorist groups.
- Journey to Extremism: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment