

Get to the **root** of extremism

HERE we go again, another horror and heart-breaking story in the news. The latest terror attack in London should serve as a wake-up call to all “unbelievers” on the threat of extremism on humanity. Extremism is the twin brother of terrorism. There would be no terror acts

Beyond the Wall: A new mindset

BY K.K. TAN

without an extremist ideology.

On June 3 near London Bridge, a van with three men (who were later killed by police) ploughed

through a crowd and the men then started knifing people in the vicinity. At least seven people were killed and another 48 injured.

This attack was only less than two weeks from another major terror attack at a concert in Manchester on May 22 where a suicide bomber killed 22 mostly young people and injured more than 100 people. If we trace the terror attacks across the world over the last one year, the list would be endless.

The extremists, inspired and led by the likes of IS, would really want to have a “Clash of Civilisations” as predicted by the late US political scientist Samuel Huntington. They would want to instigate a Third World War. If they cannot have it their way, they would rather destroy the world. And they are prepared to die to see to it.

Such is the fury, anger, desperation and insanity of these extremists, mostly disenchanting and brainwashed Muslim youths, who also fear the loss of the IS-controlled territories in Iraq and Syria, that they are committing more terror acts for strategic and psychological reasons. They still have many sympathisers and support in the Muslim world.

Only last month, Donald Trump made his maiden trip overseas as the new US president to Saudi Arabia where he gave his much awaited speech about extremism and terrorism to Muslim leaders.

Trump’s speech in Riyadh on May 21, interestingly one day before the Manchester bombing, was correct in condemning extremism and terrorism and the injustice of harming people. He was right in saying that the civilised world needs to unite and work harder to drive the terrorists out of this

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A poster on a wall reads ‘ISIS will lose; #Love will win’, at a police cordon near Borough Market in London yesterday.

planet. But beyond that, he did not offer any comprehensive solution, neither did he address the root causes of extremism and terrorism.

Here are key points that Trump missed.

First, the US (perceived to be representing the Christian world) played a major role in creating much resentment and anger in the Muslim world with its unjust handling, meddling and mismanagement of the Palestinian crisis since the violent creation of the state of Israel in 1948, which was based solely on the selfish geo-political interests of the US. There was no recognition for the rights of the Palestinian people, whose land was annexed by the Zionists in what was probably the “biggest legalised daylight robbery” in modern history.

And today, the Trump administration has been even more extreme in siding with Israel and pandering to the Zionist lobby in the US. He does not seem to favour the two-state solution, which the Palestinians have already compromised so much for the sake of peace, as the only viable option forward, supported even by his previous administrations. the UN

and the other major powers.

Second, Trump in his speech, did not address the neglect, oppression and repression of the poor Muslims which are providing an ideal breeding ground for extremist ideologies to thrive.

Third, there have been many reports to suggest that the creation of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan War and the IS during the Iraq War were partly attributed to the US’s past involvement in those two spheres of influence.

Until and unless the UN can set up an independent inquiry to investigate and clear the role of the US on the origins of these two largest terrorist groups in the world, the US must accept some responsibility based on documented reports and eyewitness accounts, including an admission by former secretary of state Hillary Clinton in 2013 (when she was known to have said “Let’s remember here, the people we are fighting today we funded them 20 years ago ...”) and also through her leaked emails which also implicated certain Arab governments.

Fourth, Trump is the most anti-Muslim US

president ever with his anti-Muslim policies and pronouncements. He wanted to ban all Muslims from entering the US and then amended his policy to selected Muslim majority countries. Instead of making peace and seeking reconciliation with moderate Muslims, including the Palestinians, he has gone on a warpath to prove his racist and xenophobic credentials and to pander to his extreme rightwing supporters.

He had the gall to take the moral high ground in Riyadh and claimed that he was a friend of the Muslims.

Trump has announced the pulling out of the Paris Climate Accord of 2015 which was put together to save the world from global warming. He has turned his back on saving our planet, yet he wants to save humanity from terrorism.

How can Trump lead the global community to counter the tide of extremism and terrorism sweeping through the world?

Asean countries facing a greater terror threat than before must get their act together and focus on addressing the root causes of extremism and terrorism, using education, psychology and intelligence. It may not be good enough to promote moderation, the situation has become so critical that a stronger approach is needed to counter extremism to counter terrorism.

Perhaps the Asean Secretariat, with UN support and involvement, should urgently consider setting up a multimedia museum in either Jakarta or Kuala Lumpur using the latest technologies to make learning interesting to attract young people and educate them on the evils of extremism. If successful, similar museums can be set up in other Asean countries and even beyond.

Extremism, as a threat to humanity, must be made a compulsory subject in all schools.

Much needs to be done to speed up the learning process for our youths against extremism as the most effective and sustainable way to contain and ultimately defeat the surge in terror acts.

The writer is a think-tank analyst who has been warning for some years about the “clear and present danger” of extremism and terrorism engulfing the world. Comments: kktan@thesundaily.com