

Issue: Fighting global terrorism by empowering regional cooperation
Forum: General Assembly - First Committee
Position: Chair
Name: Joost den Hoed



Introduction

The first issue that will be debated by this session's General Assembly 1st subcommittee (GA1) will focus on the fight against terrorism. The question at hand is whether and how empowering regional cooperation could bolster the effort. Furthermore, it should be decided what the role of the international community in this process should be.

Definition of Key Terms

Terrorism

Since there's no clear and universally accepted definition of the concept of terrorism, we have to look at multiple sources. One that immediately comes to mind is the Oxford Dictionary. The following is written there on the noun terrorism. Terrorism: "the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act". The problem of this description is that it doesn't take into consideration one of the most important factors of the concept. Terrorism is derived from the Latin word *terror*, meaning fear. Fear is the element through which terrorists mean to achieve their goal of a certain action. For example; a bombing is carried out by terrorists in order to spread fear so people or states change the way in which they're operating.

Salafism

In our time, the most well-known form of terrorism is unmistakably linked to Salafist groups. The rise of ISIL (Daesh or IS) is also a result of the difficult situation in the Middle-East and the failing policies of involved parties. According to the oxford dictionary, Salafism is

"A branch of Islam whose adherents believe in a pure interpretation of the Koran and Islamic law. Salafists are orthodox Muslims who consider the Islam practiced by Mohammed and his companions as the only true version of the religion."¹

Salafist Islam forms the base of multiple terrorist organizations such as, for example, al-Qaeda and its sub-organizations.

State sponsored terrorism

¹ <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192807021.001.0001/acref-9780192807021-e-2724> (webpage used 1/26/20)

Although not clearly visible, terrorism has not seldom ties with governmental bodies. Terrorist activities can be a part of a proxy war in which it is in the interest of parties not to show direct involvement or to destroy enemy morale.

General Overview

September 11, 2001, is the date that we remember as the day 19 associates of Al Qaeda hijacked four aircraft flying in United States' airspace. Two of these flights crashed into the World Trade Center in New York. The so-called Twin Towers were major US-landmarks and an office to thousands of people. One of the other planes was crashed into the pentagon-complex, that houses the high command of all military branches in Washington D.C. Almost 3000 civilians, mostly American but of a wider range of nationalities too, were killed during these terrorist attacks. This led to the establishment of multiple American-led initiatives to combat terrorism, directed by president George W. Bush and his successors until this day; the "War on Terror". Since the declaration of this campaign, multilateral coalitions have seen action throughout the Middle-East.

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan proposed a new strategy composed of five separate pillars in 2004. These five pillars included; dissuading groups from resorting to terrorist acts, denying terrorist's access to the means for carrying out an attack, deterring states from supporting terrorist organizations, developing state capabilities to combat terrorism, and defending human rights in the context of terrorism and counter-terrorism. Kofi Annan's plans lay the foundation of the 2005 global summit. Here, for the first time, the international community came to a unanimous condemnation of terrorism. Terrorism was to be condemned in all forms, for all purposes and committed by all parties. It is therefore a first unique approach; an impartial verdict.

As we've seen over the last 2 decennia, the War on Terror has proven to be not as effective as we'd hoped. It is therefore imperative to reassess the counter-terrorism strategy. Unfortunately, one of the problems of the War on Terror is that terrorism and its sources are widely spread around the globe. It's not limited to countries like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Terrorism is, as many of the delegates may not know, not only a 21st century phenomenon. Earliest examples that can be described as terrorism can be found in Antiquity but the most modern form has its roots in the 19th and 20th century political movements. In 2004, Rapoport created a new vision on the evolution of terrorism. This new vision breaks modern terrorism down in four waves; the late nineteenth century wave known as the "anarchist wave"; followed by the "anti colonial wave" and more recently the "left wing wave" and now the "religious wave".

Internationally, there has been quite some multilateral action toward the elimination of terrorism. Recently, this global and/or widely international approach has not been that effective. We could therefore shift our focus towards a more regional approach. Breaking down the strategy and focus more on regional cooperation might just be the key to better results.

In 2017, international terrorist organizations make up for approximately 18,814 deaths according to Forbes. Al Shabaab, Boko Haram, IS and Al Qaida are the culprit of roughly 10,632 of these deaths in 2017.

What has to be taken into consideration is that these organizations aren't just some sort of violent clubs. They are immensely rich. For example, Hezbollah has an estimated income of \$1.1 billion dollars each year. A substantial part of this can be traced back to governments and even anti-corruption funding. Corruption is a major problem in areas with a higher terrorist activity-level.

Important to recognize is the fact that terrorism is spread globally. It's not only taking place in Europe and the Middle East. Southeast Asia for example, is characterized as an 'emerging terrorist hotspot' in the 2018 publication of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI). The region, with over 600.000.000 inhabitants experiences a 'second wave' of Islamist terrorism since roughly 2013. The 'first wave occurred between 2002 and 2008 following the global pattern of terrorism in the first decade of the 21st century. Two major groups account for over 575 deaths during these 6 years; the Philippines' Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiya (JI). The 'second wave', and the current situation, is more violent and caused thousands of deaths up until now. ISIL-affiliated groups and separatist movements all over Southeast Asia, such as in Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand, are to blame. They caused roughly 300 deaths in 2017 alone.

Major Parties Involved

United States of America

As the most notable party in the fight against terrorism, the United States deploy thousands of troops in the Middle East. Some of the servicemen going to the Middle-East weren't even born at the time of the 9/11 attacks. Still, they are part of an ongoing effort to stabilize the region and combat terrorist groups active there.

European Union

The European Union (EU) has seen its fair share of terrorism over the years. Although massive bloody attacks such as the Lockerbie plane crash (1988), the bombings of the Madrid metro (2004), Paris attacks (2015) and others are less frequent as in other parts of

the world, they do stick in the minds of the Western-centralized world. Over time, the EU has shown to be an important player in the field of intelligence-sharing and other means of counter-terrorism.

Arab League

Just like the EU, the Arab league can play an important part in the fight against terrorism. Especially in countries where stability is an issue such as Libya, neighboring countries could extend the helping hand by providing forces, funds, knowledge, etc.

Switzerland

It's a well-known fact that Switzerland hosts an enormous amount of the so-called offshore banking accounts. These accounts, and by hosting them Swiss banks and Switzerland itself, play an undeniably great role in the financing of terrorism.

Timeline of Key Events

Though terrorist acts occur almost every day around the globe, the following examples have had the most impact on international politics.

September 1999	Russian Apartment Bombings
September 11 th 2001	9/11 attacks USA
March 11 2004	Madrid Attacks
August 14 th 2007	Yazidi Bombings Iraq
December 24-27 th 2008	Christmas Attacks DR Congo
January 3-7 th 2015	Baga Massacres
November 13 th 2015	Paris Attacks

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

Actions against terrorists are numerous but none have proven to be effective enough. The following, political, activities are most notable. Military actions are not included.

Fearing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) might fall into the wrong hands, the General Assembly of the UN adopted resolution 57/83 in 2002. This was the first political document focusing on the possible acquisition of chemical nuclear and/or biological weapons by terrorists.

Resolution 1540 was unanimously passed by the UN in 2004. It obliged member states to cease to and refrain from facilitating non-state parties obtaining neither nuclear, biological or chemical weapons.

The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), was established in 2005 by Kofi Anan. This UN-body is essentially a coordinative organization that aims to ensure cooperation and effective coherence among the dozens of entities operating in the field of counter-terrorism with the UN.

On 8 September 2006, The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was adopted by the General Assembly. The adoption of this global comprehensive strategy is by itself a landmark since it's a first. The strategy lays out possible measures to member states which can be undertaken individually as well as collectively. It mostly focusses on the following principles; address the conditions which make the spread of terrorism possible, combat terrorism and strengthen the agencies responsible, and -last but not least- uphold human rights while engaging in counter-terrorism measures. Through implementing this strategy, member states will contribute to the UN counter-terrorism effort and at the same time get support from specialized UN-bodies.

Possible Solutions

The creation of multilateral, but regional, taskforces.

Instead of focusing on borders and national areas, these programs could focus on cultural regions. Thus, they could cross borders but at the same time be more effective.

Regional anti-terrorism training of police forces

Local police officers, although their good intentions, might not always have the same expertise as the likes of Interpol and such. They can however make a significant change by the recognizing and early targeting of terrorist activities. To help them, they might benefit from training by experts such as Interpol-specialists.

Countering the Use of the Internet for terrorist purposes.

The modern terrorist uses the internet as means of communication, propaganda and recruitment. Monitoring the internet, and specifically with the help of companies like Google and Facebook, could bring an end to this easy way of expressing radical views and the popularity of certain terrorist groups globally like IS. In order to do this effectively, nations have to set up working groups targeting the sources and working together with local, regional and international platforms to rid the internet of terrorist activities.

Appendix/Appendices

- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Terrorism_Index
- <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/>
-

Bibliography

- Oxford dictionary online
- <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/>