Research Report

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Security Council

Strengthening international responses to terrorism and violent extremism

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Introduction

Terrorism and violent extremism often go hand-in-hand and remain severe threats to our international peace and security. Even though, according to the GTI(Global Terrorism Index), global terrorism attacks have fallen 22% this year, the crisis has intensified across regions like the Sahel and South Asia.
These extremist uprisings are driven by, among others, political and economic instability, radicalization, or personal reasons. Extremist ideologies promote the supremacy of a particular group over others and are intolerant of a more permissive society. It threatens our shared values of peace and justice and wishes to overturn fundamental rights and freedoms. Guided by the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the Security Council must address root causes and strengthen international counter-terrorism frameworks.

General Overview

Terrorism generally refers to the threat or violence intended to coerce governments or intimidate the general public in pursuit of a political, religious or ideological cause. Violent extremism is considered an umbrella term for ideologically fuelled violence to achieve certain social or political goals.

Present-day large terrorist organisations, such as IS (Islamic State), JNIM(Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin), the Taliban, and al Shabaab, operate through networks of affiliated groups and ideological supporters that are scattered across international borders. These smaller groups play an increasingly important role in maintaining the general level of violence for the organisation, resulting in an environment where the boundaries of terrorist organisations become less and less distinct. This grants them greater flexibility and is one of the key reasons why they are so difficult to eradicate despite military pressure.

Terrorist activity easily spreads across borders through, for instance, recruitment and online propaganda. Digital platforms enable terrorist organisations to spread their propaganda as well as interest potential recruiters across borders. In addition to this, terrorist organisations rely, like any other, on financial resources to sustain their activities. This funding could come from various sources, including extortion, donations, kidnapping for ransom, trade, and many other activities. Since financial transactions can cross borders, tracing and disrupting these funding networks require cooperation between member states and their financial institutions. This creates a great obstacle for international security, as each member state has distinctions in its national legislation that are all differently equipped to detect, prevent, and disrupt terrorist financing. Consequently, international cooperation between governments is essential to closing these gaps.

Recognising the nature of these threats, the United Nations General Assembly has established a multitude of measures combined in a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The tool was unanimously adopted in 2006, and has since been upheld and expanded. It demands all Member States to take practical measures to prevent and counter terrorism.

The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy consists of four pillars:

I. ‘Measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.’

   The first pillar focuses on preventing the circumstances in which terrorism can spread. This could include addressing prolonged conflict, marginalisation, or poor governance.

II. ‘Measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.’

   Pillar two covers the direct actions for counter-terrorism, such as preventing terrorist financing or strengthening border controls.

III. ‘Measures to build States’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard.’

   The third pillar recognises that countries have different resources and capabilities. It calls for the UN to take a larger role in providing technical assistance, training, and better coordination to help Member States implement these measures.

IV. ‘Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.’

   Pillar four requires the counter-terrorism efforts to respect international law and fundamental rights. It acts as a reminder that measures that are arbitrary or discriminatory could undermine the public trust and weaken cooperation

Together, these four pillars establish an approach that goes beyond just military or enforcement measures. It combines prevention, enforcement, capacity building, and human rights protection to

create a framework against this global issue.
While the General Assembly's GCTS(Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy) provides a framework for taking international action, the Security Council has also adopted numerous resolutions, addressing the specific aspects of this threat.

For instance, Security Council Resolution 1373 required Member States to take measures against terrorist financing and strengthen international cooperation. Resolution 2462 further focused on preventing and suppressing the financing of terrorism. These two resolutions play a crucial and relevant part in combating counter-terrorism today, because they force countries to take practical action against it. Following Resolution 1373, the EU developed its own system for listing groups suspected of involvement in terrorism. This allowed it to freeze their assets, with the result of restricting their financial support. This shows how regional organisations follow through on the Security Council's requirements and translate them into practical measures.

Unfortunately, terrorism and violent extremism continues to be a serious global threat in the 21st century. The Sahel remains one of the world's most severely affected regions by terrorism. According to a recent Security Council report, more than half of global deaths related to terrorism in 2025 occured in the Sahel. The ongoing violence threatens civilian communities, weakens government control and therefore calls for urgent international action.

Major Parties Involved

- The Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact
  - The GCTCC is a large coordination framework of the United Nations. They improve the management of counter-terrorism efforts between multiple UN bodies, ensuring they are consistent.

- The Security Council (CTC(Counter-Terrorism Committee))
  - This committee is responsible for implementing sanctions related to terrorism and violent extremism.
  - This committee was established after Resolution 1373 required states to strengthen their responses to terrorism. All 15 Security Council members are part of the CTC, where they review regions prone to terrorist attacks that need further support.

- UNCCT (The UN Counter-Terrorism Centre)
  - Promotes cooperation between Member States as well as regional and local organisations. It further reinforces the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.
- AU(African Union), EU(European Union), ASEAN(Association of Southeast Asian Nations) - African countries face a large number of cross-border security challenges from terrorist organisations. The African Union plays a role in regional coordination and

information-sharing.
  - The European Union focuses on cutting off terrorist funding, implementing prevention programmes, and further works with the United Nations for counter-terrorism assistance
- Similarly, the ASEAN facilitates regional coordination, shares intelligence, and works to prevent violent extremism in areas with active terrorist groups.

- The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
  - Due to the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Afghanistan is a key actor in the discussion on international counter-terrorism. They have authority over Afghan territory and security, which gives them the ability to influence other terrorist groups within the country.
  - Cooperation with Afghanistan could aid the United Nations to better monitor major terrorist groups, such as IS, and prevent them from using Afghan territory as a safe haven. (However, intelligence-sharing remains challenging due to its limited diplomatic recognition as a government.)

Possible Solutions

- Improve international intelligence-sharing.
  - Strengthening information-sharing between national authorities helps countries identify cross-border threats better. This improves the effectiveness and coordination of investigations.
  - Establish secure channels for this information sharing to protect against data leaks and maintain confidentiality.

- Expand UN(United Nations) technical assistance and training to support identifying terrorist-financing risks.
  - Providing more technical support through the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre for countries with limited resources.
  - Encourage contributions to UN capacity-building programmes that provide technical expertise and support to Member States.

- Create a rapid-response plan for major terrorist incidents
  - Terrorist or violent extremist incidents can overwhelm the response capacity of a country, such as attacks on infrastructure or when they involve a large number of casualties. Creating a framework improves coordination in times of crisis.
  - Establishing agreements for neighbouring countries helps to provide emergency response, such as medical teams and enforcement, when requested.