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Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC)

Topic 2: State Sponsorship of Extremist Ideology Abroad

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The second topic that the CTC will focus on this year is state sponsorship of extremist ideology abroad. Some governments fund schools, preachers, media outlets, and organizations in other countries that teach ideologies rejecting the local governing system and justify terrorism without ever handing anyone a weapon. This funding is usually legal, and while often described as religious or cultural outreach, it can create the environment in which terrorist recruitment succeeds.

The international community has addressed state support for terrorism before. The resolution that created this committee in 2001 requires all states to, "refrain from providing any form of support, active or passive" to people or groups involved in terrorist acts.[1] That language was written with weapons and money in mind, but says little about states that sponsor the ideas behind terrorism. Additionally, no UN body has agreed on where terrorist sponsorship begins.

The consequences reach well beyond the funding state. Receiving countries can find parts of their religious and educational institutions shaped by foreign governments. These institutions often spread ideas that conflict with local laws and values. Communities that depend on this support can end up caught between local governments and the states paying for their institutions.

Some may argue that funding religious and cultural institutions abroad is a legitimate exercise of soft power that is no different from the cultural institutes and NGOs Western countries fund around the world. Others claim that content teaching hatred or rejecting the legitimacy of other governments gives the receiving state the right to protect itself.

Some countries have taken steps to combat this issue. In 2015, Austria banned foreign funding of mosques, imams, and Muslim organizations, though Austrian Muslim groups and

[1] https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-184558, see paragraph 2(a)

Turkey's religious authority criticized the law as discriminatory.[2] In 2023, Germany instead negotiated an agreement with Turkey to gradually replace Turkish state-employed imams in roughly 900 German mosques with imams trained in Germany.[3] But there is still no international standard for when such funding becomes a problem or what should be done about it.

Please use the following questions to guide your research:

- What should count as state sponsorship of extremist ideology, and what makes an ideology extremist?
- What measures may receiving states take to protect themselves, and which of these would violate freedom of religion, expression, or association?
- How should sending states be held accountable, and who should decide that a state is a sponsor?
- What role should the international community play in monitoring and preventing the spread of extremist ideology?
    - If countries fail to prevent the spread of these ideologies, what can be done to hold them accountable?

These questions should serve as a starting point for your research, but do not feel limited to them. While researching, remember that you are representing your country and should stay aligned with its approach, including whether it funds institutions abroad, receives such funding, or has been accused of sponsorship. Please also remember that plagiarism and prohibited AI usage will not be tolerated. Feel free to reach out to me at grone@mail.yu.edu with any questions. I'm excited to hear your ideas!

Sincerely,

Gideon Rone

Chair, Counter-Terrorism Committee

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[2]https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/123950.aspx
[3]https://religionnews.com/2023/12/14/germany-and-turkey-agree-to-train-imams-who-serve-germanys-turkish-immigrant-community-in-germany/