

MULTILATERAL PEACE OPERATIONS AND THE CHALLENGES OF TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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I. Introduction

Multilateral peace operations are increasingly confronting a set of interrelated and mutually reinforcing security challenges that are relatively new to them, that do not respect borders, and that have causes and effects which cut right across the international security, peacebuilding and development agendas.¹ Terrorism and violent extremism provide one of the most prominent examples of these ‘non-traditional’ security challenges that they are struggling to come to grips with. In recent years, United Nations missions have been the frequent target of terrorist attacks in countries such as Mali, while non-UN operations have fought against violent extremist groups in Afghanistan and Somalia. Given the prospect of peace operations in countries such as Libya, Syria and Yemen—all hotbeds of terrorism and violent extremism—this is likely to become a common, if not predominant, feature of mission areas.²

Against this background, multilateral peace operations are under pressure to address terrorism and violent extremism more actively.³ Initial discussions evolved mainly around whether UN peacekeeping operations should engage in military counterterrorism (CT). Although most agree that they should not, it is widely understood that peace operations—whether they are led by the UN, regional organizations or ad hoc coalitions of states—cannot isolate themselves from the risks emanating from complex and asymmetric threat environments.⁴ Indeed, some have already been actively involved in

¹ SIPRI defines multilateral peace operations as operations conducted under the authority of the United Nations, regional organizations or alliances and ad hoc coalitions of states, with the stated intention of: (a) serving as an instrument to facilitate the implementation of peace agreements already in place; (b) supporting a peace process; or (c) assisting conflict prevention or peacebuilding efforts. Van der Lijn, J. and Smit, T., ‘Peace operations and conflict management’, in *SIPRI Yearbook 2017: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2017), p. 165. See also the SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database, <www.sipri.org/databases/pko/>.

² Gowan, R., ‘Can UN peacekeepers fight terrorists?’, Brookings Institution, 30 June 2015; and Karlsrud, J., ‘UN peacekeeping and counter-terrorism’, *Sustainable Security*, 14 Mar. 2017.

³ Boutellis, A. and Fink, N. C., *Waging Peace: UN Peace Operations Confronting Terrorism and Violent Extremism* (International Peace Institute, Oct. 2016), p. 1; and Karlsrud, J., ‘Towards UN counter-terrorism operations?’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 6 (Jan. 2017), p. 1215.

⁴ Millar, A. and Fink, N. C., ‘Blue sky III: Taking UN counterterrorism efforts in the next decade from plans to action’, *Global Center in Cooperative Security* (Sep. 2016), p. 8; Boutellis and Fink

PROJECT SUMMARY

● The New Geopolitics of Peace Operations III: Non-Traditional Security Challenges initiative was launched with support from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, co-sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, and in continued partnership with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES).

This phase of the initiative seeks to enhance understanding about peace operations and non-traditional security challenges such as terrorism and violent extremism, irregular migration, piracy, organized crime and environmental degradation. It aims to identify the various perceptions, positions and interests of the relevant stakeholders, as well as to stimulate open dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding by engaging key stakeholders and mapping the policy space for the potential role of peace operations with respect to non-traditional security challenges.

SIPRI and FES organize five dialogue meetings, each on a different non-traditional security challenge and each preceded by a background paper that sets the baseline for the meeting. The background paper gives an overview of the main developments and discussions regarding peace operations and the specific challenge to be discussed. Based on the outcomes, the initiative concludes with a final report aimed at moving the discussion forward.



military CT, such as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and the African Union (AU) Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The spread of terrorism and violent extremism in parts of Africa and the Middle East has also spurred new military CT initiatives beyond the scope of peace operations, such as the Global Coalition against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram and the Joint Force of the Group of Five Sahel (JF-G5S).

Meanwhile, recognition of the limitations of military responses to terrorism and violent extremism—that they are insufficient at best and counterproductive at worst—has gradually shifted the policy discourse from CT to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE).⁵ This has also reinvigorated the debate on the potential role of peace operations in addressing terrorism and violent extremism, from its initial narrow focus on its consequences to the wider range of activities that could be undertaken to address its underlying drivers. Although some organizations have already begun to experiment with CT and P/CVE in their peace operations, the policy and research communities are still debating the necessity, opportunities and possible implications of further movement in this direction.

Recognition of the limitations of military responses to terrorism and violent extremism has shifted the policy discourse from CT to P/CVE

II. Peace operations and CT and P/CVE

There are no universally accepted definitions of terrorism and violent extremism, and both terms are often used interchangeably.⁶ Official UN documents usually refer to violent extremism as a condition that is or can be conducive to terrorism, which implies that it is seen as a precursor to or enabler of the latter.⁷ Descriptions of violent extremism usually encompass support for ideologically motivated or justified violence without, necessarily, direct participation in it.⁸ For political and pragmatic reasons, the UN has avoided attempts to define terrorism and violent extremism and has instead left this to the discretion of individual member states.⁹

There is similar confusion about the distinction between CT and P/CVE.¹⁰ Although these terms are sometimes also used inconsistently,

(note 3), p. 3; and Karlsrud (note 3), p. 1225.

⁵ Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 4; Karlsrud (note 3), p. 1217; and Millar and Fink (note 4), p. 6.

⁶ European Commission, *Strive for Development: Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism* (Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, 2016), pp. 4–5; Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 5; and Millar and Fink (note 4), p. 4.

⁷ E.g., United Nations, General Assembly, 'Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism', Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/674, 24 Dec. 2015, paras 2, 4.

⁸ E.g. the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has defined violent extremism as 'advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic and political objectives'. USAID, 'The development response to violent extremism and insurgency', Sep. 2011, p. 2; Fink, C. N., 'Countering violent extremism: what are the key challenges for the UN', *IPI Global Observatory*, 3 Nov. 2015.

⁹ United Nations (note 7), para. 5.

¹⁰ This paper uses P/CVE to cover activities that have previously been or are currently associated with both countering (CVE) and preventing violent extremism (PVE). Since the adoption of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (note 7), P/CVE has become a common denominator to describe the range of non-kinetic preventive approaches to addressing terrorism and violent extremism primarily by targeting its drivers. Millar and Fink (note 4), p. 3.



they are normally associated with different approaches.¹¹ CT mostly refers to reactive approaches that aim to ‘contain, suppress or neutralize’ terrorist threats that already exist.¹² The means to achieve this tend to be coercive and fall within the realm of military and law enforcement measures against individuals, organizations and networks that are authorizing, planning, facilitating and/or perpetrating terrorist violence. P/CVE refers to approaches that are more proactive and which aim to prevent violent manifestations of extremist ideologies and enhance societal resilience to it. The means for achieving this are generally non-coercive and primarily target the perceived drivers of violent extremism.¹³

CT and P/CVE activities in peace operations

The possible contributions of peace operations to these objectives cover the entire range of CT and P/CVE activities. The potential role of peace operations in CT is often considered in the areas of kinetic military operations, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), border control, and policing and criminal justice.¹⁴ In terms of their potential role in P/CVE, it is useful to distinguish between activities that are P/CVE-specific and those that are P/CVE-relevant. The former are specifically designed to address drivers that may ‘pull’ individuals towards violent extremism. This could, for example, include efforts in the area of strategic communications to discredit and provide alternatives to radical ideological narratives. The latter pertain to a broader spectrum of activities that address long-term conditions that may ‘push’ individuals and communities towards violent extremism, without being specifically designed for this purpose. This may include efforts in a wide range of areas, such as good governance, socio-economic development and human rights.¹⁵

The possible contributions of peace operations cover the entire range of CT and P/CVE activities

It is possible to organize this spectrum of activities along two dimensions. First, activities can target the consequences or drivers of terrorism and violent extremism. Activities that target consequences (or symptoms) are mainly reactive, as they respond to a threat that has already been identified with the objective of reducing or neutralizing it. Activities that aim to target drivers (or root causes) are proactive, in the sense that they seek to prevent radicalization and support for terrorism and violent extremism by addressing the push and pull factors that might produce or enable such outcomes. Second, activities can target these consequences and drivers directly or indi-

¹¹ Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 5; Bhulai, R., Peters, A. and Nemr, C., ‘From policy to action: Advancing an integrated approach to women and countering violent extremism’, *Global Center on Cooperative Security* (Jan. 2016), pp. 5–6; and Fink (note 8).

¹² Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 5.

¹³ Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 5; Karlsrud (note 3); Millar and Fink (note 4), p. 3; Fink (note 8); and Frazer, O. and Nünlist, C., ‘The concept of countering violent extremism’, *CSS Analyses*, no. 138, (Center for Security Studies: ETH Zurich, Dec. 2015).

¹⁴ Karlsrud (note 3), p. 1218; and Millar and Fink (note 4), p. 3.

¹⁵ Boutellis and Fink (note 3), pp. 6–7. Although there is no conclusive evidence for general drivers of radicalization and violent extremism, the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism mentions the following conditions as recurring drivers that are conducive to these outcomes: lack of socio-economic opportunities; marginalization and discrimination; poor governance and violations of human rights and the rule of law; prolonged and unresolved conflicts; and radicalization in prisons. United Nations (note 7), para 23–31.

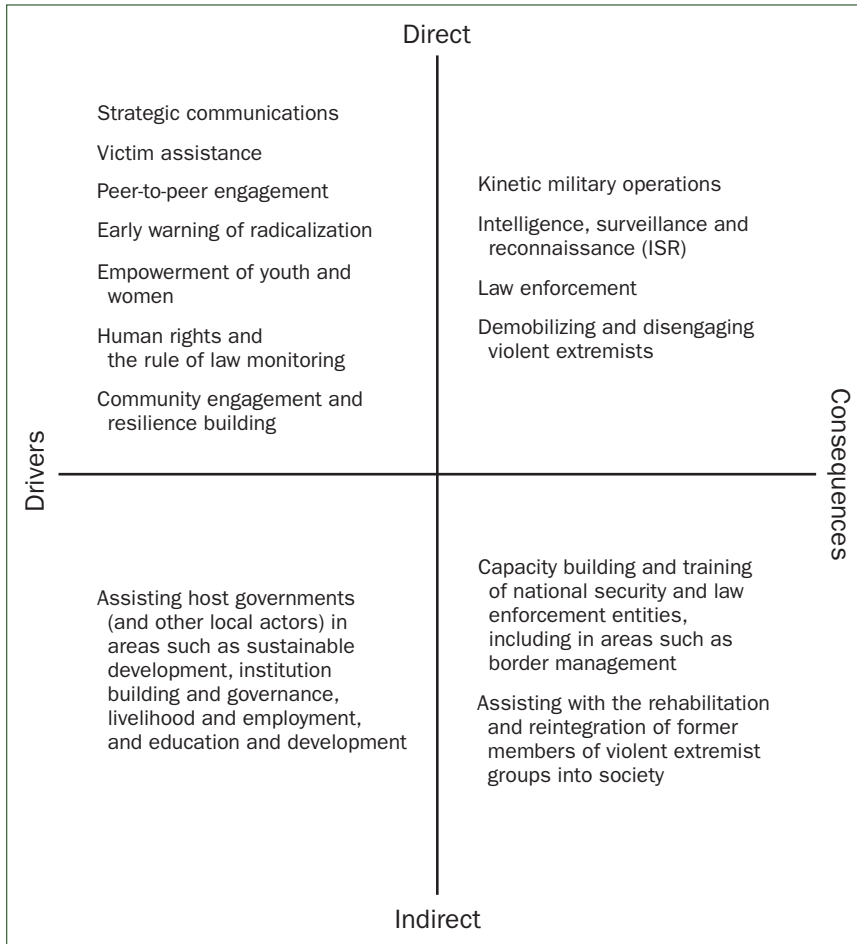


Figure 1. Examples of counterterrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism activities that peace operations could undertake

Notes: The activities included have been selected, among other things, based on examples identified in the existing literature, most notably by Boutellis and Fink, and Karlsrud. Activities are not unique to one category and can overlap.

Sources: Boutellis, A. and Fink, N. C., *Waging Peace: UN Peace Operations Confronting Terrorism and Violent Extremism* (International Peace Institute, Oct. 2016), p. 7; and Karlsrud, J., ‘Towards UN counter-terrorism operations?’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 6 (Jan. 2017), p. 1218. Author’s selection.

rectly. Whereas direct activities are executed by peace operations themselves, indirect activities aim to build or strengthen the capacity of the host government—or local non-state actors at the civil society or community level—to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism, including by addressing its root causes.

Together, these two organizing principles result in four broad categories of activities that peace operations could undertake to address terrorism and violent extremism (see figure 1). This scheme is a simplification and activities may not always fit perfectly into one category or overlap. The advantage of this categorization, however, is that it can facilitate and structure further discussion by focusing on concrete activities while detaching them from labels such as CT and P/CVE, which remain ambiguous and contested.

III. Examples of peace operations that have engaged in CT and P/CVE

A number of multilateral peace operations have already undertaken activities that address the consequences and drivers of terrorism and violent extremism, both directly and indirectly. These efforts often have broader objectives that might delib-

erately or incidentally overlap with CT or P/CVE goals. However, there are also examples of missions that have performed such tasks with the specific intention of addressing terrorism and violent extremism.

Activities addressing the consequences of terrorism and violent extremism

Few peace operations have thus far undertaken activities that directly address the consequences of terrorism and violent extremism, although notable exceptions exist. AMISOM is mandated by the UN Security Council to conduct offensive operations against al-Shabab and other armed groups



in Somalia, which also include affiliates of ISIL.¹⁶ The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led ISAF actively fought the Taliban. Although the mission that succeeded it—the Resolute Support Mission (RSM)—is formally a non-combat mission, NATO forces continue to provide combat support to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), including airstrikes.¹⁷ While the UN continues to insist that UN peacekeeping operations cannot conduct military CT operations, it has been argued that the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) may already have crossed the line into ‘CT mode’.¹⁸ Among other things, it has used advanced military capabilities and assets such as Special Operations Forces and drones to conduct ISR missions on terrorist groups in northern Mali, and has shared actionable intelligence—so-called targeting packages—with the French CT force in the region, Barkhane.¹⁹

There are more examples of peace operations addressing the consequences of terrorism and violent extremism indirectly. RSM continues to build the capacity of the ANSF, which previously received extensive training from ISAF, and which is heavily involved in combat against the Taliban. AMISOM is mentoring and assisting the Somali National Security Forces (SNSF), which are fighting al-Shabab.²⁰ The European Union (EU) is conducting two military capacity building missions in countries where terrorism and violent extremism is a major challenge—the EU Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali and EUTM Somalia. The two civilian EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Missions in Mali and Niger (EUCAP Sahel Mali and Niger) are mandated to strengthen the capacities of these countries’ internal security forces, with a particular focus on combating terrorism and crime. The EU is also considering options in which its three CSDP missions in the Sahel could further support the JF-G5S within a regionalized framework. EUTM Mali has already supported the planning of the Joint Force and provided training to staff and liaison officers from all G5 Sahel member states, focusing on coordination and interoperability.²¹

UN peace operations have also undertaken activities that address the consequences of terrorism and violent extremism indirectly, although capacity building in the field of CT and P/CVE is primarily done by other UN entities. MINUSMA is building the capacity of Malian rule of law and security institutions in areas specifically related to the consequences of terrorism and vio-

While the UN continues to insist that its peacekeeping operations cannot conduct military CT operations, MINUSMA may already have crossed the line

¹⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2372, 30 Aug. 2017, para. 8.

¹⁷ McInnis, K. J. and Feickert, A., *Additional Troops for Afghanistan? Considerations for Congress*, Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report R44853 (CRS: Washington, DC, 19 May 2017), pp. 2–3.

¹⁸ Karlsrud (note 3), p. 1224.

¹⁹ Karlsrud (note 3); de Cherisey, E., ‘Desert watchers: MINUSMA’s intelligence capabilities’, *Jane’s Defence Weekly* vol. 54, no. 23, 7 June 2017; United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Activities of the UN system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy’, Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/826, 12 Apr. 2016, p. 43.

²⁰ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2372 (note 16), para. 8 (f).

²¹ European External Action Service, ‘The European Union and the Sahel’, Fact sheet, 2 June 2017; and European External Action Service, ‘Options paper for CSDP support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force’, EEAS (2017) 933, 27 July 2017. The member states of the G5 Sahel are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. At the time of writing, the EU had not yet launched the EU Advisory Mission in Support of Security Sector Reform in Iraq (EUAM Iraq), which is therefore excluded from the overview.

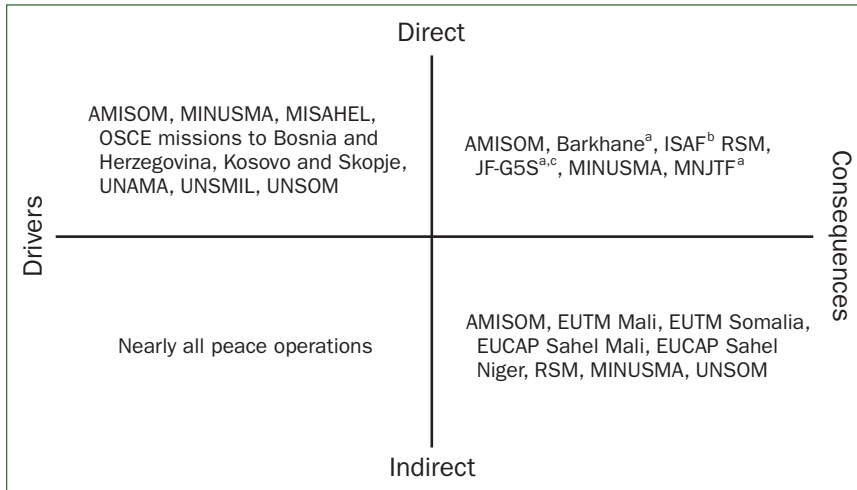


Figure 2. Examples of peace operations that have undertaken counter-terrorism and/or preventing and countering violent extremism activities

AMISOM = AU Mission in Somalia; EUCAP Sahel Mali = EU CSDP Mission in Mali; EUCAP Sahel Niger = EU CSDP Mission in Niger; EUTM Mali = EU Training Mission to Mali; EUTM Somalia = EU Training Mission in Somalia; ISAF = International Security Assistance Force; JF-G5S = Joint Force of the Group of Five Sahel; MINUSMA = UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; MISAHEL = AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel; MNJTF = Multinational Joint Task Force; OSCE = Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; UNAMA = UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; UNSMIL = UN Support Mission in Libya; UNSOM = UN Support Mission in Somalia; RSM = Resolute Support Mission.

^a Not a multilateral peace operation according to the definition applied by SIPRI.

^b ISAF terminated on 31 Dec. 2014.

^c The JF-G5S had yet to achieve full operational capability as of 31 Oct. 2017.

lent extremism.²² Several UN peace operations have also provided support to host governments with developing or revising national legislation, strategies and action plans on CT.²³ The UN Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has supported the Somali Government with the implementation of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and rehabilitation programmes for former al-Shabab combatants, which is another field in which future contributions by UN peace operations have been envisaged.²⁴

Activities addressing the drivers of terrorism and violent extremism

Most peace operations undertake activities which directly address the structural conditions in host countries that can be drivers of terrorism and violent extremism. In fact, given that ‘prolonged and unresolved conflict’ has been identified as one of these drivers, it is possible to argue that the core objective of all peace operations is P/CVE-relevant. Various peace

operations monitor and report on human rights violations in host countries, including violations committed or sanctioned by governments and national security services.²⁵ This type of activity—which is included in the mandates of missions such as MINUSMA, UNSOM and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)—can also be seen as directly addressing P/CVE-relevant objectives, as oppressive and discriminatory government policies or abuse by security and correctional services can be important drivers (or ‘tipping points’) pushing individuals towards embracing violent extremist beliefs.²⁶

²² E.g. in the areas of forensic analysis and countering improvised explosive devices. Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 17.

²³ E.g. UNAMA, the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and MINUSMA. United Nations (note 19), p. 22.

²⁴ United Nations (note 19), p. 43; United Nations, Security Council, ‘Report of the Secretary-General in Somalia’, S/2017/408, 9 May 2017, paras 34–35; UNSOM, ‘Activities: Rule of law & security’, <<https://unsom.unmissions.org/rule-law-security>>; Cockayne, J. and O’Neil, S. (eds), *UN DDR in an Era of Violent Extremism: Is it Fit for Purpose?* (United Nations University: Tokyo, 2015); and Hickendorff, A. and Van der Lijn, J., ‘Renewal of MINUSMA: A missed opportunity for new generation of DDR’, SIPRI Commentary, 30 June 2017.

²⁵ United Nations, Security Council, ‘Field missions mandate table (as of 1 July 2017)’, Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council, <<http://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/data.shtml>>.

²⁶ United Nations Development Programme, *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment* (UNDP: New York, 2017), p. 73.



There are also examples of peace operations that engage directly with civil society actors in activities that are P/CVE-specific. AMISOM, UNSOM, the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) and a number of missions of the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the Western Balkans have engaged religious leaders, local communities, and women's and youth groups in programmes or activities to develop and disseminate counter-narratives, encourage defection and disengagement from terrorist and violent extremist groups and promote inter-faith dialogue and religious tolerance.²⁷

Many peace operations undertake activities that address drivers of terrorism and violent extremism indirectly, primarily in areas that are P/CVE-relevant (see figure 2). Most civilian and multidimensional missions support host governments to implement reforms and improve conditions in areas that are relevant in this regard, such as development, democracy, good governance, anti-corruption, the rule of law and human rights. Assistance with the development of national legislation on terrorism and violent extremism is relevant for dealing with not only its consequences, but also its drivers if it seeks to ensure that these legal and policy frameworks are in accordance with human rights. This applies equally to many forms of capacity building, including military training. There are also examples of operations, such as UNSOM, that have assisted governments with the development and operationalization of national strategies on preventing violent extremism.²⁸

Most peace operations undertake activities which directly address the structural conditions in host countries that can be drivers of terrorism and violent extremism

IV. Peace operations, CT and P/CVE: potential implications

Debates on whether peace operations can or should address terrorism and violent extremism more actively remain divided between sceptics who are wary of the risks and challenges, and advocates who see this as an opportunity—or, indeed, a necessity—to preserve peace operations' relevance.²⁹ Recent discussions on the potential opportunities and challenges have focused primarily on UN peace operations, for which activities related to terrorism and violent extremism are relatively new and constitute a significant departure from their traditional roles and responsibilities.³⁰ Then again, there are ample assessments of the successes and, in particular, the failures of international responses to terrorism and violent extremism by other actors. Indeed, whereas more optimistic appraisals of the potential role of peace operations in addressing terrorism and violent extremism are

²⁷ United Nations, Security Council, 'Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia', S/2017/751, 5 Sep. 2017; and UNSOM, 'Strategic communications & public affairs', n. d., <<https://unsom.unmissions.org/strategic-communications-public-affairs>>; African Union, Peace and Security Council, 'The African Union Strategy for the Sahel Region', PSC/PR/3(CDXLIX), 11 Aug. 2014, p. 11; Sharif, T. A. and Richards, J., 'Towards a continental strategy for countering violent extremism in Africa', *Global Peace Operations Review*, 19 Dec. 2016; and OSCE, What we do, 'Countering terrorism', n. d., <<http://www.osce.org/countering-terrorism>>. Some of these activities can also be indirect if the role of the peace operations is primarily to assist or facilitate local actors in their execution.

²⁸ United Nations (note 27), para. 4.

²⁹ E.g., Avezov, X., Van der Lijn, J. and Smit, T., *African Directions: Towards an Equitable Partnership in Peace Operations* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Feb. 2017), p. 11.

³⁰ Boutellis and Fink (note 3); Karlsrud (note 3); Novosseloff, A. 'Can we make UN peacekeeping great again?', May 2017.



often based on best practices and lessons learned from past experiences, others are concerned that peace operations would replicate the mistakes of the past.³¹

Opportunities for the involvement of peace operations in CT and P/CVE

Despite the recognition that military CT alone is insufficient, most acknowledge that robust military force may be necessary in mission areas where there is a sustained terrorist threat. This is also acknowledged by the UN and was recently reiterated by the UN Secretary-General.³² While the UN remains of the opinion that its peacekeeping operations are neither suitable for nor capable of military CT operations, it does want regional organizations or ad hoc coalitions of states to take on this responsibility on behalf of the UN Security Council.³³ Indeed, in Africa, the emergence of such a division of labour is already evident.³⁴ This is one of the reasons why the UN is deepening its strategic partnership with the AU, which deploys AMISOM and authorized and supports the MNJTF and the JF-G5S. At the same time, the UN Security Council remains divided on the extent to which the UN should assist these initiatives and has been unable to agree to support the MNJTF and JF-G5S politically and financially by means of a Security Council authorization and funding drawn from UN assessed contributions.³⁵

P/CVE has been identified as a domain to which peace operations can contribute, given their long experience in related areas

The above overview of the activities that peace operations can undertake illustrates that there are many ways in which they can address terrorism and violent extremism beyond military CT operations. P/CVE has been identified as a domain to which peace operations can contribute, given their long experience in related areas. This is exemplified by the 2015 UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which signalled an intention to integrate P/CVE into relevant activities of UN peace operations, including in areas such as DDR and Security Sector Reform (SSR).³⁶ Impartial human rights monitoring has also been mentioned as an area in which peace operations—and UN peace operations in particular—could help reduce the appeal of terrorist and violent extremist groups and the narratives that they project by ensuring that communities are protected regardless of their affiliation and that individual and collective grievances are addressed appropriately.³⁷

³¹ United Nations (note 7).

³² United Nations, Security Council, 8051st meeting, S/PV.8051, 20 Sep. 2017, p. 3.

³³ This was also supported by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. United Nations, General Assembly/Security Council, 'Report of the High-level Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people', A/70/95 and S/2015/446, 17 June 2015, para. 119; and United Nations, Security Council (note 32), p. 3.

³⁴ De Coning, C., 'Peace enforcement in Africa: Doctrinal distinctions between the African Union and United Nations', *Contemporary Security Policy* (Feb. 2017), pp. 2, 13.

³⁵ Lebovic, A., 'Serious questions remain over G5 Sahel military force', European Council on Foreign Relations, Commentary, 16 June 2017.

³⁶ United Nations (note 7), para 58 (b).

³⁷ International Peace Institute, 'UN peace operations in violent and asymmetric threat environments', Meeting note, UN Plaza, New York (Mar. 2016).



Potential challenges of involvement in CT and P/CVE

Nonetheless, there are concerns that further movement towards increased engagement by multilateral peace operations in CT and P/CVE could have unintended consequences that might affect their regular activities, as well as broader efforts to address terrorism and violent extremism more generally. A number of potential challenges and risks are mentioned frequently in this regard.

First, peace operations might become further militarized. Critics have argued that the discursive move from CT to P/CVE has had minimal effect on the transformation of policies, if not disguised a continued over-reliance on coercive and kinetic tactics.³⁸ They argue that military responses are ineffective at reducing terrorism and violent extremism and probably counterproductive if respect and accountability for human rights are subordinated to CT goals. Even assuming that reactive CT operations can be successful in the short term, they are insufficient in the long run if they are not coupled with a comprehensive strategy that also targets the drivers of terrorism and violent extremism. Yet further militarization of peace operations could be at the expense of their proactive and preventive activities. Militarized responses can also reinforce drivers of terrorism and violent extremism when they cause excessive collateral damage or lead to reprisal attacks against civilians.³⁹

Further militarization of peace operations could be at the expense of their proactive and preventive activities

Second, peace operations would risk compromising their impartiality. By default, CT and P/CVE involve the explicit or implicit designation of an enemy and can reinforce local perceptions that missions are aligned with host governments.⁴⁰ Peace operations that are associated with a high risk of casualties (see below) also tend to be composed primarily of troops from countries that are willing to accept those risks because they have interests at stake. This often includes neighbouring countries or other powers that locally are not perceived to be impartial.⁴¹ More so than for other organizations, remaining impartial is particularly important for the UN: it is a core principle of its peacekeeping operations and a prerequisite for its ability to talk with everyone. Although the possibility of negotiating with terrorist groups has been questioned, the idea that the UN must preserve this option is still widely supported.⁴² Any perception of partiality would also complicate cooperation between peace operations and humanitarian actors, which might then want to avoid being associated with these missions, as their ability to access and work in conflict zones often depends on their strict neutrality vis-à-vis combatants from all sides.⁴³

³⁸ Attree, L., 'Shouldn't you be countering violent extremism?', *Saferworld*, 14 Mar. 2017.

³⁹ Saferworld, 'Overview: Lessons on counter-terror and countering violent extremism', Saferworld, 7 July 2017; Karlsrud (note 2); Karlsrud (note 3); Hunt, C. T., 'All necessary means to what ends? The unintended consequences of the "robust turn" in UN peace operations', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 24, no. 1 (Aug. 2016), p. 115.

⁴⁰ Hunt (note 39), pp. 114–18.

⁴¹ Karlsrud (note 2); Karlsrud (note 3), p. 1225.

⁴² Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 28; and Novosseloff (note 30).

⁴³ Guidotti, A., 'Challenges for human rights sections of UN peace operations', *Center on International Cooperation*, 13 Dec. 2016.



Peace operations that actively address terrorism and violent extremism may increasingly become targets themselves

Third, peace operations that actively address terrorism and violent extremism and are not perceived as impartial may increasingly become targets themselves, which would raise further concerns about safety and security.⁴⁴ Threats to the safety and security of peace operations and their personnel are often distributed unevenly within and between missions, as capabilities for self-protection vary. For example, while MINUSMA has military units at its disposal that are experienced and well-equipped to deal with asymmetric threats, terrorist groups in Mali have primarily targeted UN troops that are less capable in this respect.⁴⁵ Civilian components and missions are obviously even more vulnerable. Deteriorating safety and security conditions could lead to a ‘bunkerization’ of peace operations, further restricting their ability to interact with local populations.⁴⁶ The subsequent need for enhanced security measures would also increase the financial burden on peace operations, many of which are already under-resourced.⁴⁷ Finally, troop and police contributors that are more risk-averse might withdraw from peace operations or decide not to participate where they believe the risk of casualties is too high.⁴⁸

Fourth, there are concerns that an increased focus on terrorism and violent extremism would be at the expense of peace operations’ regular activities and places where terrorism and violent extremism is less salient but peace operations are equally needed. The political demand for their involvement in CT and P/CVE, and the increasing availability of budgets to fund this, could incentivize missions to refocus or re-label existing activities in these terms in order to access funding opportunities or satisfy donors.⁴⁹ This tendency could contribute to the securitization, politicization and marginalization of activities that might be P/CVE-relevant, but whose original objectives were much broader. Attaching P/CVE labels to such activities could also expose those who implement them to risks and obstruct cooperation with civil society by stigmatizing communities that already feel marginalized.⁵⁰ Explicit references to terrorism and violent extremism in mandates could also raise the expectations of host governments and populations, which would be hard to manage, especially when it comes to addressing its acute symptoms. The failure to meet such expectations—fair or not—could subsequently harm the credibility of peace operations and the confidence entrusted in them, as may already have been the case with past operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 13.

⁴⁵ Cold-Ravnkilde, S., Albrecht, P. and Haugegaard, R., ‘Friction and inequality among peacekeepers in Mali’, *RUSI Journal*, vol. 162, no. 2 (June 2017), pp. 34–42.

⁴⁶ Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 13; Karlsrud (note 3), p. 1222.

⁴⁷ International Peace Institute (note 37), p. 2; McCormick, T. and Lynch, C., ‘To save peacekeeping from Trump’s axe, will the UN embrace fighting terrorism?’, *Foreign Policy*, 29 Mar. 2017.

⁴⁸ E.g. the Philippines withdrew its contingent from the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights in 2014, following a series of security incidents involving violent extremist groups. Van der Lijn, J. and Smit, T., ‘Global and regional trends in peace operations’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2015*, p. 170–71.

⁴⁹ Bhulai, Peters and Nemr (note 11), p. 6.

⁵⁰ Fink (note 8).

⁵¹ Karlsrud (note 2).



V. Cooperation and coordination

Effective cooperation and coordination is a major challenge in all multi-stakeholder efforts in the field of peace and security. The need to improve cooperation and coordination within organizations and missions, and with other relevant actors including other peace operations, receives recurring attention in mandates, policy documents and strategies. Since peace operations are relative newcomers to the fields of CT and P/CVE, it is important to consider the opportunities and challenges for effective cooperation and coordination presented by their actual and potential activities in these areas.

Cooperation and coordination between and within peace operations

Modern mission environments often host multiple peace operations, both in parallel and in sequence. In theatres with a sustained insurgent or terrorist threat, peace operations have in addition operated alongside regional or unilateral counterinsurgency or CT forces.⁵² An even wider range of actors is involved in capacity building of national institutions and security forces. Missions that are deployed in parallel usually cooperate in various ways and have both formal and informal mechanisms in place to coordinate their activities.⁵³ Nonetheless, recent experiences have demonstrated that obstacles remain to effective divisions of labour among various actors.

The training and capacity building of national security services is mentioned regularly as an area where efforts are either duplicated or not sufficiently complementary. The EU Police Mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan initially experienced difficulties in coordinating its activities even with individual EU member states that were assisting the Afghan Government bilaterally on police reform.⁵⁴ EUPOL's mandate to build Afghan capacity in civilian policing at times also seemed at odds with NATO- and US-led efforts to enhance the ability of the ANSF—including the Afghan National Police—to defeat the Taliban.⁵⁵ In Somalia, training of the SNSF has been particularly fragmented among various multilateral and bilateral actors.⁵⁶ The need to improve coordination of these efforts was explicitly acknowledged in the final communiqué of the 2017 Conference on the Future of Somalia.⁵⁷

Since peace operations are relative newcomers to the fields of CT and P/CVE, it is important to consider effective cooperation and coordination

⁵² This includes ongoing US CT operations in Afghanistan—Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS)—and Somalia, and France's regional CT operation, Barkhane in the Sahel.

⁵³ Dijkstra, H. et al., 'Partners in conflict prevention and peacebuilding: How the EU, UN and OSCE exchange civilian capabilities in Kosovo, Mali and Armenia', *EU-CIVCAP Report*, 4 Sep. 2017, pp. 25–28.

⁵⁴ European Court of Auditors, 'The EU Police Mission in Afghanistan: Mixed results', *Special Report*, no. 7 (8 July 2015), p. 18.

⁵⁵ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defence and Security Sector: Lessons from the US Experience in Afghanistan* (Arlington, VA: SIGAR, Sep. 2017), pp. 166–67.

⁵⁶ Besides AMISOM and EUTM Mali, various countries—Egypt, Ethiopia, Italy, Kenya, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, Turkey and Sudan—have been involved in training and mentoring the SNSF. Wondemagegnehu, D. Y. and Kebede, D. G., 'AMISOM: Charting a new course for African Union peace missions', *African Security Review*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Apr. 2017), pp. 209–11; and Avezov, van der Lijn and Smit (note 29), p. 40.

⁵⁷ United Kingdom Government, 'London Somalia Conference 11 May 2017: Communiqué', 11 May 2017, para. 8.



Even among peace operations that cooperate closely, the exchange of information can be restricted, especially in the military and intelligence domains

Another area where cooperation and coordination could be improved is information sharing. Even among peace operations that cooperate closely, the exchange of information can be restricted, especially in the military and intelligence domains. Research on MINUSMA suggests that Operation Barkhane has been reluctant to share more information with the UN mission than necessary.⁵⁸ Even within MINUSMA intelligence has not been shared freely between its producers—which are primarily from Western countries—and its intended recipients at headquarters or in the field.⁵⁹ The issuance of the first UN policy on peacekeeping intelligence in 2017, and the establishment of a secure network within MINUSMA's force headquarters, may help resolve some of the concerns that have inhibited intelligence sharing with and within the mission.⁶⁰

Cooperation on and coordination of CT and P/CVE activities are also important within peace operations. This is particularly the case for multidimensional peacekeeping operations that have broad mandates and significant military, police and civilian components. Their military and police components are often made up of units from many different countries, with different doctrines, cultures, capabilities and levels of interoperability. While this can inhibit effective cooperation and coordination among them, there are relevant areas in which this diversity could be better utilized. For example, there are opportunities to improve the—thus far largely non-existent—cooperation between European ISR units in MINUSMA that gather intelligence and West African contingents that have a much better understanding of local customs and languages.⁶¹

Cooperation and coordination between military and civilian mission components on CT and P/CVE are arguably even more important. The UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism elevated the fourth pillar of the UN Global CT Strategy—'ensuring respect for human rights for all and the rule of law while countering terrorism'—to the forefront of the UN's P/CVE efforts.⁶² Nonetheless, in multidimensional operations with more robust mandates, relations between military components and civilian human rights sections can become particularly challenging. Some argue that military units are likely to be uncomfortable with being monitored by human rights observers from their own mission while they conduct offensive operations, which could lead to a mutual reluctance to cooperate and share information.⁶³ Cooperation with or reliance on host governments in combating terrorism and violent extremism may also restrict the ability of civilian components in

⁵⁸ Operation Barkhane is not a peace operation according to SIPRI's definition, but it is included here as it cooperates with other peace operations in Mali and the UN Security Council has authorized it to intervene in support of MINUSMA when required. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2364, 29 June 2017, para 37.

⁵⁹ Albrecht, P., Cold-Ravnkilde, S. M. and Haugegaard, R., *African Peacekeepers in Mali* (Danish Institute of International Studies: Copenhagen, 2017), pp. 22, 57–64.

⁶⁰ Albrecht, Cold-Ravnkilde and Haugegaard (note 59), p. 59; United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support, 'DPKO-DFS Policy on Peacekeeping Intelligence', 2017.07, 2 May 2017.

⁶¹ Albrecht, Cold-Ravnkilde and Haugegaard (note 59), pp. 51, 62–63, 74.

⁶² United Nations (note 7).

⁶³ Guidotti (note 43).



peace operations to report on human rights violations by national security forces in the context of CT operations.⁶⁴

Cooperation and coordination between peace operations and other actors

As multilateral peace operations assume a larger role in addressing terrorism and violent extremism, they join a multitude of other actors at the international, regional, national and local levels that are already undertaking CT and P/CVE activities. Given the varied and complex nature of the challenge, responsibilities in the areas of preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism are often scattered—and to varying extents duplicated—across multiple different entities in the multilateral organizations and governments that conduct and host peace operations. As CT and P/CVE are not limited to the security domain, this also includes development actors and non-governmental organizations. CT and P/CVE policies moreover increasingly stress the need to engage with civil society, notably local communities, religious leaders, women and youth. Peace operations therefore have to coordinate any potential CT and P/CVE activities with all these different stakeholders in order to ensure their coherence and effectiveness.

The UN has taken responsibility for promoting coordination and coherence in the implementation of the 2006 UN Global CT Strategy and is well placed to support multi-stakeholder approaches to P/CVE.⁶⁵ However, the primary responsibility for implementing this strategy lies with UN member states—and coordinating the relevant efforts of various UN entities has been a challenge in itself. To improve the situation, the UN General Assembly recently approved placing the UN CT Implementation Task Force (CTITF)—which is tasked with coordinating the CT and P/CVE efforts of its 38 member entities, including the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Political Affairs (DPA)—within a newly established UN CT Office under the leadership of a newly appointed Under-Secretary-General.⁶⁶ There may be particular opportunities for cooperation and coordination between UN peace operations and, for example, the UN Development Programme (UNDP)—which has been working on P/CVE from a human rights-based development perspective since 2014—given that they are active in many of the same places and the overlap between the UN Plan of Action on PVE and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (goal 16).⁶⁷

Another important requirement for effective contributions to CT and P/CVE by peace operations is constructive engagement and cooperation with both host governments and civil society actors. Host governments are necessary partners of peace operations, the deployment of which in all but a

In addressing terrorism and violent extremism, peace operations join a multitude of other actors at the international, regional, national and local levels

⁶⁴ Hunt (note 39), pp. 120–21.

⁶⁵ United Nations (note 20), para. 2; Boutellis and Fink (note 3), p. 2.

⁶⁶ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/291, A/RES/71/291, 15 June 2017, para. 1.

⁶⁷ United Nations Development Programme, *Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity: A Development Response to Addressing Radicalization and Violent Extremism* (UNDP: New York, 2016); and Zhou, J., Sullivan, K. A. and Milante, G., 'Towards pathways for peacebuilding and development to reduce violent extremism', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, vol. 12, no. 2 (Aug. 2017).



few cases depends on their consent. As sovereign actors, host governments also bear primary responsibility for implementation of the UN Global CT Strategy within their country, and are instrumental in all indirect efforts by peace operations to address the drivers and consequences of terrorism and violent extremism. At the same time, much of the criticism of international CT and P/CVE policies highlights the reliance on partnerships with host governments and state-centric solutions as key factors that have reinforced rather than mitigated drivers of conflict and terrorism and violent extremism. Critics argue that the international community has too often subordinated good governance, democracy, human rights and the empowerment of civil society to short-term CT objectives to the detriment of progress in all these areas.⁶⁸

When peace operations engage in CT and P/CVE it is important they balance their relationships with host governments and civil society actors to ensure legitimate ownership by both

When peace operations engage in CT and P/CVE it is important that they balance their relationships with host governments and civil society actors to ensure legitimate ownership by both. Collectively, peace operations and the organizations that conduct them could use their leverage over host governments to prevent or disincentivize them from using terrorism and violent extremism to restrict the political space for civil society, delegitimize political actors and their constituencies, and justify oppressive, indiscriminate and disproportionate policies and tactics. This would be in line with the UN Global CT Strategy and the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, both of which emphasize that efforts can only be effective if they are embedded in approaches that take account of respect for human rights.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, peace operations should cooperate with civil society actors—in particular women and youth—in a way that acknowledges their agency and elevates their voices, without instrumentalizing them for narrow CT and P/CVE objectives.⁷⁰

VI. Conclusions

Multilateral peace operations find themselves under increasing pressure to adapt to the complex and varied threat landscape in which they operate, which increasingly includes challenges related to terrorism and violent extremism. These pressures originate from the field, where operations are confronted with the consequences of terrorism and violent extremism, as well as from their political headquarters, where policymakers are exploring whether their operations can contribute to CT and P/CVE objectives. Many peace operations are already addressing terrorism and violent extremism indirectly, and there are examples of missions that have undertaken activities that directly target its drivers and consequences. These developments have led to a nascent but growing body of research on the challenges and opportunities that moves in this direction present, particularly with regard to UN peacekeeping operations.

It is widely recognized that multilateral peace operations that operate in asymmetric threat environments must adapt to the conditions they confront in the field and need to be provided with the necessary means to protect

⁶⁸ Saferworld (note 39).

⁶⁹ United Nations (note 7).

⁷⁰ Bhulai, Peters and Nemr (note 11); Millar and Fink (note 4).



themselves and implement their mandates. In many contemporary mission environments, the challenges posed by terrorism and violent extremism are an important factor that cannot be ignored. Similarly, the increasing recognition that addressing the consequences of terrorism and violent extremism is insufficient, and that long-term efforts to address its drivers require more attention, has been well received. More so than in CT, there appears to be a consensus that there is a role for peace operations to play in P/CVE. Nonetheless, the discussions on these issues concentrate primarily on challenges rather than opportunities. Further in-depth exploration and exchange of ideas and experiences are therefore necessary to ensure that peace operations are better prepared to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

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SIPRI BACKGROUND PAPER

MULTILATERAL PEACE OPERATIONS AND THE CHALLENGES OF TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

TIMO SMIT

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