

The Nexus between Development and Security: Searching for Common Ground in Countering Terrorism

Ivan Briscoe and Dr. Bibi van Ginkel

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Abstract

In recent years, only limited collaboration existed between the counter-terrorism community and the development sector. With the exception of some shared rhetoric on state-building and a common focus on an instrumental use of “development”, there has been more mistrust than cooperation, and civil-military exercises have repeatedly created grave problems for humanitarian workers. ICCT Research Fellow Dr. Bibi van Ginkel and Clingendael Senior Research Fellow Ivan Briscoe analyse the relationship between the development and counter-terrorism sectors in light of the changing nature of terrorism. The authors argue that there is a complex but important connection between political violence and socio-economic development and argue for new synergies between development and counter-terrorism experts. This increased cooperation should build on small steps that both communities have taken of late and start with sharing experiences and collaborating on topics of mutual interest such as (de-) radicalisation, the rule of law and countering violent extremism.

About the Authors

Ivan Briscoe is a Senior Research Fellow at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’, where he works in governance at the Conflict Research Unit (CRU). A graduate in politics and philosophy, he subsequently specialized in the field of developing countries. He has worked as a journalist and newspaper editor in Latin America, France and Spain, and more recently as an expert in fragile states and conflict. Within CRU he specialises in the political economy of post-conflict countries, and has a regional focus on Latin America. His particular interests include drug trafficking, shadow states and the dynamics of inequality.

Dr. Bibi van Ginkel is a Senior Research Fellow at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’, and a Research Fellow at the International Centre for Counter Terrorism – The Hague. She studied International and European Law (Netherlands). In June 2010, she defended her PhD thesis *The Practice of the United Nations in Combating Terrorism from 1946-2008; Questions of Legality and Legitimacy*. Before working at the Clingendael Institute, she taught International and European Law at Utrecht University. She coordinated the research project ‘Ethical Justness of European Counter-Terrorism Measures’, which was part of the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission. She is a member of the Peace and Security Committee of the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs. Additionally, she is General Secretary of the Daily Board of the Netherlands Helsinki Committee. Her areas of interest include the security related aspects of law, such as terrorism, piracy and the employment of Private Security Companies.

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Contact

ICCT – The Hague
Koningin Julianaplein 10
P.O. Box 13228
2501 EE, The Hague
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)70 800 9531

E info@icct.nl

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1. Introduction

At the height of the global “war on terror” that followed the attacks of September 11, little – if any – common ground seemed to be shared between the concerns of those dedicated to protecting Western security and the aims of development experts seeking to bring socio-economic improvement and institutional reform to the poorest regions of the world. Aside from a certain amount of shared rhetoric around the desirability of democracy or state-building, the most prominent links between the two focused on an instrumental use of “development.” This included high-visibility improvements in living conditions and infrastructure for communities vulnerable to insurgent penetration (such as the works carried out by Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan), or distributing cash in Iraq as a means to acquire better field intelligence or to prevent terrorist recruitment.

To caricature the stereotypes held by each side, counter-terrorism was perceived to be about quick wins, armed coercion and imposition of security by a foreign hand. Development policy, on the other hand, appeared to its security critics as an exercise in wishful thinking as regards poverty reduction and improved governance. Its aim in Afghanistan, as former US Defence Secretary Robert Gates famously mocked, was to create a “Central Asian Valhalla.”¹

One result of this mutual suspicion has been observed precisely in the international engagement in Afghanistan, which has been profoundly undermined by uncertainty over the extent and intent of the military presence there, and whether the priority is war, counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, state-building, or peace-building – each of which appeared to require very different strategies, funding streams and allies in the field.² Both in Afghanistan and in other conflict zones, the deployment of military-led relief operations, or the use of other forms of civil-military governance cooperation, has caused grave problems for humanitarian workers seeking to maintain their profile as apolitical and neutral, leading to the killing of a number of relief staff, as well as prompting accusations of wasteful or inefficient spending.³

Thus, for many aid organisations the grand rhetoric of a nexus between security and development, first enunciated by the United Nations (UN) in the 1990s as part of the broader meaning of “human security”,⁴ has been irrevocably tainted through its co-option by military tacticians seeking to win over the “hearts and minds” of native populations without attending to the slower, deeper and more inclusive processes that development requires. According to this critical interpretation of foreign interventionism in the wake of September 11, “politically driven, objectives-based military culture is fundamentally at odds with humanitarianism.”⁵ Indeed, the distinction between relief, aid and the strategic security objectives of foreign donors has been enshrined into the rules for Official Development Aid (ODA), which expressly prohibits the inclusion of any money that is used for the supply or financing of military equipment or services. While this distinction has certainly helped maintain a difference between development and security as two sets of activities, it may not have served to improve relations between two policy communities both hungry for public resources.⁶

However, this antagonism now appears to be subsiding. Tensions between the aid community and security community over the counter-terrorism agenda have waned following the de-escalation of conflict in Iraq, and ahead of a definitive foreign troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. The changing nature of the terrorist

¹ Gates told the US Senate Armed Services Committee in 2009: “If we set ourselves the objective of creating some sort of Central Asian Valhalla over there, we will lose, because nobody in the world has that kind of time, patience and money.” See Tyson, Ann Scott. 2009. “Gates Predicts ‘Slog’ in Afghanistan.” *Washington Post* (28 January 2009). http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2009-01-28/world/36826037_1_asian-valhalla-greatest-military-challenge-civilian-casualties

² Goodhand, Jonathan. 2012. “Contested transitions: International drawdown and the future state in Afghanistan.” *Fragile States Futures series*, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) and Clingendael Institute Conflict Research Unit.

³ These concerns are well documented by humanitarian and development organizations. See, for example, The Lancet. 2006. “Military incursions into aid work anger humanitarian groups.” Vol. 367; Oxfam. 2011. *Whose Aid is it Anyway? Politicizing aid in conflicts and crises*. Oxfam Briefing Paper 145; Saferworld. 2011. *The Securitisation of Aid? Reclaiming Security to Meet Poor People’s Needs*. Saferworld Briefing.

⁴ McCormack, Tara. 2011. “Human security and the separation of security and development.” *Conflict, Security & Development*, 11:02, pp. 235-260.

⁵ The Lancet, op. cit.

⁶ In addition, development aid spending on countries of great strategic importance could and did increase sharply: from 2002 to 2010, one third of all development aid to 48 states labelled “fragile” went to three countries: Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Furthermore, spending through donor vehicles not counted as development aid at a much grew much faster rate than ODA in the United States. See Oxfam, op. cit.

threat, a corresponding evolution in the understanding of what constitutes effective prevention of terrorism and counter-terrorism response, and a general crisis of confidence within the aid community – epitomised most recently by the collapse of the “donor darling” state in Mali – have combined to erode certainties on both sides. Given the mistrust built up over the last decade, there remain serious hurdles to overcome in any rapprochement, as well as doubts over how far it should go, but this does not obscure the fact that each side might now be willing and able to learn something useful from the other. This is certainly the case for the counter-terrorism community, which used to be identified with the security community, but which is now refocusing on a comprehensive and more preventive approach. In this ICCT Policy Brief, we try to shed some light on the possibilities for a more fruitful relationship, and make some recommendations for further co-operation.

2. The Changing Nature of Terrorism

Terrorism, with both a strong home base and a transnational reach, may or may not be a more serious threat than it was a decade ago: opinion on the subject is divided.⁷ But there is no questioning a marked change in the character and underpinning of the current threat. Sunni extremism, responsible for 56 percent of all terrorist attacks and 70 percent of fatalities in the world in 2011 according to figures from the US National Counter-Terrorism Centre,⁸ remains the principle source of such violence. Yet, the vehicle of this threat has mutated from a tightly organised and hermetic cadre with links to a broad global network – the Osama Bin Laden era – into a decentralised, diverse set of armed groups or cells that appear to be tenuously linked with one another via a few common contacts, believed to be representatives of residual al-Qaeda, and a shared fundamentalist doctrine. So tenuous is the link to al-Qaeda, however, that the organisation was held responsible for only one of the 5,000 terrorist attacks carried out in 2011, according to figures from the Global Terrorism Database.⁹

As a result, and putting aside the special case of the conflict zone on the Afghan-Pakistan frontier, the contemporary terrorist threat as perceived by Western interests can broadly be located in two domains. One of these is in the home societies of the West, and would appear still to be largely reliant on the motivational effects of the jihadist cause among alienated young people rather than any organic link to the al-Qaeda network. The magazine *Inspire* embodies the terrorist group’s outreach to just such an audience, whose motivations may not be too different from the self-destructive pathologies of other suicide bombers and school shooters.¹⁰ In addition to the jihadist cause, right wing or left wing extremism can also serve as an inspiration for acts of terrorism.

The other, far more important area of growth involves the spread of fundamentalist groups to a number of zones of Africa and the Arab region where conflict and poor governance have long been endemic. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (and its offshoot in Yemen, Ansar al-Sharia), al-Qaeda in Iraq, Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabaab in Somalia, various fundamentalist militia in Libya and the principal Islamist and Salafist groups operating out of northern Mali appear to epitomise this second segment of global terrorism.

“We have decimated core al-Qaeda,” declared former US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta in a speech in November 2012. “But the al-Qaeda cancer has also adapted to this pressure by becoming even more widely distributed, loosely knit and geographically dispersed.”¹¹ As a result, even as the West appears to be safer from terrorist attacks than at any point over the past decade, the global number of incidents has settled close to the peak reached in 2007, with an estimated 7,500 fatalities in 2011. Most importantly, these attacks are heavily concentrated in countries and regions that are consequently exposed to a succession of atrocities and serious political instability: some 87 percent of all attacks occurred in just 10 countries.¹²

⁷ In this respect, contrast Riedel, Bruce. 2012. “Al Qaeda’s Resurgence.” Yale Global Online, in which he argues that “Al Qaeda today is stronger at the operational level in the Arab World than it has been in years,” with other commentaries, such as Maclean, William. 2012. “Local wars blur al Qaeda’s threat to West.” Reuters 05/07/12.

⁸ See the statistical information provided by the Center here: <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2011/195555.htm>

⁹ Institute for Economics and Peace. 2012. *Global Terrorism Index. Capturing the Impact of Terrorism from 2002-2011*.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Lankford, Adam. 2012. *The Myth of Martyrdom: What Really Drives Suicide Bombers, Rampage Shooters, and Other Self-Destructive Killers*. Palgrave.

¹¹ “The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow.” Speech by US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, 20/11/12.

¹² These countries are: Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Yemen, Somalia, Nigeria, Thailand, Russia and the Philippines. All the figures in this paragraph are from Institute for Economics and Peace, op. cit.

In all cases, the emergence and spread of these radical groups cannot be disconnected from the very local, historically-rooted circumstances in which they thrive. Whereas early al-Qaeda may be considered an “outward-looking” entity, oriented from its original Afghan enclave towards the millenarian achievement of a new caliphate via attacks on Western soil, these newer organisations deploy strategies of violence and political accumulation first and foremost at the local level, through imposition of sharia law, territorial dominion, armed assaults and bombings. When they do operate on a transnational scale they tend to do so selectively, as in the al-Shabaab bombings in Uganda in 2010, or erratically, as appears to be the case for Yemen’s extremist cells, whose capacity to mount attacks on foreign airliners nevertheless seems robust. Until the French offensive in Mali in January 2013, the main violent Islamist groups’ only cross-border projection from that country revolved around transporting arms or attracting criminal revenue, either through kidnapping foreigners or drug trafficking. The hostage crisis in the Amenas gas refinery in Algeria certainly confirmed the Mali-based Islamists’ ability to make swift cross-border strikes, yet still without demonstrating their wherewithal to reach European soil.¹³

Indeed, it is striking that Bin Laden himself despaired of this dependence on locally grounded movements, many of whom were busier killing fellow Muslims than targeting the “Crusader Zionist alliance.” Among the documents taken from his files in Abbottabad, and since published by the Combating Terrorism Center, one missive deals with this issue in depth. “Some of the brothers became totally absorbed in fighting our local enemies, and more mistakes have been made [...] Making these mistakes is a great issue; needless to say, the greatness of the Muslim blood violation in addition to the damage impacting the Jihad. As a result, the alienation of most of the nation from the Mujahidin.”¹⁴

3. Poverty, Bad Governance and Conflict

Various aspects of these new terrorist phenomena bear directly on the nexus between development and the emergence of political violence, and thus on possible future dialogue and coordination between the work of the security community concerned with counter-terrorism and that of the development community. This nexus is undoubtedly strongest when the objective is reframed as countering violent extremism – a phrase that has been coined to specify a particular part of counter-terrorism, with a focus on prevention. This new terminology also seeks to move away from the label “terrorism”, which is subject to political manipulation, has not been defined internationally, and has been used on many occasions by authoritarian regimes to criminalise legitimate opponents.¹⁵

Above all, there is now growing evidence of linkages between the emergence of violent extremism and conditions of economic deprivation, bad governance and conflict. Until now, efforts to map a correlation between violent extremist affiliation in numerous contexts and economic factors have struggled to prove any direct link. A range of analytic methods including “biographical interview information, case studies, or more sophisticated econometric analyses of the comparative population” seemed to reach the same conclusion: “terrorists are rarely characterized by poverty or lack of education.”¹⁶ Indeed, much of the available evidence points to a prevalence of middle and upper class participants in myriad terrorist causes. One theory holds that social classes adhere to terrorism in the form of an inverted U. “Those at the low end are too busy trying to survive to rebel and those at the high end are fairly satisfied with their lot.”¹⁷

On this basis, it might appear that any effort to link the emergence of terrorism directly with economic conditions is doomed: terrorists seemingly initiate their careers irrespective of material hardship. Extremes of

¹³ Although the group of 32 fighters which carried out the attack on the gas refinery had reportedly been based in northern Mali, it was made up of many different nationalities, including members from Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Mali, Niger, Canada and Mauritania. See BBC News. 2013. “Algeria siege: 37 foreigners died, PM says.” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21127646>.

¹⁴ Rassler, Don et al. 2012. Letters from Bin Laden, dated May 2012 (SOCOM-2012-0000019). See Combating Terrorism Center. 2012. *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Laden Sidelined?* West Point: CTC.

¹⁵ Podder, Sukanya. 2012. “From spoilers to statebuilders: Constructive approaches to engagement with non-state armed groups in fragile states.” Working paper for OECD-DAC. Paris: OECD, p. 17.

¹⁶ Berrebi, Claude. 2009. “The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism: What Matters and Is Rational-Choice Theory Helpful?”, p. 160. In *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

¹⁷ Noricks, Darcy M. E. 2009. “The Root Causes of Terrorism.” Pp. 29-30. It should be added, however, that this is a subject of ongoing scholarly dispute. For a useful overview of the field, see Mesoy, Atle. 2013. “Poverty and radicalisation into violent extremism: a causal link?” Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF).

poverty are not correlated with current manifestations of terrorism: only two of the ten countries suffering most attacks are low-income (Afghanistan and Somalia); at the same time, numerous extremely poor sub-Saharan countries suffer no terrorist attacks at all (e.g. Burkina Faso, Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone).¹⁸ But the absence of a direct link should not be taken to mean there is no connection whatsoever between economic conditions and extremist violence. Once the concept of development is enriched by taking into account elements aside from poverty or wealth – issues such as governance, access to decision-making, or levels of social exclusion, relative deprivation and marginalisation – or when it is considered more as a dynamic process than a snapshot of current income levels, much more substantial evidence can be found pointing to a correlation with terrorism.

Although terrorism is clearly not dependent on poverty, there is no doubt that the lion's share of attacks is to be found in countries that are relatively poor – above all, lower middle income nations. Likewise, attacks in low-income countries have undergone a fourfold increase since 2002.¹⁹ The shift of locus in terrorist activity towards areas of extreme economic hardship and deprivation, such as the Sahel region and northern Nigeria, or to places where armed conflicts have festered for decades, as in Yemen or Somalia, indicates a growing alignment of Islamist extremism with populations long affected by grievance, exclusion and marginalisation. Paul Rogers identifies the new global security challenge as the “revolt from the margins” in an “economically polarised and ecologically constrained world.”²⁰ For Bruce Riedel, counter-terrorism adviser to President Obama, Islamist terrorism is adeptly capitalising on the after-effects of “revolutionary change in the Arab World.” In other words, it has bloomed by attaching itself to profound structural tensions and ruptures in states and societies.

This rootedness in grievance, and attachment to areas of pre-existing or accelerating armed conflict, recasts the meaning of the relationship between socio-economic development and terrorism. While terrorist recruitment and mobilisation may not be directly linked to poverty levels, there is no doubt that armed conflict is. In fact, the correlation between propensity to conflict and income level is robust: poorer countries are considerably more likely to suffer wars.²¹ As a result, the more terrorist movements perch on the fault lines of established conflicts, the more likely they are to cluster in the most economically disadvantaged countries and regions of the world. And whereas their leadership cadres, especially those with transnational connections, may continue to hail largely from the educated middle class, the extremist rank-and-file is more likely to emerge from amongst the poorest social sectors. Studies in various local contexts, such as Pakistan's Swat Valley and Iraq, appear to support precisely this thesis.²²

Importantly, this link between poverty and conflict, and thus between economic conditions and new manifestations of terrorism, should not be construed as meaning that income levels and economic conditions are the primary determinants of conflict – a claim for which there is limited evidence. Instead, levels of economic development may be taken as proxies or signifiers for factors that do seem intimately connected to the likelihood of war, such as the possibility of securing a job, the general capacity of the state, or the availability of basic public services.²³ In other words, income levels tend to reflect broader failures in governance and political representation that are themselves the direct causes of public anomie and revolt.

A second way of deepening our understanding of development is to move from a static analysis to consider the dynamic effects of development on levels of political disaffection and unrest, an issue that has long fascinated scholars and policymakers.²⁴ Growth and modernisation can fall far short of meeting people's expectations. Alternatively, they can cause such traumatic social upheavals through urbanisation, inequality, mass education and secularisation that they are experienced as impoverishment. In either case, there is evidence to suggest a number of cross-linkages between economic conditions and terrorism. This may be found in a suspected correlation between youth unemployment and violent extremism, which is detected in one recent study on Western Europe²⁵ and appears highly relevant to the case of North Africa, where youth unemployment stood in 2011 at 27.9 percent. Another connection can be found in the effects of perceptions of corruption and

¹⁸ Institute for Economics and Peace, op. cit.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Rogers, Paul. 2011. “Al-Qaida, and a world in balance.” OpenDemocracy 06/06/112.

²¹ Fearon, James. 2010. “Governance and Civil War Onset.” Background paper for the World Development Report 2011.

²² Regarding Pakistan, see Mesoy, op.cit.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Two classic works on the subject include Olson, Mancur. 1963. “Rapid Growth as a Destabilizing Force.” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 23 no. 4, pp. 529-552; and Huntington, Samuel. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. Yale University Press.

²⁵ Caruso, Raul and Schneider, Friedrich. 2011. “The Socio-Economic determinants of terrorism and political violence in Western Europe (1994-2007).” *European Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 27.

rent-seeking in public life on broader political mobilisation, including extremist groups and parties. Fury over perceived corruption in times of stagnation has indeed proved central to numerous uprisings during the Arab Spring.

This more dynamic account of how economic experiences, poor governance and political extremism can be intertwined (but need not always be) is well reflected in the burgeoning study of the process of becoming radical. Causes for radicalisation can be found on multiple levels, and include a sense of grievance and discrimination that can be shared by entire population groups, as well as factors that are rather more contingent to the given social environment – such as the presence of an extreme ideology, local support networks for such extremism, and the psychological and ideological tools needed to identify, and eventually dehumanise, the intended victims. Disaffected and marginalised regions, such as northern Nigeria, where youth unemployment is high and 9.6 million students attend Islamic schools, can thus be regarded as potent vehicles for widespread radicalisation.

However, the existence of these circumstances does not necessarily mean that each individual living in the same environment will choose the path of radicalisation. Alex Schmid, for instance, argues that individual poverty alone does not necessarily cause radicalisation, but that unemployment may play a role in pushing aimless young people towards violent groups.²⁶ Ideological radicalisation, if it happens at all, then follows after joining the group and partaking in its activities. Similarly, the sense of personal disillusion in developing countries, particularly in urban areas, is widespread, yet not everyone living under these circumstances turns to violent extremism: instead there is something akin to a “staircase” of radicalisation.²⁷ Individual and group grievances, such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination, and political or economic marginalisation, can be used as mobilising instruments. The pull factors, subsequently, are the benefits from joining an extremist group, including economic security, the sense of belonging, and the group’s ideology, which emphasises that it is possible to change society through violent action instead of enduring the frustrations of an imperfect democratic process, or a system of authoritarian exclusion.²⁸

4. Tactics and Recruitment of the New Extremist Groups

Some of these connections between conflict, development and terrorism become clearer when contemplating the new range of extremist groupings. In the first place, the character of their operations means that great caution should be used even in applying the term “terrorist.”²⁹ AQIM and its current partner organisations in northern Mali, Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and the Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), as well as more recently-created factions (such as that led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who is believed to have been killed in March), have not carried out any mass casualty attacks on civilian targets in the country. Although they have of course mounted a significant armed incursion into Algeria, fought skirmishes and applied a strict interpretation of sharia law that includes mutilations and other barbaric punishments. Most of the instability and unrest in the capital city, Bamako, has instead been caused by a governance vacuum resulting from last year’s military coup.

In the north of Nigeria, Boko Haram’s capacity to carry out bomb attacks does more readily qualify it as a terrorist group, as would its death toll for 2012 of an estimated 770 people.³⁰ Their activities remain heavily

²⁶ Evidence provided for this assertion is so far largely anecdotal, but does appear to be supported by research on terrorist and insurgent groups in places such as Iraq and Kashmir. See Schmid, Alex. Forthcoming. “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review.” *ICCT Research Paper*. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague.

²⁷ Moghaddam, Fathali. 2009. “De-radicalisation and the Staircase from Terrorism.” In Canter, David (ed.), *The Faces of Terrorism Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. New York: John Wiley.

²⁸ A useful summation of these various push and pull factors can be found in USAID. 2011. *The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency*. Washington DC: USAID. According to the paper, “many of the drivers of violent extremism and insurgency are development challenges. Indeed, factors such as socioeconomic inequalities, repression, corruption, and poor governance often create an enabling environment for radicalization and violent extremism.”

²⁹ No definition of terrorism exists. An act can have a terrorist character, and according to a criminal code fall under a specific criminal charge. When an act with a terrorist character is committed during an armed conflict, the Geneva Conventions on humanitarian law apply. At present, some factions have separatist motives, while others are extremist jihadist. The label “terrorism” should strictly speaking only be applied to their violent acts. Whether these organisations can be labelled “terrorist organisations”, and have crossed a certain threshold in the process, is a matter for debate.

³⁰ Stewart, Scott. 2012. “Is Boko Haram More Dangerous Than Ever?.” *Stratfor Global Intelligence* (13 December 2012). <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/boko-haram-more-dangerous-ever>.

restricted to its geographical basis in the north, and the group has not carried out an attack in Lagos, the country's biggest city. It is also useful to consider the events underway in the Syrian civil war. Jihadist and salafist elements, such as the Jabhat al-Nusra and other rebel brigades, now form an important part of the armed resistance, and have been critical in the battle for Aleppo. But it is uncertain whether they could be labelled terrorist groups, or rather as an armed resistance group that has committed war crimes by launching attacks on pro-regime civilian targets.

Clearly, a general qualification of these forces as terrorist groups does not do justice to the diversity of interests and *modi operandi* of these organisations. They are on occasion also conscientious political actors, aligning with local business elites and using brutal methods to exact a sort of public legitimacy for their rule – as in Mali, and notoriously, in the al-Shabaab-dominated areas of Somalia. They are adept at the use of digital media, and are not reluctant to form alliances with other armed groups when required. A clear example can be found in the Islamist forces in Mali, who to a large extent piggy-backed on a Tuareg rebellion that they later captured through force and political manoeuvring.

The role of these local groups as dedicated and ruthless agents of local governance reflects the flaws in state presence in these areas, as well as the unreliable public provision of security and basic services. In many cases, government representatives are corrupt and exploitative. In the case of Syria, the prominence of Islamist fighters reflects the imperative of a collective war effort in which radicalised jihadist groups can be the most effective and knowledgeable soldiers. But these groups' rootedness and arguable usefulness in areas of hardship and conflict does not disguise their willingness also to exploit the poor. Each member of the MUJAO militia was reported to have received at least 300 dollars after a recent ransom payment from the West,³¹ while Ivan Simonovic, the UN's Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, reported last year that Islamists were paying Malian families a fee of about 600 dollars to enlist their children as drivers and fighters.³² Similarly, in Iraq a large number of suspected al-Qaeda operatives detained by the US military were young, unemployed men who had accepted money from the terrorist group to build or plant roadside bombs, or carry out other tasks.³³

These and other examples of contemporary terrorism, or violent extremism, reveal the hugely complex relations that exist between radical groups, established local grievances and individual resentment or ambition. Recent theories of radicalisation seek to capture the iteration of causes that may create an extremist or a terrorist. At the same time, approaches to de-radicalisation of entire extremist groups or prison populations are as yet in their infancy, with very little evidence available to indicate what may or may not work.³⁴ Even so, it seems improbable that de-radicalisation in contexts such as Mali, Syria or northern Nigeria could function successfully without considerable attention being devoted to the nature of the socio-economic contexts, the perception of exclusion, and the character of national and local governance. A preventive approach thus seems to make a great deal of sense.

5. The Birth of a Comprehensive Approach to Counter-Terrorism

Even before the emergence of a new variety of local extremist groups, the international community was paying greater heed to the multiple links between terrorism and the broader landscape of development and governance. The awareness that development plays a role in the structural factors conducive to terrorism is not new, and already played a prominent role in the first ever resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on counter-terrorism in 1972 (General Assembly Resolution 3034). The events of September 11, however, left little room in the political discourse of most international organisations and many Member States for a balanced approach to countering terrorism, with an often singular focus on security issues and repressive measures taking its place in the years after 2001.

The UN Security Council played a prominent role in dictating the global counter-terrorism policy agenda in the first years following September 2001. The first ever legislative resolution on the issue from the Security Council, Resolution 1373, ordered states to criminalise the financing of terrorism. In addition, the Security Council broadened the scope of the sanction regime that froze the financial assets of Taliban government members in

³¹ Lewis, David and Diarra, Adama. 2012. "Special Report: In the land of "Gangster-jihadists," *Reuters* 25/10/12.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Noricks, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

³⁴ Schmid, Alex, *op. cit.*

order to include Osama Bin Laden and other members of al-Qaeda.³⁵ Both measures have been heavily criticised.³⁶ In addition to the criticism on the far-reaching powers exercised by the Council, there was also no clear definition of terrorism in the resolution.

The Security Council acted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which provides the Council with powers to adopt binding measures after the Council has determined that there is a threat to or a breach of international peace and security. Because the UN Charter placed the primary responsibility for international peace and security as well as the main coercive powers with the Security Council,³⁷ the other organs and committees of the UN initially shied away from playing a major role in combating terrorism. As a consequence, few efforts were made to ensure the Security Council's resolutions respected human rights, or attended to the root causes of terrorism, during the first years after the September 11 attacks. In fact the term "root causes" became a taboo, as it suggested to some that terrorist acts could be legitimised. The result is that UN bodies now prefer to speak somewhat obliquely of "conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism," instead of plain "root causes".

At the same time, other organisations were adopting a rather more integral approach towards the problem. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has always worked with a cross-dimensional concept of security, including in its remit the political-military dimension, economics and the environment, did not manage to alter the prevalent discourse immediately. However, the OSCE Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism in 2001 was one of the first to recognise the importance of a broad and comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism.

Moreover, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with the adoption of its document *A Development Cooperation Lens on Terrorism Prevention* in 2003, acknowledged the nexus between development and counter-terrorism. It argued that "[w]hile development cooperation cannot and should not target individual terrorists nor combat their networks, it does have an important role to play in helping to deprive terrorists of popular support and addressing the conditions that terrorist leaders feed on and exploit." The OECD also understood that most of the initial counter-terrorism policies focused on terrorist leaders, whereas in many cases al-Qaeda leaders turned out to be disaffected, ideologically-motivated children of the educated middle class. Yet, the young people they recruit tend to come from the more frustrated, poor and politically and economically excluded social groups.

This shift in paradigm, signalled by both the OSCE and OECD, has resulted in a more balanced policy approach, which has since been acknowledged in the UN through its 2006 adoption of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (General Assembly Resolution 60/288). The Strategy recognises that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The first of the four pillars of the Strategy deals with "conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism", and refers again to the importance of development. Special focus should thus be placed on youth unemployment, which could reduce marginalisation and the subsequent sense of victimisation that propels extremism. The adoption of the Strategy has had a major influence on the thinking and implementation of counter-terrorism measures that originate in the UN; in 2010 the Security Council even adopted a resolution in which it referred to the nexus between development and peace and security (Security Council Resolutions 1963).

Meanwhile, the European Union (EU), with the adoption of the Council Conclusions on Security and Development in 2007, and its *Agenda for Change* in the field of development policy in 2011, asserted that the objectives of development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security are intertwined; and called for a stronger focus on these objectives as well as on the rule of law, anti-corruption, civil society and economic growth. The ambition is to link the EU's development, foreign and security policy initiatives so as to create a more coherent approach to peace, state-building, poverty reduction and the underlying causes of conflict. These ambitions are also echoed in other documents and instruments, including a recent Discussion Paper by the EU

³⁵ Security Council Resolution 1267 (1999), followed by resolutions 1333 (2000), 1390 (2002), 1455 (2003), 1526 (2004), 1617 (2005), 1736 (2006), 1822 (2008), etc.

³⁶ See, among others, Hudson, Andrew. 2012. "Not a Great Asset: The UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Regime: Violating Human Rights." In *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, Vol. 17, No. 5, pp. 881-919; Cameron, Iain. 2003. "UN Targeted Sanctions, Legal Safeguards and the European Convention on Human Rights." In *Nordic Journal of International Law*, Vol. 72, No. 2, pp. 159-214; Ginkel, B.T. van. 2008. "Combating international terrorism: New powers for the Security Council?" In I. Boerefijn and J. Goldschmidt (eds). *Changing perceptions on Sovereignty and Human Rights; Essays in Honour of Cees Flinterman*, Intersentia, pp. 497-519.

³⁷ Pursuant to article 24 of the UN Charter.

Counter-Terrorism Coordinator,³⁸ and the Instrument for Stability,³⁹ which deals with capacity building in the fight against terrorism and assistance related to other security challenges.

6. Counter-Terrorism & Development Policy: The Terms of a Rapprochement

Despite these changes in policy and strategies, and the apparent modifications in the landscape of terrorist threats and modus operandi, historic suspicions between the counter-terrorism community and the development community still seem hard to overcome. Whereas the philosophy of development aid continues to emphasise the long-term process of state-building and the role of “local ownership” in this process, counter-terrorism – specifically when it forms part of military-led counter-terrorism operations – can have as a primary goal the submission of the enemy on the battlefield or in covert operations, and has been used to justify support for autocratic regimes aligned with Western security policy. The polarised logic of the two after Iraq and Afghanistan may appear insurmountable, and is still visible in the opposing schools of thought on the priorities of donor policy in post-crisis Yemen or Libya.

A further issue that must be resolved before attempting to achieve new synergies between the development community and the security community on counter-terrorism relates to the former’s requirements of independence and impartiality. These are crucial principles for all development work. They derive their importance from the principle of “do no harm” in interventions, but they also have great practical significance in underwriting the security of people working on development and relief projects in conflict-prone areas. Any perceived affiliation with security forces would jeopardise their basic security.

However, a narrow focus on the obstacles in the way of coordinating the security and development communities in contexts of military counter-insurgency operations overlooks the broader scope of counter-terrorism, and most importantly, the objectives of countering violent extremism. In particular, it neglects entirely the developmental agenda that is part and parcel of reducing the attractions of violent extremism. A preventive and balanced approach that is targeted at communities vulnerable to radicalisation requires much more than short-term, security-oriented interventions. Policies to foster economic development, improve education, nurture inter-religious dialogue, train young political leaders, and facilitate inclusive political dialogue all form part of this broader agenda.⁴⁰ Increased cooperation between the security community and the development community at this stage should thus make sense.

This ICCT Policy Brief has described the deepening links between development, governance and the new terrorist phenomena, which have grown increasingly parasitic on poverty and conflict. Since 2006 (when the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy), counter-terrorist professionals have shown they understand the importance of the ways in which militant groups spread, and the legitimacy they acquire from disadvantaged populations. They are also much more committed to capacity building in local security forces and civil society. At the same time, development professionals have grown increasingly interested in aspects of work that bear on the same issues: they are concerned with understanding and supporting “resilient” states and communities, which are able to manage internal conflicts peacefully,⁴¹ and have also grown increasingly preoccupied with the reform and improvement of security and justice systems as essential parts of the state-building process.⁴² Understanding and managing theories of radicalisation and its reverse, de-radicalisation, would thus seem relevant to the new portfolio of development professionals.

In Mali, for instance, development assistance over the course of a decade proved largely unresponsive to the criminalisation of the state and the corresponding radicalisation of the country’s north – until it was too late. Concepts drawn from counter-terrorism could also prove critical in Libya or Syria, where development assistance

³⁸ Council of the European Union. 2012. *Note from the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator on the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy – Discussion Paper*. Council of the European Union (23 May 2012), <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/12/st09/st09990.en12.pdf>.

³⁹ The Instrument for Stability was launched in 2007 by the European Commission in order to facilitate crisis response projects in the areas of conflict prevention, crisis management and peace building.

⁴⁰ See USAID, op. cit.

⁴¹ On the distinction between fragility and resilience, see Putzel, James and Di John, Jonathan. 2012. *Meeting the Challenges of Crisis States*. LSE: London, esp. chapter 2.

⁴² This is one of the main themes of the highly influential *World Development Report 2011*. See World Bank. 2011. *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*. Washington DC: World Bank.

after the probable fall of the Assad regime will have to establish as a priority the moderation of extremist actors and a reduction in their attractiveness to disenfranchised, post-conflict communities.

In fact, negotiating and shaping development aid packages in environments marked by the pull of extremist politics is likely to constitute one of the main challenges for aid officials in parts of Africa and the Middle East. Development professionals who prefer to focus on historically grounded sources of exclusion and malaise are likely not to contemplate the global dynamics that push criminal and terrorist activity across frontiers into new states and territories, thereby transforming or reshaping old indigenous grievances. It is of course right that the “root causes” of the resulting crises be addressed in the long run, including poverty, inequality or ethnic exclusion. But it is also true that efforts to do so by the donor community will be constrained by a new frame of reference in conflict-affected countries, in which radicalised and criminal groups, cross-border flows, areas of de facto governance, and the use of terrorist acts will become significant barriers to aid effectiveness.⁴³

7. Recommendations for Future Progress

Achieving such a learning process does not necessarily require any sort of fusion, or joint programming between the development and counter-terrorism communities. But it does point to a certain sharing of experience, an exploration of new ideas, and a willingness on both sides to soften some doctrinaire approaches. At the same time, a rapprochement between the two policy communities will continue to require safeguards for each side, and a clear understanding of the possible pitfalls of their re-engagement.

A counter-terrorism approach that focuses on the logic of wartime emergency and coercive, short-term measures will be largely immune to dialogue with the issues that concern the development community. These military operations are ongoing, and will continue, but the local booster projects that accompany them should not be mistaken for development. However, even in such emergency situations, there is room to think that a new school of counter-terrorism, in which measures are taken strictly in accordance with the rule of law, may support an alternative strategy rooted in the concept of human security.

In short, new areas in which militia or terrorist activity is proliferating would seem to require a strategy of counter-terrorism that is even more responsive to development concerns, as well as an approach by development aid that is more aware of and better equipped to act upon the risks of (rapid) radicalisation and cross-border contagion.

A next step in this process would see increased moves towards framing shared concepts and goals. One very useful hook for this would be the notion of countering violent extremism, the implications of which bridge development and economic goals, governance reforms, as well as civil society and community-based initiatives aimed at preventing radicalisation of young people – activities which should fall under the current definition of ODA. The precise programmes implemented by the development or the security community will depend on the given local situation, although it is fair to expect that each takes into account the insights and understanding of the other while maintaining clear respect for each party’s different role. In the Annex, a table displays the variety of policy measures that could be implemented according to the gravity of the conflict. More country specific analyses, involving professionals from the development and security communities, would create an interesting basis for joint action, one that could possibly be undertaken in post-conflict Syria or Mali.

Inevitably, this approach would target resources at areas that are exposed to the risk of terrorism, but it is not unreasonable to think that development professionals will accept this funding bias. First, these areas will tend to be the poorest and most excluded parts of the country, which is certainly the case for the northern parts of Mali and Nigeria. And second, the development community may come to increasingly understand de-radicalisation as a logical extension of its programmes of demobilisation and reintegration, which have long been exposed to criticism of focalising aid resources at groups responsible for war and violence rather than their innocent victims.

However, it is also crucial that this rapprochement is not captured by policy factions or interest groups, or spoilt by the resurgence of suspicions. In this respect, a number of safeguards and provisos are essential:

- Avoid wherever possible a battle for diminishing or stagnant ODA resources. Development professionals must clearly understand the dimensions and importance of countering violent extremism, and its

⁴³ OECD. 2012. *Think global, act global: Confronting global factors that influence conflict and fragility*. Paris: OECD.

contribution to their strategic goals. Pooled stability or conflict budgets should also willingness to invest in the longer term goals of development and community security in response.

- Prevent a merging of roles, particularly for humanitarian relief workers. Development actors engaged in areas prone to violent extremism should not in any way be relied upon for intelligence gathering or other security tasks. Clear divisions of responsibility on the ground are the necessary accompaniment to any synthesis of strategic objectives in donor headquarters or the capitals of recipient countries.
- Likewise, humanitarian relief workers, actors in conflict transformation, peace-builders and other development actors should be protected insofar as they negotiate with representatives of armed non-state groups, or insurgent forces that employ terrorist techniques. Initiatives to blacklist or criminalise such activities, such as the clauses on providing material support for terrorism in the so-called Material Support Act⁴⁴ should be softened or repealed. Donor support for democratic manifestations of formerly violent, grievance-based groups should be encouraged, not hindered.
- Where counter-terrorism actions are undertaken, they should invariably be carried out in accordance with the rule of law and the internationally-accepted rules of warfare. The ultimate goal and responsibility of any security policy, including counter-terrorism, should be the safety, freedom, and dignity of individuals and their communities (see the 10 Human Security Guiding Practices for Countering Violent Extremism, developed by the [Civil Society Network for Human Security](#)).
- The security community and the development community should jointly assess the short-term versus the long-term implications of their policies, particularly when it comes to the effects of supporting undemocratic, repressive and/or predatory regimes. The best opportunities for synergising policies will arise when counterproductive effects in the long-term or the short-term are recognised, and are mitigated in the process of developing and implementing policies.

⁴⁴ Two federal laws and Executive Order (EO) 13224 bar anyone, including charities and foundations, from engaging in transactions with terrorist organizations. This includes humanitarian aid, conflict resolution programmes, and other non-violent activities. Providing material support to designated terrorist organizations is prohibited by the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA), which was enacted in 1996 and later amended by the USA PATRIOT Act in 2001 and 2004. AEDPA authorizes the Secretary of State to designate “foreign terrorist organizations”, and makes it a crime for any person or organization to knowingly provide, attempt, or conspire to provide “material support or resources” to a designated entity, regardless of the character or intent of the support provided.

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Annex

Policy Instruments and their Relevance to Different Levels of Conflict

Squares highlighted in dark-blue denote that a certain policy instrument is available to local governments, donor states and/or NGOs is applicable at that level of conflict. When other policies are not marked in dark-blue, this does not necessarily mean that no such measures could be implemented, but rather that the emphasis should lie elsewhere.

Policy Instruments \ Levels of Conflict	Peace	Social grievance	Radicalisation	Recruitment	Foreign fighters/training camps	Terrorist attacks	Under control of violent extremists	Armed conflict
Counter-insurgency operation								
Targeted operations								
Humanitarian action								
Conflict-mediation								
Political dialogue								
De-radicalisation								
Counter-radicalisation								
Counter-narratives								
Community policing								
Capacity-building (rule of law)								
Capacity-building (education)								
Youth leadership								
Women empowerment								
Economic/social development								
Inter-faith dialogue								
Employment programmes								
Democratic participation								
Law enforcement								