THE FIGHT AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE
UN, AND HOW HAS IT CHANGED AFTER 9/11?

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The September 11, 2011 (9/11) terror attacks in New York marked a watershed in the global counterterrorism efforts. Before 9/11, neither a comprehensive framework nor a unifying approach existed through which the majority of the world's nations could corporate to fight terrorism of a scale similar to the 9/11 attacks. Even so, there existed concerns at the UN level in the years preceding 9/11 on how to deal with global terrorism.

However, the lack of binding and all-encompassing state-level commitments watered down the counterterrorism effort. For instance, before 9/11, states did not have a treaty in place to outline how they would deal with terrorist acts of entities that shielded themselves in foreign safe havens. Then again, UN members did not have the mandatory legal backing to mitigate international terrorism. The counterterrorism measures the UN members agreed upon prior to 9/11 were merely multiple, contentious treaties that mirrored disjointed nationalistic approaches to deal with terrorism (von Hippel, 2004).

The discrepancies in global counterterrorism were evident immediately after 9/11. As one of the major unifying global organization—with a traditional mandate of maintaining peace—the UN was the first choice to provide a platform to create a global counterterrorism approach. Accordingly, after 9/11, with the leadership of the UN, the Security Council (SC) agitated for the formation of an integrated system to fight terrorism.

The role of the UN, therefore, became deeply entrenched in the global fight against terrorism after 9/11. The organization's function became a critical component of the prevailing anti-terrorism sentiment, and furthermore, indicated that the UN was still at the forefront in combating terrorism and promoting international security (Oudraat, 2004b).

Aims

This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the UN role in global counterterrorism measures. It aims to evaluate the effectiveness of UN's participation and identify the thematic aspects of the challenges that the organization faces in its role after the events of September 11.

Research Questions

RQ-1.   What is the role of the UN in the fight against international terrorism?

RQ-2.   How has the role of the UN in the global counterterrorism effort changed after 9/11?

Approach

The study applies a non-empirical and mixed method of research. It primarily bases it arguments on sources that are categorisable by origin and content, namely:

- UN documents and materials;

- Documents and materials of international intergovernmental regional organizations, for instance, NATO, EU, OSCE and Council of Europe;

- Legislation to combat terrorism; and

- Monographs and articles of UN officials addressing international terrorism, for example, the reports of the former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

Background

Although terrorism has historically managed to attract attention—both as a byproduct and as a fulfillment of its main objective (that is, instilling terror)—the 9/11 attacks were unprecedented. The September attacks also marked the first time where an international terrorist group motivated a wide scale shift in the international corporation on counterterrorism. September 11 also notably precipitated the wars associable with the U.S. war on terror, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other hand, the 9/11 attacks brought to the fore the discourse on how the international community could handle transnational terrorism. Still, the debate spawned multiple concerns, for instance:

- What was motivating the emergent, concerted wave of international terrorism?

- Could the attacks indicate a growing anti-Western sentiment?

- Could the attacks point to increasing strains in the relations between religions, majorly based on an upsurge in religious fundamentalism?

- Could nations, such as the U.S., be justified to make unilateral decisions on how best to handle terrorism—for instance, the American war on terror?

- What role did international organizations; such as the UN, EU, NATO, et cetera, have in combating transnational terrorism?

Defining Terrorism

The General Assembly (GA) of the UN contended in the 1960s that there was a need for a working definition of terrorism. Prior to the GA's decision, there was no consensus on whether defining terrorism should put emphasis on the terrorist's (1) efforts for self-determination; (2) motives and methods; or (3) religious motivations (Boulden & Weiss, 2004). Still, UN member states compounded the GA efforts of installing a strict definition for terrorism. Some of the members' concerns included:

(1) A strict definition would hinder a state's interests;

(2) A limiting definition would inhibit some liberation movements, which assumed tactics akin to terrorism; and

(3) A common definition would be too generic thus limiting future debates on conventions and treaties

Nonetheless, the GA adopted a definition that described terrorism as:

Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them (United Nations General Assembly, 1994).

However, Pawlak (2015) termed the GA definition for terrorism as too generic, and cited the numerous official definitions in countries, such as U.S., Australia, Canada, Egypt, and China as reason enough to define terrorism on a case-by-case basis. He states, "Different and evolving national approaches to terrorism render the definition a moving target and attaining cooperation more difficult" (Pawlak, 2015, p. 2). As a result, the lack of a common legal description for terrorism makes the UN efforts complex since the organization has to generate common ground that facilitates the drafting of treaties and conventions to fight transnational terrorism.

How/Why the UN Assumed the Mandate to Spearhead Fight against Terrorism

The UN Charter instituted the organization as the primary entity tasked with maintaining "international peace and security […] removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace" (United Nations, 1945, p. 3). Furthermore, because of the large number of member states—that is 193 states out of the 196—the UN has the capacity to mobilize resources and facilitate the formulation of treaties and conventions that govern matters of global importance.

As a result, through Resolution 1373, the UN indicated that its mandate in fighting terrorism was because terrorism constituted "a threat to international peace and security" (United Nations Security Council, 2001a). On the other hand, after 9/11, the UN was the only international entity that had the influence to create a global platform where no member would suffer victimization, but instead become a contributor to how best to aid in the prevailing global terrorism phenomenon.

Related Literature

The UN earned its role as a leading entity in counterterrorism because of its wide appeal and ability to coordinate the efforts of a large number of member states. The mandate largely borrows from its Charter (United Nations, 1945). Mani (2004) similarly indicated, "The desire to […] deliver to all peoples [,] freedom from fear and want motivated the drafters of the Charter" (p. 219). Although the UN assumed a high-level approach to freeing the citizens of its member states from 'fear', Gallagher's (2001) study provided the medical basis to argue how terrorism was a substantial cause of fear and suffering in individuals, and collectively, for communities.

On the other hand, the UN's role in fighting terrorism is crucial to world peace, because studies, such as Abrahms' (2012) exposed how the vice is effective in causing geo-political disruptions

without regard for civilian targeting. Therefore, the body of research confirms the need for a potent counterterrorism effort because on the flip side, terrorism is a viable means of creating wide scale havoc and destabilizing governance order. Still, the UN suffers from multiple weaknesses that create the opportunity for ad hoc counterterrorism initiatives, such as the American war on terror, which generate further challenges like abuse of human rights and contravention of international laws (Miller, 2011).

Distinguishing Terror Acts/Agents

The UN's efforts to fight terrorism took a logical approach by first attempting to categorize and define terrorism (Pawlak, 2015). In the pre-9/11 era, the UN majorly considered terrorism according to the "[1] agents, [2] objectives, [and] [3] methods" the terrorist actors used (Mani, 2004, p. 220). However, in the post-9/11 era, Mani (2004) observed that the agent/actor received more attention from the UN counterterrorism efforts. Hence, Mani (2004) further expounded on the classification to include (1) non-state terrorism; (2) state terrorism; and (3) state-cum-non-state/amphibolous terrorism.

The distinction is important because the fight against terrorism assumed full-out military action against states, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, whereas the U.S. argued that its anti-terrorism undertakings targeted non-state terrorists like the al-Qaeda. The non-state terrorism designation generates considerable controversy for UN counterterrorism measures because it encompasses factors such as self-determination. However, in such cases, therefore, 'terror groups' like the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), and even the African National Congress (ANC) can justify their violent tactics and impede the UN's fight against terrorism (Mani, 2004).

Choosing between Counterterrorism Strategies

Days after 9/11, the then Secretary-General of the UN—Kofi Annan—stated, "Terrorism is a global menace. It calls for a united, global response" (United Nations , 2001). Thus, the Secretary-General effectively exposed the lack of an "international […] framework" for tackling transnational terrorism (Boulden & Weiss, 2004, p. 10). Then again, in addition to the divergent views on which groups the organization should go after in its counterterrorism efforts, studies such as Gross (2011) surmised that the UN would have to consider the legitimacy of the actors' agitations were it to enforce a normative framework.

Additionally, the controversy surrounding whether the UN was justified to incorporate military action in its framework required it to desist from measures that were "merely punitive or reactive" in favor of a "preventive and comprehensive strategy" (Boulden & Weiss, 2004, p. 13). Thus, while member states required the UN to enhance its counterterrorism response, the literature bemoaned the conflicting opinions on how the UN should constitute the framework (Laborde & DeFeo, 2006).

Adaptation of UN Strategy

According to Bredel (2003), the dominant theme of the UN at the turn of the millennium has been to entrench a "culture of prevention" throughout its constituting agencies (p. 51). However,

the study observed that the 9/11 events informed a substantial reduction in the UN's conflict prevention strategies (Bredel, 2003). Besides, Bredel (2003) argued that the creation of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) through Resolution 1373 indicated that the organization's fight against terrorism was still a "work in progress" and not applicable to the wider long-term conflict prevention strategies (p. 65).

Nonetheless, the UN's largest asset is termed as its function as a forum "in which values […] are espoused and […] opinion can coalesce around particular understandings" (MacFarlane, 2004, p. 29). Then again, the literature revealed the overlap between the perceptions of U.S.-initiated actions after 9/11, such as the War on Terror, and the role of the UN in formulating a normative framework to combat terrorism (MacFarlane, 2004).

Impact of Counterterrorism on International Relations

Overall, the literature suggested that the UN struggles between issues that relate to creating a widely applicable interpretation of terrorism and presenting an accurate philosophy on dealing with the vice, separate from the general mantra of maintaining world peace and international security. Comparably, Bolden's (2008) dissertation that applied behavior analysis to expound on the al-Qaeda motivations behind the 9/11 attacks failed to unearth valid antecedents. Thus, similarly, member states task the UN with creating a counterterrorism framework in the face of disparate root causes and corresponding causes of action.

Likewise, on the international arena, von Hippel (2004) argued that the 9/11 events seemed to herald a new era of international relations as states combined efforts to combat terrorism. However, von Hippel (2004) cited the entrenchment of the anti-Western sentiment, which when combined with the prominence of Western states in the SC created a negative perception of the UN's ability to function as an unprejudiced counterterrorism body.

UN Strategies for Fighting Terrorism

UN has afforded the terrorism phenomenon extra concern starting in the 1960s. The organization has displayed its commitment through the actions of its two constituents: (1) the GA; and (2) the SC (Peterson, 2004; Oudraat, 2004a). The GA notable contributions include (1) encouraging the development of a normative framework that would tackle terrorism; and (2) persuading member states to institute national laws that would deal with terrorists (Peterson, 2004). On the other hand, the SC has provided the policies, such as sanctions, that have served as deterrents to terrorists and their sponsors (Oudraat, 2004a; Oudraat, 2003).

Still, the role of the SC is subject to the perception that it is overly eager to adopt the proposals of the U.S.—one of its permanent members. For instance, through Resolution 1269, the UN considered terrorism as one of the leading threats to international peace and security—but even so; the development was partly informed by the threats that the U.S. faced from the al-Qaeda in between 1998-1999 (Oudraat, 2004a).

Through the General Assembly

In addition to the five other major organs of the UN—that is, the Secretariat; SC; Economic and Social Council; Trusteeship Council; and the International Court of Justice—the GA serves as an organ that recommends courses of action to the SC. In the fight against terrorism, the GA is important because it provides for fair representation for all the member states, hence its resolutions are indicative of the prevailing global sentiment on the phenomenon.

However, despite the ability for the GA to build consensus regarding counterterrorism efforts, it nonetheless lacks the authority to direct given actors, such as national governments, to adopt the measures it deems fit. Furthermore, the GA does not have the administrative capability and resources to implement its decisions or enforce them.

Still, the GA possesses the moral authority "for collective legitimization or […] de-legitimization of normative descriptions", which can in turn inform the overall approach of the UN to tackling terrorism (Peterson, 2004, p. 173). The process of consensus building is gradual, and sometimes very slow, for the GA. As a result, the GA is a poor actor in instances when certain terrorist developments unfold at a rapid rate. For instance, while the Taliban and al-Qaeda nexus in Afghanistan executed its objectives with considerable speed between 1998 and 1999, the GA was not in a position to influence a unified UN counterterrorism strategy that would have changed the mitigated the impact of the 9/11 attacks.

The GA has however earned a reputation for producing weak pronouncements when its member states fail to reach a strong consensus on any matter. The ability of the diplomatic personnel in its panels to generate ambiguous declarations are a matter of concern since it enables otherwise important matters to drag on endlessly. To that effect, the GA is an inefficient, though necessary, cog in the UN's global counterterrorism strategies.

Through the Security Council

The UN member states task the SC with the responsibility of maintaining international security and peace. The SC is one of the most powerful organs of the UN because of its ability to enforce resolutions on the member states. Furthermore, the organ can institute sanctions, authorize military actions, or direct the deployment of peacekeeping efforts. The input of the SC has provided a bulk of the initiatives that have out rightly buoyed the global fight against terrorism (Oudraat, 2004b).

Still, the approach of the SC has historically leaned towards the objectives of the superpowers that sit in its membership. The U.S., for instance, has a history of influencing the ultimate determinations of the SC, with limited standoffs that were evident in the Cold War. Accordingly, Oudraat (2003) argued, "when the United States demonstrates leadership and determination, it frequently convinces other Security Council members to follow its lead and take effective multilateral action" (p. 164). Although the participation can be labeled as leadership, it waters down the concept that the UN can act independent of any biases when formulating its anti-terrorist strategies.

Thus, the outcome of the SC's composition creates policies aimed at protecting Western interests at the expense of the larger bulk of the world's regions. Pointedly, the only time that the SC executed the provisions of Chapter VII of the UN Charter—providing for mandatory sanctions—was after the terrorist bombings of the 1988 UTA flight 772 and the 1989 Pan Am flight 103. Then again, the sanctions on Sudan and the Afghan/Taliban leadership in 1996 and 1999 were also related to the regimes' increasingly violent anti-Western stance (Oudraat, 2003).

Hence, when the Bush administration precipitated drawn out wars in Afghanistan and Iraq after the 9/11 attacks, the UN's approach to combating global terrorism was already under the impression of dominance by a few members of the SC. Thus, even though the SC has the ability to fast track the implementation of its decisions compared to the GA, the setup creates a skewed participation, which starves the UN counterterrorism effort of the wide global appeal necessary to defeat the phenomenon without the unjustifiable expediency of the SC.

Evolution of UN Counterterrorism Efforts Pre- and Post-9/11

Before the September 11 attacks, the UN's role as a global anti-terrorism entity was largely evident through scholarly reviews. Additionally, Boulden and Weiss (2004) indicated that prior to 9/11; the UN's participation in counterterrorism was "largely peripheral to mainstream analysis of either UN affairs or U.S. foreign policy" (p. 5). However, after 9/11 UN's participation heralded an era that the organization took a central role in influencing international relations to combat transnational terrorist activity. Apart from thrusting the UN into the attention of the media and the analyses based on international relations, the 9/11 events also forced the organization to assume unprecedented policy changes and formulations on matters related to transnational terrorism (Boulden & Weiss, 2004). On the other hand, the 9/11 period also exposed the challenges that the UN faced in drawing consensus for its anti-terrorism efforts and implementing its sometimes controversial policies.

Before September 11

UN's role in the fight against terrorism was not explicit before September 11. The UN Charter, for instance, did not task the organization with the responsibility of combating transnational terrorism, even though it provided for the UN to maintain international security and peace. According to Luck (2004a), UN's perceivable role prior to September 11 was in accordance with Chapters V and VII of the UN Charter, which dictated that in case of a phenomenon such global terrorism, the SC should:

(1) Maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the UN;

(2) Determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;

(3) Call on Members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression; or even

(4) Take military action against an aggressor (United Nations Security Council, 2016).

Besides, before the 80s, transnational terrorism was a matter that states handled between themselves without formally involving the UN. During the period, when terrorism concerns forced the UN to intervene, the GA; through the Sixth (Legal) Committee; tackled the issues in an inconclusive yet transient manner (Rostow, 2002). However, after 1989, the SC became party to the concerns on global terrorism when it passed Resolution 635 to address the use of plastic explosives in terrorism. Still, the GA made notable contributions to the fight against terrorism through the adoption of thirteen conventions that addressed diverse aspects of terrorist acts and organizations.

Still, the SC's involvement in the anti-terrorism effort in the 1990s was primarily informed by the increased frequency and successes of terrorist attacks against U.S. interests (Oudraat, 2004a).

Thus, through Resolution 635, the SC (and in essence the UN) became the prominent transnational entity through which the international community could tackle terrorism. Effectively, the UN created the infrastructure through which it would later respond to the spike in terrorist activities at the turn of the millennium, and most notably, after September 11.

In the Aftermath of September 11

After the 9/11 attacks, the UN reacted with an immediacy that it had never afforded for matters concerning terrorism in any other time in its history. For instance, the SC adopted Resolution 1368, which was an official condemnation of the September 11 attacks, twenty-fours after the terrorist acts (Luck, 2004b). The Resolution stated in part, "the [resolution] unequivocally condemns in the strongest terms the horrifying terrorist attacks […] like any act of international terrorism, as a threat to international peace and security" (United Nations Security Council, 2001b).

Distinctly, the response of the SC after September 11 expounded on UN Charter's Article 51, which indicated that member states had the right to self-defense in instances where terrorist acts constituted grave danger to the peace and security of the nation. As a result, Boulden and Weiss (2004) argued that the SC had in essence opted "out of subsequent decision-making and [left] the military response to the United States" (p. 7). Nonetheless, the SC indicated that its provision for member states to pursue self-defense initiatives as retribution for terror attacks was not based on legal justifications. Therefore, while the SC informed the War on Terror, it distanced itself from the associated international and human rights laws contraventions that other SC members accused the U.S. of committing in the subsequent Afghan and Iraqi wars.

The swiftness of the SC response after September 11 was also evident when the Council adopted Resolution 1373 on September 28—just weeks after 9/11. The Resolution marked another novel response by the SC as it encompassed comprehensive commitments that were akin to how treaties would function in international relations. Resolution 1373 required UN member states to:

(1) Desist from supporting terrorist agents or actors within their areas of jurisdiction;

(2) Tackle the financing of terrorism, that is, through tactics such as asset freezing;

(3) Deny terrorists safe havens;

(4) Improve security of cross-border traffic through tougher passport rules;

(5) To participate actively in measures that would enhance transnational corporation to fight terrorism.

Additionally, the post-9/11 portended the formation of the CTC, which the UN tasked with enhancing the counterterrorism capabilities of all the member states (Luck, 2004a). Furthermore, the CTC simplified the organization's anti-terrorist initiatives as it provided for a 'one-stop' venue where states would report on and ask for assistance in their implementation of counterterrorism strategies.

International and Human Rights Laws Controversies

The SC has employed sanctions to compel states to denounce terrorism or desist from supporting terrorism. A befitting case is the SC's sanctions against Iraq that began in 1990 and ended on 2003 after the conclusion of the War on Terror in Iraq meant to oust the nation's strongman—Saddam Hussein. However, according to human rights, such an approach results in widespread suffering of the civilian population, which is not comparable to the desired outcomes of fighting terrorism. However, the SC reiterated that its binding commitments take into account the diverse laws that protect humanitarian welfare and jurisdiction-specific laws and regulations. For instance, under Resolution 1456, the SC contended, "[Member] states must ensure that any measure taken to combat terrorism comply with […] international law […] human rights, refugee and humanitarian law" (Council on Foreign Affairs, 2003). However, such SC pronouncements sweep too wide with respect to whether they conform to certain local laws, and as a result, imbue the organization's anti-terrorism campaigns with negative perceptions.

The UN required its member states to adopt measures, which would although combat terrorism, would create complex demands on their local legislative and judicial systems. Resolution 1373, for instance, requires states to freeze the assets of suspected terrorist financiers and agents/actors. However, according to Cortright and Lopez (2007), several states, such as Argentina faced political and legislative difficulties when they attempted to implement aspects of SC's Resolution 1373. A similar challenge exists in India, where the anti-terrorism measures coerced the *hawala* banking system to register its activities within the confines of the conventional banking system. In other cases, the SC resolutions force the poor member states to incorporate the Council's obligations, such as reporting regularly to the CTC, which in turn have strained their already stretched national budgets (Cortright & Lopez, 2007).

According to the European Court of Human Rights (2014), as well as a majority of other legal systems of the UN member states, suspects (both state and non-state actors) have the right to a fair trial and legal representation. However, the SC subjects the suspected agents and supporters of terrorism to perceivably unjust processes when it punishes them with sanctions. Then again, when the SC proposes such sanctions against individuals it acts as a quasi-judicial organ, when in the real sense, the organ is a political organ without that has no mandate to violate universal human rights. Ultimately, the actions of the SC when it aimed to punish state actors, such as Iraq, result in widespread suffering of the civilian population, which is akin to large-scale violation of human rights.

Analysis of UN Action against Terrorism in the Aftermath of 9/11

There was a significant increase in the visibility of the UN as a transnational counterterrorism entity after September 11. The GA managed to attract more consensuses on matters that related to the fight against terrorism, while the SC managed to formulate and institute a large number of resolutions with a swiftness that was not witnessed before September 11. Furthermore, the reference of the SC to articles of the UN Charter, such as Article 51, created the attention that

reminded member states that they had the right to self-defense when faced with unprecedented threats from phenomena like international terrorism.

However, the increased scrutiny also highlighted the controversies that surrounded the UN's observance of international laws and human rights laws. Still, the vibrancy with which the UN's GA and SC approached the anti-terrorism efforts informed broader legislative changes across the member states that in turn made transnational terrorism more difficult after September 11.

Successes

Prior to the September 11 terrorist attacks, the GA was already grappling with the marked increase in transnational terrorist activity. As a result, the Assembly passed two major conventions to tackle terrorism, namely:

   (1) International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997)

   (2) International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999)

However, there was little interest in ratifying the conventions in the period before 9/11. For instance, only 9 states had ratified the convention meant to reduce terrorist bombings by 2000, and only 2 ratifications by the same year of the convention meant to tackle financing of terrorism (see Table 1). After September 11, there was a dramatic increase in ratifications of both conventions, with convention on terrorist bombings receiving the input of 32 states and the convention on terrorism financing receiving 48 ratifications by 2000.

Table 1: Cumulative number of member states the ratified UN conventions against terrorism

Year	Convention meant to reduce terrorist bombings (1997)	Convention meant to tackle terrorism financing (1999)
1998	1	n/a
1999	7	n/a
2000	9	2
Up to September 11 2001	10	2
September 12, 2001 to December 31, 2001	19	12
2002	32	48
2003	37	43
2004	17	25
2005	3	17
March 2006	n/a	2
Total	145	151

Source: UN Treaty Collection website, showing which countries ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism
[https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-11&chapter=18&lang=en] and the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings
[https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-9&chapter=18&lang=en].

On the other hand, the SC also received a boost in the number of resolutions it passed in the post-September 11 period. Before September 11, for example, the council had only passed 13 resolutions, but after 9/11, the number increased to 20 passed resolutions (see Table 2).

Table 2: Resolutions passed to combat terrorism pre- and post-September 11

Resolutions	Pre-9/11	Post-9/11
Technical or general	2 (15.5%)	11 (55%)
Where terrorism earns little attention	2 (15.5%)	n/a
As a response to a terror act	3 (23%)	11 (55%)
As a response to terrorism through sanctions	6 (46%)	1 (5%)
Attracted a unanimous vote	8 (62%)	19 (95%)
Attracted a no-vote or abstention	5 (38%)	1 (5%)
Average per year	Around 1	Between 4-5
Total	13	20

Source: The UN Security Council's Response to Terrorism: Before and after September 11, 2001: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20202886

On a qualitative perspective, it is also evident that the SC offered terrorism matters more attention. For instance, Table 2 indicates that only 15 per cent of the resolutions that dealt with terrorism on technical or general terms were passed before September 11. However, after 9/11 more than 50 per cent of the resolutions tackled general issues concerning terrorism. Ideally, the data indicates that the SC (and in turn, the GA) afforded terrorism matters more attention as a whole.

Challenges

The lack of a universal definition for terrorism continued to hamper UN's creation of a concise and comprehensive normative framework to tackle terrorism. On the other hand, the ambiguity created by the lack of an agreeable working definition have trickled into the enforceability of the UN measures to fight terrorism. Then again, the disparate wealth of the states makes it difficult for all of them to afford similar resources to realize the objectives of the UN counterterrorism effort.

The U.S.'s dominance in the SC creates the potential for other states to deviate from the objectives of counterterrorism in favor of seeking a balance of power. Furthermore, the actions of the U.S. after 9/11 and during the War on Terror created a negative image of UN's ability to direct the fight against terrorism despite the influence of some of its member states.

As the UN seeks to expand its mandate and ability to function as a transnational counterterrorism entity, it also continues to generate the controversies related to the respect for international laws and human rights laws. As a result, the organization faces the imminent hurdle of dealing with activist organizations that will challenge its right to institute certain resolutions.

Conclusion

The UN's response to terrorism was markedly different in the aftermath of the September terrorist attacks. The post-9/11 period heralded the passing of multiple resolutions by the SC that reiterated member states' right to self-defense against terrorism, and the formation of a dedicated entity—the CTC—to monitor and manage the states' implementation of counterterrorism measures.

However, the role of the UN in the fight against terrorism faced belittling in the face of U.S.'s War on Terror. Although the SC was against because of the lack of legal basis, the SC member went ahead to pursue military initiatives that created a negative perception of the UN's ability to manage the actions of its SC members.

Still, the UN managed to build its counterterrorism efforts on the platform of the UN Charter that mandates it to maintain international peace and security. However, the lack of a unified definition for terrorism has made the efforts slow and ineffectual to a degree as the UN actions on terrorism are bound to attract multiple interpretations when an agent—like in cases with earlier groups such as the ANC and the IRA—agitates for self-determination.

Conclusively, the approach of the UN after the September 11 attacks confirmed the organization as the only transnational entity with the wide appeal and influence to offer binding commitments that would make fighting a global phenomenon such as terrorism viable.

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