

Research report

BonaMUN

Security Council



Improving the cooperation between countries in order to prevent terrorist attacks

Ties Peters

Introduction

The United Nations (UN), and especially the Security Council, is a primary focal point for conflict resolution and the establishment of global legal norms and the setting of human right standards. In the field of international counter-terrorism policies, the UN as a whole has taken an increasing interest in developing an effective, multilateral response to acts of terrorism, as attacks seem to occur at an ascending rate. However, the efforts that are made to create this type of policy and/or cooperation are being tempered by the conflict of interests of the superpowers and competition, separation movements that are struggling for independency and the rise of new types of terrorism. Since the 1960s, the UN General Assembly is responsible for the development of conventions with the goal to proscribe the definition of terror, but without major success.

The uprising of new forms of terror, like cyber terrorism and the extensive use of social media by non-state aggressors, also opposes a great threat to a disorganised policy. The use of social media for recruitment and propaganda is like we have never seen before. These developments increasingly call for multilateral instruments against terrorism. Although instruments like these have existed since the 1960s, the unprecedented reach and potential of these terrorist networks such as al-Qaeda, and more recently ISIL, constitute a new danger that challenges standing tools and institutions. Despite the increasing use of military force against non-state aggressors like ISIL, the world is still looking for an effective and sustainable way to respond to the global terrorist threat. But whilst some seek to affect global change, more and more groups remain focused on local and national political dynamics. These groups are able to thrive through taking advantage of porous borders and interconnected international systems with limited control of a supranational organisation. In order to maintain international peace and justice, terrorism must be countered as soon as possible in the most effective and sustainable way possible.

Definition of Key Terms

Terrorism

The unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims. Even though there is no universal agreement on the definition of terrorism, this is the most used one.

Counter-terrorism

The use of different techniques and strategies, for example reading encrypted emails and the infiltration of smartphones, with the purpose of preventing terrorist acts and/or to eradicate terrorist groups. This is usually carried out by police and military branches, which specialize in counter-terrorism

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

A unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism, according to the United Nations General Assembly. The application of the strategy is reviewed every 2 years and 2016 marks the 10th anniversary of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

General Overview

The concept of counter-terrorism is one that strives to maintain peace, justice and security around the world by preventing and dealing with acts of terrorism. In order for counter-terrorism to be as effective as possible there is a need for the current approaches to be evaluated in order to find ways to prevent states from abusing their power against civilians. Also, due to the rise in international terrorism attacks, particularly in the European Union, it is essential to evaluate current measures in order to prevent further attacks and deaths of civilians.

The creation of counter-terrorism policies dates back to the 1960's. However, it wasn't until the attacks on 9/11 that terrorism was seen as a real threat to the Western world.

Therefore, the attacks on 9/11 mark the beginning of a new era for counter-terrorism policies. Before 9/11 terrorism was seen as a national issue, which posed no real threat to the Western world and their core values. This all drastically changed after 11 September 2001. The intervention of the Security Council in the aftermath of 9/11 has had a lot of impact on the international policies for counter-terrorism. Traditional intergovernmental multilateralism has shown a growing consensus on the need for an efficient approach to countering terrorism. The plans are innovative and ambitious, but the synchronization of international objectives comes with great risks and responsibilities on all governmental levels.

The synchronization of international objectives has created an opening for better technical and political multilateral coordination on both levels. However, two rather significant risks remain. First of all, putting a focus on certain areas by the international community could pose the risk of diverting resources and attention from other regions where political violence could also threaten future international peace and security. The so-called 'agenda-setters' need to receive help with putting enough stress on preventing the emerging of future hubs of terrorism. The second risk is formed from the risk that duplication of efforts, overlapping mandates, and weak information sharing and coordination among the international, regional and sub regional levels will exert a drag on effectiveness. As more and more leaders will take action on counter terrorism, the coordination may become even more difficult. Recruiting every actor with a plausible counter-terrorism connection could lead to a decrease on effectiveness on the ground.

On the other hand, ineffectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts on the ground globally and the increase in terrorist activities in the Middle East as Syria has been destabilized is rapidly forming a hazard. There has been a lot of evidence that suggests that the counter-terrorism efforts only lead to more terrorism activities. Things that might cause this are a lack of education, an increase in violence after the efforts or the use of these efforts to recruit locals for the organisations. But also destabilised areas form a great threat. Unrest on both political and military levels lead to more and more terrorist activities, which allows terrorist organisations to broaden their reach and influence.

The Security Council has strengthened the international legal foundation for counterterrorism efforts by issuing numerous binding resolutions (for example resolution 1373, which was adopted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter and which founded the CTC). However, this is not enough to ignore The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights. In short; a lot of world leaders have expressed their wish to more cooperation to implement counter-terrorism policies. Nevertheless, the lack of coordination, binding powers and effective policies from both governmental and supranational institutions and the great risks that come with international cooperation on counter-terrorism makes this a great challenge.

The issue of privacy

The issue of privacy is arguably one of the biggest problems that counter-terrorism has to deal with. Collecting intelligence is a major part of counter-terrorism measures, as this allows officials to track down and identify terrorists and potential threats. The issue of privacy is also included in The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights, which states "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks." This means that any potential ways to improve international cooperation on the implementation of counter-terrorism must make sure that the privacy of civilians isn't compromised and that a balance is maintained between safety and privacy.

War on terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Beside multilateral counter-terrorism, countries have taken matters in their own hands to fight terrorism. For example, after the war on terror began following the 9/11 bombings, the USA issues an ultimatum to the Taliban government in Afghanistan to hand over Osama Bin Laden or face military action. After the lack of cooperation of the Afghani government, the USA along with the United Kingdom (UK) invaded Afghanistan as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Following the fall of the Taliban government, Taliban and Al-Qaeda force have become widespread in Northern Pakistan and in Afghanistan. In an attempt to eliminate senior Al-Qaeda and Taliban members, the USA has

also launched a drone offensive in certain instances. However, Amnesty International has condemned the drone strikes, claiming that the strikes have broken international laws and can be classified as war crimes as many innocent civilians have been killed. The human rights group has also claimed that even if these individuals were part of a banned group it would be illegal to use these drone strikes to kill them. In addition to this, research has shown that those that have been affected by the violence of these operations are more likely to resort to terrorism as means of retribution. Although some have seen the war on terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan as somewhat successful, the reality is that this method of combating terrorism hasn't been triumphant.

Counter-terrorism approaches

The United Nations Counter Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) has created a 4 pillar global strategy that gives member states a direction as to how they can combat terrorism. The first pillar is linked to addressing the outcome of the spread of terrorism. The second is to prevent and combat terrorism. The third is preparing states and increasing the role of the United Nations in doing so. The last pillar is ensuring that all human rights and the rule of law are followed. One strategy that links the most to the UN structure is the E.U strategy. This is because it still respects the human rights of those involved and also focuses on 4 aspects (preventing, protecting, pursuing and responding). EU hopes to engage with other member states such as the US in order to make agreements and make counter terrorism more effective.

Limitations of current strategies

Currently, it is much easier for terrorist groups to reach their goal of recruiting more people and getting them to adhere to their beliefs. This is because terrorists are now able to use technology to communicate with the rest of the world by raising awareness of their goal through fear. For example, the fact that they are able to negotiate the release of a hostage gives them more power as they are succeeding in promoting fear. Also, after an attack, the media will cover this and once again this will cause some to be inspired and want to copy these acts or want to join the group. This can be seen by the fact that there are a large number of young people joining ISIS. Also, the current measures are not as effective as they were presumed to be since ISIS has attacked 143 times in 29 countries in 2 years. Moreover, many governments have taken advantage of counter-terrorism by abusing its purpose. This has led to arbitrary arrests, unfair trials and violations of rights of suspects.

Major parties involved

Counter-Terrorism Task Force (CTITF)

CTITF was set up in 2005 and is a branch of the UN. This organization was set up in accordance with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Although it is up to the member states of this organization as to what extent they wish to follow the guidelines stated in the document, it is CTITF's responsibility to offer support in implementation of these strategies. The organization meets several times throughout the year in order to address terrorism issues which affect different parts of the globe. A conference in Saudi Arabia in February 2013 titled "International Conference to promote counter-terrorism collaboration between National, Regional and International Centres and Initiatives," aimed to solve the issue of international implementation of counter-terrorism measures. However as of yet, no information has been released regarding this conference. CTITF has quite a lot of influence in promoting counter-terrorism measures worldwide and could help to implement any resolutions regarding this issue.

International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO)

The ICPO, also known as Interpol, was set up in 1923 and has its headquarters in Lyon, France. Interpol consists of 190 member countries and was established in order to increase efficiency of cooperation between law criminal police authorities around the world. Interpol is a politically impartial organization which must follow the laws of the individual countries in which it is based.

Interpol has already attempted to enhance the international implementation of counter-terrorism by setting up the Interpol Terrorism Watch List, which was set up on 11th April 2002. In addition to this, Interpol opened a command centre which runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and a system which identifies sources of finance for terrorist organizations. Interpol could still do more in order to stop terrorism and potential solutions to this issue could involve Interpol.

United States of America (USA)

The USA started its war on terror in response to increased terror activity around the world, which culminated in the 9/11 attacks in America in 2001. Since this war began, the USA has become heavily involved in counter-terrorism activity worldwide. The USA was the country that led the fight against Al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In addition to this, US forces have also been involved in recent raids in Somalia and in the capture of Anas Al Libi. However, in October 2013, the USA came under scrutiny for carrying out drone strikes in Pakistan.

UNCCT

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) was established in 2011 within the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), in the Department of Political Affairs to assist in meeting capacity-building needs of Member States, while strengthening United Nations' counter-terrorism expertise.

Objectives of the Centre

1. The UNCCT aims at buttressing the implementation of the pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a comprehensive and integrated manner through the development of national and regional Counter-Terrorism Strategy implementation plans;
2. The UNCCT undertakes initiatives aimed at fostering international counter-terrorism cooperation and promote collaboration between national, regional and international counter-terrorism centres and organizations
3. Through collaboration with CTITF working groups, the UNCCT serves a critical role in building capacity of Member States to strengthen their counter-terrorism capability.

Timeline of Key events

Dec. 15, 1997	International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings
Feb. 3, 2000	Syria and Sudan sign agreement on fighting terrorism in compliance with Arab Antiterrorism Convention
Sep. 28, 2001	The United Nations Security Council adopts resolution 1373 which established the Counter Terrorism Committee
Nov. 22, 2002	The United Nations General Assembly adopts resolution 57/83 to help stop non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction

Relevant UN treaties and events

- United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 on counter terrorism, 28 September 2001 (**S/RES/1373**)
- Adopting the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, 20 September 2009 (**A/RES/60/288**)
- The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, 13 October 2013 (**A/RES/66/282**)
- Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism (**A/RES/49/60**)
- The International Convention for the suppression of the Financing of Terrorism
- The International Convention for the suppression of Terrorist Bombings

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

The intervention of the Security Council in the aftermath of 9/11 has had a lot of impact on the international policies for counterterrorism. The Security Council has strengthened the international legal foundation for counterterrorism efforts by issuing numerous binding resolutions (for example resolution 1373, which was adopted under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter and which

founded the CTC). To oversee the implementation of resolutions adopted by the Security Council, the UNSC established the Counterterrorism Committee (CTC), and later the CTC Executive Directorate (CTED). The CTC, composed of all fifteen UNSC members, is tasked with assessing states' efforts to implement relevant resolutions, evaluating gaps in state capacity and facilitating donor coordination for technical and financial counterterrorism assistance. The CTED works to strengthen and better coordinate implementation of UNSC resolutions, as well as to conduct country assessments and facilitate technical assistance from donor countries. However, both bodies struggle to fulfil their tasks for uneven support from the member states. Some countries, mainly those from the global south, have considered the CTC illegitimate, not to mention out of touch with countries it's responsible for assisting and with donor countries that are (currently) not on the Security Council. Moreover, member states seem to give low priority to counterterrorism on their state agenda. Because of the fact that nobody is responsible for ensuring that member states meet their commitments under UN terrorism conventions or resolutions, and the CTC and CTED can't penalize countries and have never referred a case to the UNSC, countries are not obliged to implement any resolution.

The UNSC also founded the 1540 Committee, which oversees the implementation of UNSCR 1540, which obligates member states to prevent non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. An expert group that examines member state implementation of the resolution assists it. The UN also sponsored numerous sanctions addressing state sponsorship of terrorism. Over the last decade terrorist groups evolved to rely less on a centrally led network, which made this policy even less effective.

Despite all the efforts made so far, this hasn't stopped terrorist groups such as ISIL. In fact, they have been able to increase their attacks globally in the recent years. This means the current multilateral strategies are lacking in effectiveness.

Possible solutions

Firstly, it is crucial to establish a definition of terrorism. The United Nations has yet to set a definition of terrorism, which hinders any counter-terrorism effort. No unified definition of terrorism makes implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy inefficient.

Secondly, in order to evaluate the current counter-terrorism measures, all states must realize that their current measures are insufficient. An evaluation of the mistakes that are made and the reasons for the rise in terrorist attacks is crucial. In order to do so, a solution could be to create a binding resolution towards following the 4 pillars in the UN strategy for counter-terrorism. For example, when looking at the first pillar, we see that it is about finding the cause of what is spreading terrorism and then use methods to stop this. For example, reasons can be very personal such as an unhealthy social background. Also, the fact that it is now very easy for terrorist groups to communicate and spread their ideology with the rest of the world through social media will motivate others to radicalize. This means that people who are at risk of joining a terrorist group should be educated and supported to prevent them from joining.

Moreover, it is quite hard to fully prevent terrorism however; states can decrease the chance of it. For example, weapon embargoes can be a useful way to prevent terrorist from gaining access to weapons. Also, financial freezing of terrorist accounts can help as a means to prevent terrorism since then they will not have the financial means to continue their activities. This strategy is mainly taken up by the United States of America, but could be more efficient if taken up by more states.

Bibliography

<http://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/57>

<https://www.cfr.org/report/global-regime-terrorism>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/foreign-policy/security-policy/new-challenges/countering-terrorism/international-cooperation-against-terrorism.html>

<https://www.ipinst.org/tag/terrorism>

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12620.doc.htm>

<https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/en/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_1373-Resolution_1456_.282003.29