



UNITED NATIONS ROLE IN COMBATING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: A CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS (2010-2020)

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Abstract:

This paper examines the recent reforms of the United Nations (UN) concerning governance of the counter-terrorism (CT) through a process begun in 2010 and completed in 2020, prompted by the successive changes to the security environment characterized by the advent of transnational networks of terrorists, cyber-enabled extremism, and the emergence of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). A critical realist mixed-methods approach was employed in the investigation, and an embedded multiple-case research design was also used, allowing for the exploration of the macro-level evolution, meso-level institutional coordination, and micro-level implementation in Afghanistan, Nigeria, and the Philippines. The theory used in the analytical framework is the Tripartite Security Governance Framework that combines all three theories of Collective Security, Securitization, and Regime Complex. The results have shown that although the creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) has strengthened strategic coherence, operational gaps still persist, especially in the fragile states where the centralized decision-making unit makes it not possible to be flexible in the field. Comparative analysis also proves that locally-rooted legitimacy and hybrid governance mechanisms can be seen to be the key to success, as exemplified by Nigeria and the Philippines, but not the case with the top-down, technocratic approaches seen with Afghanistan, as it failed to achieve a sustainable reintegration. This contribution of the study is therefore both theoretical and practical by identifying the structural, normative and coordination circumstances in which the UN CT endeavours can bridge the normative to operational gap and



maintain legitimacy in a highly disputed global security environment.

Keywords: United Nations, counter-terrorism, UNOCT, Collective Security Theory, Securitization, Regime Complex, human rights, legitimacy, governance reform

Introduction:

The period between 2010 and 2020 was a turning point when the world of counter-terrorism changed significantly. The geographical concentration of the self-described Islamic State (ISIS), movement of the terrorists and its supporters across the borders with their counterparts (commonly known as foreign terrorist fighters), emergence and dominance of extremist groups with online capabilities, and the long-running insurgency waged by the movements such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and Taliban in Afghanistan were some of the most known examples of stretching of the available capacities of international institutions in adjustments and response. On the one hand, these advances presented the United Nations with an opportunity and need to reform its counter-terrorism governance to become relevant, credible and effective to operate in the new complex and transnational security environment that developed.

Throughout history, the United Nations architect of counter-terrorism has been noted to have large-scale institutional fragmentation. The system also includes over thirty organisations legally empowered to undertake mandates that are related to CT. The major coordination of these entities is enabled through the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). Even though this arrangement is operative in some ways, it is associated with an overlap in mandates, redundancy of effort and the lack of coherent strategic direction. The ensuing lack of unifying leadership undermines political control as well as the ability to deliver operations especially in fast responses and in cases that need concerted actions. Frustration with member states over these inefficiencies and the noticed weak on ground representation of UN agencies led to a historical institutional reform whereby the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) was created through General Assembly Resolution 71/291 in June 2017.

The creation of UNOCT resembled an institutional move enhancing the standing of strategic leadership structure, stimulating the development of inter-agency coordination, and a diffusion of operations in areas with disproportionate impact of terrorism-based activity. There was thus an obvious inquiry that asked whether these reforms have led to quantifiable benefits in terms of coherence, flexibilities or human rights standards.

To begin with, the centralization of leadership in UNOCT was to enhance coordination and counter duplication within the agencies of which UNOCT was a key player. Nevertheless, it is still not clear how far this goal has been achieved. The lack of ability to synchronize programs and reports of collaboration difficulties is also recorded in agency reports.



Second, the reform plan aimed to enhance the UN's counter-terrorism structures' agility in coping with potential emerging threats, including cyberterrorism and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). The organization has proved to adapt to non-traditional phenomena of security, but there is an imbalance between adaptation in different modules.

Third, the ability to protect human rights and, at the same time, assist member states in areas of high risk and highly political situations forms one of the major tests. Although UNOCT specifically emphasizes human rights in its mandate, the monitoring of this aspect is inadequate. Synthetically, these views cast doubt on the extent to which structural change has had concrete achievements in the spheres of coherence, agility, and observance of rights.

It is a study that questions the development of UN counter-terrorism governance during 2010-2020 as applied with the Tripartite Security Governance Framework as one of the theoretical instruments used to synthesize the Collective Security Theory (CST), Securitization Theory (ST), the Regime Complex Theory (RCT). The framework allows evaluating the UN counter-terrorism governance on three dimensions that are considered to be pivotal such as institutional coherence, normative alignment, and effectiveness of coordination. In the process, there are four key questions that are answered by the research: (1) How did UN counter-terrorism governance develop in the aspect of institutional coherence and strategic alignment? In their turn, (2) how far were these reforms influenced by the occurrence of emerging threats, such as cyber-enabled terrorism, foreign terrorist fighters, and the prevention of violent extremism? What were the processes that the UN pursued in balancing effectiveness against counter-terrorism versus respecting human rights in this period? And, lastly, what effect did changing geopolitics have on multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation and how did regime complexity temper that effect?

The current research has two contributions. On the one hand, in theoretical terms, it augments the corpus pertaining to global security governance by operationalising a multi-theory approach that cuts through the complex nature of the relationship between institutional design, threat framing, and inter-organisational relationships. Second, the present study empirically addresses macro- to meso- to micro-level variants of UN governance of counter-terrorism (CT) and, thus, provides a unique integrated view of UN CT governance in action. The results will be useful in both academic discussion and in policy debate about how the UN might bridge the gap between its normative goals and its realities of operation.

Literature Review:

The 2010 to 2020 was characterized by overlapping academic discussion in United Nations counter-terrorism (CT) governance with three other areas: global security governance, reform of the global governance institution, and the normative tension between security and human rights. In the research the main distinguished contributions, which are three research strands, can be discussed: the one layered on the Collective Security Theory (CST), a research explore the Securitization Theory (ST) as applied to the global CT practices, and a research that addresses the UN as a part of



a regime complex. Taken together, these views explain the evolving CT mandate of the UN along with structural challenges that it faces when seeking unity between institutional coherence, legitimacy, and effectiveness of operations.

The collective security theory traditionally has been one of the fundamental normative and institutional identity at the United Nations. This is a doctrine that infers that the maintenance of peace depends on member states acting together whenever any among the states faces threats as discussed by Claude (1962). This state-focused model worked well when it came to dealing with interstate armed violence but it became less sufficient when dealing with non-state transnational issues like terrorism. The collective security theory was also applied into the domain of non-state actors with Post-9/11 Security Council resolutions, and in particular Resolution 1373 (2001), which redefined terrorism as a threat to international peace and security (Weiss, 2015; Biersteker, 2018). Researchers like Peters (2017) argue that this expansion was not only unavoidable but also needed but it led to frictional areas between sovereignty and intervention especially in states where there are weak governance systems. The literature also illustrates that despite the legitimising scheme that is presented by the Collective Security Theory to counterterrorism in multilateral action, its execution is limited by the policy priorities of member states (Balzacq, 2011; NI Aolain, 2019).

Securitization of terrorism by the UN is a key study of literature. The seminal work by Buzan, W, and de Wilde (1998) presents the concept in a wording that makes securitization refer to the process according to which a problem is presented as an existential threat so as to justify exceptional actions (p. 23). The subsequent institutional and legal expansion that follows the securitization of terrorism occurred very quickly, although the critics of such a move claim that it had solidified a security-driven mentality at an expense of human rights (Gomez & Ramirez, 2019; Nã i Aolain, 2019). In 2016, the introduction of the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda marked a desire to de securitize the CT policy by incorporating the ideas of development, education, and governance approaches (UNDP, 2017). However, according to empirical studies, the PVE programs, however, have their own coercive repression context and, thus, have a limited transformation potential (Doho, 2023; Zenn, 2021). Such partial and uneven de securitization is indicative of the prevailing difficulty of the UN trying to balance political exigencies with its normative commitments.

Reviewal of the technical structure of the UN counter-terrorism (CT) infrastructure demonstrates it to be either a complex of regimes, the partially overlapping set of institutions that lacks a centralised hierarchy as determined by Keohane and Victor (2011). This structure is made up of Security Council, the General Assembly, specialised organizations like UNODC and UNDP as well as ad hoc collaboration with regional organisations like African Union and ASEAN. The variety supplies the matter-based competence and flexibility, and at the same time predisposes the system to duplication of mandates, rivalry over resources, and miscellaneous approaches (Global Center on Cooperative Security, 2016). Before 2017, the coordination was carried out by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF); assessments recognized, nevertheless, little power and poor field coverage (UNOCT, 2020). These gaps gave rise to the establishment of the United Nations



Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact that was meant to address them. However, researchers such as Biersteker (2018) and Pereouse de Montclos (2014) note that the problem of structural fragmentation has remained since the coordination processes continue to heavily depend on voluntary collaboration and informal links among heads of agencies.

Scholarly empirical research into the implementation of counter-terrorism (CT) by the United Nations proves that there is a marked variability of contexts. An example of this aspect includes the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) in Afghanistan that suffered low results due to the lack of domestic ownership and misappropriation of funds among the elites (Rettberg & Ugarriza, 2016). Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) is a model of its kind, it is widely acclaimed for community-based approach, incorporation of religious leaders, and gender sensitive framework of reference (Yusuf & Yahaya, 2021; Crisis Group, 2021). The Philippines proposes a different approach, integrating the judicial reforms that speed up the terrorism prosecutions with the community-based outreach of the local public-private connection in Mindanao (DW, 2021). Aggregated evaluations indicate that multicentric projects based on high levels of community legitimacy and combining state and non-state models of governance are likely to excel compared to state-centric, top-down programs when it comes to reducing recidivism and enabling social re-entry (Tickner, 2004; UNHCR, 2021).

They are the subjects of growing scholarship around such thematic issues as cyber-enabled extremism, foreign terrorist fighters, and the leveraging of private-sector partnerships in online content moderation (e.g., Tech Against Terrorism initiative; UNOCT, 2020). The findings are that although the United Nations has laid normative frameworks on those aspects, implementation mechanisms are still weak; and the implementation is mostly voluntary rather than binding protocols (UNSC Res. 2178, 2014; UNSC Res. 2242, 2015). The growth of the involvement of the private sector in content moderation also raises the issues of responsibility, free speech, and the balance between sovereign and commercial power in the sphere of global security governance (Balzacq, 2011; Keohane & Victor, 2011).

Despite the fact that much has been written on UN counter-terrorism (CT) interventions, a number of crucial gaps remain outstanding. The practice of scholarship seldom unifies the conceptual perspectives of comparative security studies, strategic studies and randomized controlled trials, which restricts the cross-sectional analysis of legitimacy, framing, and coordination. And finally, empirical evidence establishing causal connections between reforms implemented at the headquarters level and effects at the field level is relatively scarce, especially on the two CAF states. Systematic analyses by varying political environments of different models of governance are rare and not many analyze how structural and normative preconditions of success or failure of UN CT interventions can be found. These weaknesses are overcome in the present study, which uses Tripartite Security Governance Framework to analyse UN CT governance in macro, meso, and micro levels, informed by 10 years of institutional change and three contrasting cases - Afghanistan,



Nigeria and the Philippines.

Theoretical Framework:

The governing Tripartite Security Framework used in the present study is an amalgamation of three inter-connected theoretical frameworks including Collective Security Theory (CST), Securitization Theory (ST) and Regime Complex Theory (RCT). In this way, it provides a thorough analytical tool through which to question the course of United Nations counter-terrorism (CT) governance between 2010 and 2020. Both perspectives under this framework represent a particular, but overlapping analytical perspective that contributes to a multi-focal understanding of institutional architecture, normative construction and inter-organisational coordination.

Collective Security Theory formed the original normative basis of the United Nations peace and security framework, which argues that the rationale of collective deterrence and response form of peacekeeping ensures that the peace can be maintained so long as there is collective deterrence and response to security threats made against any member. Traditionally, CST has been used on interstate aggression but the rise of terrorist attacks by non-state actors has necessitated its applied to non-state actors like the ISIS, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram. This has left the initial premises of CST unbalanced especially those premised on state consent and reciprocity. This paper uses CST to evaluate how institutional reforms-including most prominently the formation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)-have impacted the UN capacity to act as a coherent actor in collective security, able to generate multilateral action in response to complex threats posed by non-state actors.

Securitization Theory (hereafter ST) is one such important tool at the disposal of Security Studies that can be used to ask probing questions to understand how terrorism is framed in a discursive manner and later given form as an existential threat requiring exceptional measures. On focusing on the policy discourse on terrorism of the UN, ST allows searching the dialectic exercise of threat construction, legitimacy and human rights. The interaction of the UN with the issue of terrorism at the beginning of the 2010s was almost entirely securitized since it supported the use of its coercive action as a response to the perceived threat. Yet, a partial desecuritisation with baleful intent was expressed when the terrorism Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda was adopted in 2016, which puts terrorism back within the conceptual geography of development and governance. The study uses ST to analyze the push and pull between securitized practices and PVE initiatives and how far the latter has succeeded in being operationalized in ways that actually transform the program design and results.

Regime Complex Theory focuses on design and dynamics of governance systems that are formed out of overlapping systems of institutions. Such a complex is the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture which involves the Security Council, the General Assembly, the specialised agencies and the Partnerships between the organization and regional organisations and even private bodies. The institutional variety facilitates flexibility and innovation on the one hand but on the other hand



introduces weaknesses connected with duplication of mandate, competition of resources, and strategic inconsistencies. Therefore, the framework will be utilized in this research to determine whether the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact has mitigated fragmentation, fostered coherence, and helped in the effective multiactor coordination.

The Tripartite Security Governance Framework is based on the synthesis of complex system theory (CST), security governance theory (ST), and the relational concept of risk-community trust (RCT) and thus constitutes an integrated analytical tool. CST provides the premise of institutional legitimacy, ST reflects upon the normative and political design of the policies of counterterrorism (CT) and RCT questions the practical and structural implications of the multi-actor governance. The combination of all these views can help explain the complex mutual relationship between the strategic aspirations of the United Nations, its normative commitments, and the empirical difficulty of realizing them in heterogeneous political- and conflict-specific settings.

Methodology:

The study under investigation here starts with a critical realist approach to epistemology, made possible both by the acceptance of the fact that institutional structures have actual, real causal powers and the acknowledgment that they are accessed to us through the socially constructed interpretational mediation. They are pursued by the mixed-methods approach that combines the qualitative and quantitative data to follow the institutional development of United Nations counterterrorism (UN CT) governance and its impacts on the field. It makes use of an embedded multiple-case design, which establishes connections between macro-level reforms that had their origins in the UN headquarters and meso-level strategies of coordination and micro-level programed effects in the chosen national settings.

Case selection was informed by a most-different systems design (Blalock 1964; Dess 1982) in an attempt to ensure maximum variation in geography, type of conflict and mode of governance. The main cases have been selected as Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Philippines. Afghanistan (2010-2016) is a post-insurgency environment where the process of reintegration was met by abiding legitimacy losses and security threats. Nigeria (2016-2020) provides an opposite example that created a hybrid of community-based reintegration, gender-sensitive programming, and mechanisms of hybrid governance in the form of Operation Safe Corridor (OSC). Philippines (2016-2020) is another example of such a model of counter-terrorism, in which judicial reform was combined with PVE measures involving communities in the Mindanao region.

This paper is based on a complex source of information which includes not only documentary materials such as UN resolutions, reports of Secretary-General, and UNOCT and other partner organisations, but also includes thirty-five elite interviews with UN officials, national coordinators, civil society representatives, and community leaders. These interviews explain how the policy-making process works as well as the actual operationalization of the daily implementation of the initiatives on counter-terrorism. Also, where available, quantitative data on programed outputs and



outcomes including reintegration retention and recidivism rates were collated. Parallel to these figures, ethnographic fieldwork in Nigeria and the Philippines caught the accounts and the notions regarding legitimacy of the communities, and thus constituted an essential lens to view the performance of the programmed.

The investigation of the architecture of counter-terrorism evolving within the United Nations was carried out through three steps with each step applying analytical scales with levels of zooming in on the phenomenon. To begin with, on the macro level, institutional changes of the UN and the stated goals of this organization were methodically contrasted to the development of the global architecture of counter-terrorism. Second, at the meso level, effectiveness of the coordination devices was assessed, namely, the Global Counter-Terrorism Compact. Third, on the micro level, the programme implementation was examined by analysing quantitative indicators, especially Defection Success Index (DSI), which were analysed with qualitative measures of legitimacy. This trilateral approach permitted a holistic view on interaction between the policy intent, design of an institution, and reality of operation.

Through a systematic analysis, it can be revealed that the United Nations governance against terrorism has been growing in a two-step trajectory, going hand in hand with a disjointed, ad hoc scene that was transverse during 2010 to 2016 prior to the creation of a more unified framework in 2017 and beyond. Between 2010 and 2016, various UN organs undertook work that had substantial duplication and inefficiencies because they were largely doing the same job. In spite of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) being the main counter-terrorism coordination mechanism, the decision-making process was lengthy, and donor interests used to interfere in the process of allocating resources. Until the end of World War II, field presence was limited, mainly keeping the bulk of operational control back in New York. Externally, the Global Center on Cooperative Security (2016) evaluation described the lack of measurable outcomes framework and the natural effort to obtain strategic incoherence regarding this first phase. The 2017/2020 era was a turning point back to more coherent institutional landscape: the CTITF enshrined its superior coordinating functions in a systematic measurement framework, and eventually aimed institutional mandates and resources base towards articulated strategic priorities.

The establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) in 2017 was a reform aimed at re-placing a centralized leadership to the Under-Secretary-General level. This reform integrated the portfolio of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), established a more strategic integrated planning system and institutionalized collaboration across agencies into the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. It thus increased the visibility of counter-terrorism in the UN system and created regional liaison offices in Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East. However, there were big hindrances that persisted. Portions of the decision making were highly centralized and thus limited stillness of operations on the field. Whereas human-rights mainstreaming had already made considerable progress within the discourse of policy, its translation into operational reality remained stagnating; in addition, monitoring and evaluation tools remained



unsatisfactorily developed.

The United Nations has been recording relative successes in specific areas in its efforts to deal with the emergent threats but there has been erratic improvement in the overall security consideration. The emergence of cyber-enabled terrorism promoted the invention of the Tech Against Terrorism collaboration that engaged technology businesses in eliminating the online extremist content. Although the undertaking is viewed as setting an example of multi-stakeholder co-operation, this initiative was reliant chiefly on the voluntary corporate compliance, thus limiting its regulatory teeth. The phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters was addressed with the help of Resolution 2178 (2014) and the following actions to strengthen international borders and aid in the ability to connect national watch lists to those maintained by INTERPOL. Even as this normative framework was adopted, there was a major difference in the uptake between member states. The Preventing Violent Extremism agenda aimed to expand the counter-terrorism paradigm in a way that concerns governance failures in their structures and the causes of radicalization. Nevertheless, within the reality, PVE programs often did not escape the logic of securitized discourses and diluted the radical goals that the initiative knew how to pursue.

Empirical case studies provide some idea about how the dynamics play off in post-conflict reintegration. In Afghanistan, programmes were characterized by lack of involvement of tribal/religious leaders with a lack of legitimacy and high recidivism. Capturing of resources among elite also undermined the trust in the communities and there was minimal strong monitoring in terms of adapting to failures. The rehabilitation programme known as the Operation Safe Corridor in Nigeria had relatively higher levels of success due to its strategies of ensuring community and religious-leader participation, integration of gender-sensitive programming, and reliance on hybrid forms of governance to control it. The Philippines implemented a hybrid plan of Judicial reforms to reduce delay in terrorism related cases along with education and rehabilitation of young terrorists being available on regional front on the help of ASEAN to improve cross-border intelligence operations.

Discussion:

Using the Tripartite Security Governance Framework, the research study finds verifiable advances made in direction of coherence and strategic alignment of the United Nations counter-terrorism structure, albeit demands of operational, normative and political challenges. The creation of UNOCT in 2017 is a critical institutional change, since it will adhere to the logic of Collective Security Theory by strengthening the ability of the UN to act as a unitary global security actor. When a leadership is concentrated in the hands of an Under-Secretary-General, it increases the political profile of the regime, as well as provide more planned planning actions. However, when considered through the interpretative imaginings of the Regime Complex Theory, siloed functioning of specialized agencies reveals the fact that structural adjustments, in themselves, cannot work fully against the centrifugal forces of any governance system that involves multiple actors. Field level coordination is therefore dependent on intimate contacts and on an ad hoc basis.



Based on Securitization Theory, the United Nations has resorted to flitting between the securitized and de securitized policies. The foreign terrorist fighter crisis with the rise of the ISIS in the middle of the 2010s served as a booster to reorient the direction towards an increased securitization with its core features of increased control over the borders and borders, broadened surveillance systems, and increased collaboration within the law enforcement. Such steps were necessary to fight direct threats, but also undermined human rights and civil liberties, especially in those situations where protection of human rights and civil liberties were weak due to significant lack of protection of the rule of law. This shift was embodied in the development of the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda in 2016 which took a decisive turn towards de securitization by adopting a structural approach to radicalization through state governance regulation, educational campaigns or community outreach. However, there were often instances of operationalization being framed by the existing security frameworks leaving little space to allow the emergence of de securitization to break through the established counter-terrorism programming logic.

Investigations in three different circumstances (Afghanistan, Nigeria and The Philippines), comparative analyses reveal that legitimacy is the most critical variable that determines the outcome of the programed. The lack of community trust was witnessed in Afghanistan where the reintegration initiatives were designed and implemented without involving the tribal and religious leaders which was exacerbated by the elite capture of the programed resources. In contrast, Operation Safe Corridor in Nigeria had admirable re-integration results since the program design had a specific feature of integrating legitimacy-building structures. Defectors most of them had been female, were targeted through bringing in religious leaders in the rehabilitation process, introducing gender sensitive treatment, in making community own the project by the use of hybrid forms of governance. The Philippines shows that a key counter-terrorism intervention that tends to be under-invested in programming, judicial reform, can significantly diminish the appeal of violent extremism by creating procedural fairness and attending to grievances around state justice systems. The perpetual disjunction between the normative commitments vowed by the United Nations (UN) and the practice of the entity comprise a critical academic issue. Three interconnected restrictions support this divergence, to refer to the current analyses: 1) Political constraints by their state sovereignty limiting the UN to enforce compliance with human-rights in cases where collaboration with counter-terrorist agencies can be perceived as being strategically or politically expedient; 2) The over-centralization of the decision-making process in New York and 3) the lack of comprehensive mechanisms of impact-evaluation and therefore insufficient inflow of lessons learned in successes as well as failures at subsequent programming. All of these restrictions point towards the need to supplement structural reform with a change in governance culture that should encourage decentralization, programming flexibility, and rights-based accountability.

Conclusion:

The three interrelated theoretical claims that the current study puts forward are the following: (1) the Collective Security Theory may also be extended to a wider set of collective security challenges that are not limited to the state as long as the concept of legitimacy remains instantiated institutionally



and locally rooted; (2) the logic of de securitization described in Securitization Theory can be operationalized, yet also subjected to a follow-up logic of politicization; and (3) the Regime Complex Theory provides essential insights into the trade-offs between flexibility and coherence produced by multi- This argument is backed with empirical data that has been collected out of three case studies, viz., Pakistan, Somalia, and Kenya that highlight how the counter-terrorism programs in fragile and conflict affected states can be argued in terms of legitimacy formation, de securitization as well as regime complex governance.

Based on the findings, the present study makes six policy recommendations which are interrelated. First, the United Nations (UN) ought to decentralize decision-making as much as possible by delegating operational decisions to regional and country offices as well as introduce more flexible funding mechanisms that will allow the United Nations to quickly adapt to the local conditions. Second, the United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) has to establish an independent human-rights compliance unit to annually audit all counter-terrorism programs publicly. Third, institutionalization of community legitimacy should be made a stepping block to program clearance and it must involve compulsory consultations with local heads, civil-society members and people involved. Fourth, the frameworks used in evaluation must be impact focused not output focused and therefore focus more on long-term results whose measures would be recidivism rates, measures of community trust and measures of livelihood sustainability than short-term outputs. Fifth, strategic collaborations between the regime complex have to be formalized over memorandum of understandings to secure clarity in the functions and roles especially among regional organizations and with the private sector. Sixth and lastly, the UN ought to de securitize narratives through mainstreaming in prevalence of violence (PVE) programs to position PVE as a challenge to governance and development as a rebuttal to the counterproductive impact of stigmatization and over securitization.

Further academic study must apply rigor to evaluate subsequent changes in United Nations-based governance of counter-terrorism, in light of the manifestation of the reforms of the UNOCT in post-ISIS stabilization in Syria and Iraq. Comparative analysis involving the level subnational differences within states can shed light as to why some communities are able to portray more positive attitudes to interventions delivered under the aegis of the United Nations in comparison to other communities. Further examination into the role of the private sector involvement in combating online extremism can also guide industry-related regulatory measures that can balance security against the rights to freedom of expression and the right to privacy.

The results of the current research support the view that accomplishment of sustainable counter-terrorism results goes beyond institutional consistency and resources mobilization. These results depend on legitimacy building and maintenance, upon the ability to respond to diversity of local contexts, upon making the commitment of human-rights standards organic to all parts of the program design and execution. Whether or not the UN will maintain its authoritative position in the global governance of the issue of counter-terrorism will depend on its ability to bridge the



normative operational gap as it looks to navigate the geopolitical division that has become a hallmark of the international security realm.

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