



CATALYSTS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN COUNTERTERRORISM

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Metaphorically, international cooperation in counterterrorism has become the spearhead in such unremitting efforts, simply because terrorism *per se* is a global cross-border problem. The key importance of counterterrorism cooperation lies in the set of international and regional treaties and agreements. Equally important, the establishment of a number of counterterrorism organizations and centers at all levels, such as the United Nations Center for Counter-Terrorism (UNCCT), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC), has also come into play.

OBJECTIVES OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Global counterterrorism cooperation aims to coordinate the efforts of security institutions in the local, regional and international arenas, in such a manner as to curb and prevent terrorist crimes and fill any gaps of security information. With this in mind, the dimensions of terrorist crimes along with the plans set to perpetrate such acts can be well revealed and exposed. This , furthermore, includes drawing on the international security experiences and best practices in the concerned institutions.

It stands to reason that international cooperation contributes generously to setting the tone for conducting research studies of a common nature between specialized institutions and subject-matter research centers, making up a bedrock to develop action and produce better and seminal results at various levels, while also promoting the security arrangements of the internal arena to maintain security and protection of borders and ports. By the same token, international cooperation also enhances the capacity of local security in the international arena in tracking down the sources of criminal action and financing methods thereof, even before it sneaks across

borders. Similarly, international cooperation contributes to achieving optimal rapprochement and integration between the concerned security agencies, exchanging liaison officers and subject-matter experts and strengthening avenues of cooperation in the areas of technical training.

AVENUES OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Global counterterrorism cooperation requires a set of methods to better enhance performance, including:

1. Adopting a standard definition of terrorism, in an acceptable form that is satisfactory to all member states.
2. Establishing an international counterterrorism information center to develop methods of exchanging information, learn about the characteristics and manifestations of terrorist crime, collect complete data on those affiliated with terrorist groups or even likely suspects, as well as the necessary data on the structure of terrorist groups and their political beliefs, methods of terrorist recruitment, training areas, sources of funding and types of ammunition used. Such a center should also be concerned with analyzing information, forecasting the objectives of operations, enhancing cooperation between data-specialized agencies in member states and encouraging information exchange, which will increase the ability to infiltrate terrorist organizations, in accordance with Resolution No. (1373) in 2001 issued by the Security Council and the Riyadh Declaration issued by the International Counter-Terrorism Conference in 2005.
3. Establishing a security information bank to monitor all data related to dangerous terrorist organizations of an international character, support confidence to retrieve and cull information and quickly learn about everything related to terrorist activities.
4. Increasing coordination among relevant security agencies in member states, increasing the number of liaison officers and facilitating their action methods.
5. Improving the skills of field counterterrorism staff scientifically, professionally and technically.

CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Although the international efforts made to counter terrorism and dry up its sources of financing are very remarkably large, there are a number of challenges encountered while put into action, including:

1. Terrorist threats have different and interchangeable manifestations, as terrorist threats become more complex through the rapid movement between the terrorist regions, lone wolves, multiple methods used in operations, different means of communication and techniques of encryption, which impede experts while monitoring communication among terrorist groups.
2. Mobility, as members of terrorist organizations and extremist groups have the opportunity to move easily and surreptitiously, especially as they operate within small cells, and they have many sympathizers in certain areas.
3. Ease of funneling weapons and explosives, using the means of scientific and technical advancement; terrorists have experts who train their members to manufacture and detonate explosive devices, and publish their clips on the internet.
4. The trained, qualified leaders and technical experts promote the ideologies of the organization and recruit new members; they have competent experts who use social networking sites in scientific and psychological manners, marketing their crimes and baseless goals.
5. Confidentiality in information and process security; Correspondence and means of communication between terrorists are surrounded with complete secrecy, which includes the security of their information and operational plans, and they choose for themselves code names that conceal their true personalities.
6. Confidentiality of information security; correspondence and means of communication among terrorists are shrouded in secrecy, including information security and action plans; they choose code names for themselves that conceal their true personalities.
7. Poor information exchange and analysis among some counterterrorism agencies along with combating terrorist financing.

8. Different methods of exercising freedoms and security, and the existing relative procedures.
9. Financing terrorism is the main artery for the sustainability and continuation of terrorist groups. Despite the many international efforts and standards to combat the financing of terrorism, there are still gaps in commitment with such measures and implementation thereof. This is glaringly telling in the increasing growing amount of money laundered across the world (about 3 to 6 trillion dollars), especially since terrorist groups have heavily relied on oil, taxes, drug trafficking, ransom and the like.
10. The lack of a comprehensive international definition of terrorism; this impedes many joint cooperation agreements due to the inconsistency of some national laws with counterterrorism regional and international conventions, in addition to the differences between states in terms of commitment to national security and national sovereignty, complicity in extraditing terrorists, and the poor application of the principle of mutual legal assistance or reciprocity.
11. The limited counterterrorism and counter-extremism national strategies and plans, as a result of insufficient funding to implement national counterterrorism programs and plans, little interest in monitoring and assessing programs of some strategies, and the lack of competencies and experiences in preparing strategies and plans.

In conclusion, it seems clear that many countries lack executive counterterrorism national strategies; the modernization of such strategies, if any, is still substandard according to national, regional and international developments. These are among the most notorious challenges facing international counterterrorism cooperation programs. It is necessary to develop strategies based on comprehensive research studies in order to establish a solid bedrock of analysis, diagnose and treatment of terrorism-related issues.