

## Background Guide



United Nations Security Council

Topic A: Addressing State Fragility with the Rise of Non-State Actors

Topic B: Status of Current Peacekeeping Missions

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## **Topic A: Emerging Threats in Global Terrorism**

### **Background:**

Terrorist attacks and threats continue to occur worldwide, including the shift in trends on global terrorism in the past 30+ years. Despite the fact that terrorist groups continue to exist on a worldwide scale, their methodology and plans have changed with the times.<sup>1</sup> In the early 2000s, the focus of the international community was on terrorist organizations acquiring chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons. While this threat still exists, subsequent assaults have turned to the use of less difficult but more accessible things<sup>2</sup>. For example, vans and trucks were utilized by the Islamic States (ISIL/Da'esh) in their attacks that occurred in Nice, Berlin, London and Barcelona<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the quantity and variety of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) joining currently active terrorist organizations has substantially grown in comparison to previous FTF numbers<sup>4</sup>. Despite the fact that the United Nations does not have an official definition of terrorism, there is a consensus among leading international organizations that terrorists are non-state actors whose actions are motivated by an ideology to cause terror and violence<sup>5</sup>. However, regional organizations and Member States have distinct definitions of terrorism, resulting in disparate capacities and priorities for devoting resources to combatting terrorism and implementing the current UN counter-terrorism framework<sup>6</sup>. The United Nations has also created additional frameworks and policies to strengthen the anti-terrorism regimes for countering

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<sup>1</sup> UN Security Council, Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (S/RES/1540 (2004)), 2004; Deutsche Welle, Search for Berlin attack suspect intensifies as anger in Germany grows, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 5 Bolon, Van Hits Pedestrians in Deadly Barcelona Terror Attack, The New York Times, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> UN, Security Council, CTED, CTED Trends Report: The Challenge of Returning and Relocating Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Research Perspectives, 2018, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Santarelli, Nonstate Actors, 2016; UN DPI, United Nations Urged to Pay More Heed to Role of 'Non-State Actors' in Approach to Global Problems, 2004; Daboné, International law: armed groups in a state-centric system, 2011, pp. 395-396; The Global Regime for Terrorism, Council on Foreign Relations, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> The Global Regime for Terrorism, Council on Foreign Relations, 2011.

terrorism. In 2006, UNGA adopted the *United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*. It expands the frameworks established by the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy existing standards and introduces the four pillars for a simplified approach to counter terrorism. The first pillar addresses minimizing the environment favorable and conducive to terrorism, whereas the second pillar addresses resisting and preventing the spread of terrorism. The third encourages strengthening Member States' capabilities to combat terrorism, while the fourth pillar focuses on protection of human rights and adherence to the rule of law.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, there has been a rise in far-right extremism, with groups like the Proud Boys, Atomwaffen Division, and the Oath Keepers carrying out violent attacks in the United States and other countries. Far-right groups often target minorities, immigrants, and religious communities and are motivated by racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-government ideologies.

The past several years have seen an increase in the number of lone – wolf attacks, where individuals carry out acts of terrorism on their own without any direct support or coordination from a larger group. These attacks can be difficult to prevent, as the attackers often have no known connections to terrorist organizations and may use simple, easily available weapons such as knives and vehicles as part of their attack to cause damage and instill fear. Lone wolf attacks have become increasingly common in recent years, both in the United States and around the world. In the United States, for example, lone wolf attacks accounted for most of all terrorist attacks between 2010 and 2018. Similarly, in Europe, there has been a rise in the number of lone wolf attacks carried out by individuals inspired by extremist ideologies, including Islamism and far-right extremism.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> PBS – Frontline. “Lone Wolf Attacks Are Becoming More Common – And More Deadly.” <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/lone-wolf-attacks-are-becoming-more-common-and-more-deadly/>

As a relatively young field, cyberattacks constitute the most dangerous technical threat. In tandem with cyber-attacks, disruptive technologies occupy the second position. It is rather noteworthy that the dissemination of false information ranks third, after the growth of information and technology, AI, the rapid acceleration of digitalization, and automation.<sup>9</sup> One way that new technologies are being used by terrorist groups is using social media and online propaganda. Extremist groups use social media platforms to disseminate propaganda, recruit followers, and coordinate attacks. They also use encrypted messaging apps to communicate with each other and plan attacks, making it more difficult for law enforcement to monitor their activities. Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning have also made it easier for extremist groups to create sophisticated deepfakes, which can be used to spread disinformation and manipulate public opinion. Another emerging threat in global terrorism is the use of autonomous weapons and drones. Terrorist groups can use drones to carry out attacks, conduct surveillance, and deliver explosives. Autonomous weapons, such as unmanned ground vehicles and robots, can also be used to carry out attacks with minimal human involvement.<sup>10</sup> These technologies can make it more difficult for law enforcement to respond to and prevent attacks, as they can be operated remotely and do not require direct physical contact with targets. Cyber warfare is another emerging threat in global terrorism, as terrorist groups can use cyber-attacks to disrupt critical infrastructure, steal sensitive information, and carry out acts of sabotage<sup>11</sup>. These attacks can have significant economic and social consequences, as they can disrupt essential services and undermine public trust in institutions. However, technical advancement, such as AI, biotechnology, and the Internet of Things, may provide terrorists with opportunity to undertake

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<sup>9</sup> NATO – Centre of Excellence Defense Against Terrorism. “Emerging Threats in Terrorism”.  
[https://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/researches/13-Emerging\\_ThreatsinTerrorism.pdf](https://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/researches/13-Emerging_ThreatsinTerrorism.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> USIP. “United States Institute of Peace Special Report: Cyberterrorism – How Real is the Threat?”  
<https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr119.pdf>

high-profile attacks by devising new, and more distant assault tactics and collaborating across borders<sup>12</sup>. Terrorists will also seek out weapons of mass destruction and other weaponry that will enable them to undertake an increased efficiency of attacks, resulting in large numbers of casualties.

**Current Situation:**

Experts place a significant deal of attention on the escalating tensions between big powers and predict that this competition will lead to an increase in proxy warfare. However, analysts do not predict a frontal clash owing to the battle of views between big nations. After 9/11, the international security agenda is likely to be dominated by concerns concerning physical force. The resumption of interstate strife in Europe. However, the aftermath of the conflict in Ukraine is likely to lead to a worsening of the situation in Ukraine because of the large influx of weapons and the escalation of violence. Numerous weapons are likely to be smuggled into the European periphery, e.g., to the Balkans, which increases the likelihood of future confrontations. The scenario might be paralleled to the fall of the Libyan regime. The ensuing battle in the Sahel area, which was fueled by Libyan arsenals' munitions. Moreover, these problems are quite pertinent in Europe. Regional security concerns are anticipated to be more severe in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East since security threats seldom go far from an area. However, the tendency toward a more comprehensive approach to security.

There have also been changes in peacekeeping operations because of emerging threats. DPKO's mandate includes aiding the Secretary-General and Member States in sustaining international peace and security by reducing violent extremism in its activities. While the 2018 report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) explicitly states that UN

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<sup>12</sup> ODNI. "Global Trends: A More Contested World."  
<https://www.dni.gov/index.php/gt2040-home/emerging-dynamics/international-dynamics/the-future-of-terrorism>

peacekeeping missions "are neither suited nor equipped to engage in counter-terrorism operations,<sup>13</sup>" peacekeeping missions are increasingly forced to reconcile that the violent extremism their operations address includes terrorist acts; this is becoming increasingly relevant as recent terrorist attacks have specifically targeted peacekeepers<sup>14</sup>. In response, the Secretary-General declared in February 2018 the need to simplify UN-wide anti-terrorism activities, including a greater emphasis on integrating these techniques into peacekeeping operations.<sup>15</sup>

**Past UN Actions:**

Aside from work with the CTC, the United Nations system has been developing and strengthening established conventions and frameworks, to further encourage cooperation among Member States, regional organizations and interested stakeholders. In 2006, the UN adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which provides a framework for member states to prevent and combat terrorism while upholding human rights and the rule of law. The strategy emphasizes the importance of cooperation among member states and the need to address the conditions that facilitate the spread of terrorism.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the G7 has established the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to combat terrorist financing.<sup>17</sup> The FATF is an intergovernmental organization that develops and promotes policies to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. It works with member states to implement measures to detect and prevent the flow of funds to terrorist organizations. Along with established legal frameworks and GCTS, The UN has developed a range of capacity- building initiatives to support member states in preventing and countering

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<sup>13</sup> 9 UN Peacekeeping, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/72/19), 2018, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> UN DPI, UN chief inks pact to better coordinate counter-terrorism support to Governments, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> UN Office of Counter Terrorism. "UN global Counter – Terrorism Strategy.

<https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>

<sup>17</sup> IMF. "Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism.

<https://www.imf.org/external/np/leg/amlcft/eng/aml1.htm>



terrorism. This includes providing technical assistance to member states in developing national strategies and legislation to combat terrorism and building the capacity of law enforcement and border security agencies.<sup>18</sup>

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Does your country have an apparatus or framework similar to the CTC to counter terrorist attacks? If not, what steps have been taken to develop one?
2. Regarding new and emerging technologies, does your country have a regime framework to regulate the private and public use of the new technology?
3. What steps has your country taken to deal with right-wing extremism? Has your country experienced attacks perpetrated by right wing groups?
4. Regarding lone-wolf style attacks, has your country experienced them? What has been the leading cause?
5. Has your country been impacted by terrorist attacks in the past? How were they perpetrated?

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<sup>18</sup> UN-CTC. "Law enforcement". <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/law-enforcement>

## **Topic B: Status of Current Peacekeeping Missions**

### **Background:**

The Charter of the United Nations gives the Security Council the primary responsibility for international peace and security.<sup>19</sup> Although this does not explicitly include military operations conducted under UN auspices, peacekeeping has become one of the primary tools that the UN uses to deal with military crises<sup>20</sup>. A peacekeeping operation is a deployment of international military or police forces into another country for the purpose of preventing an armed conflict from resuming. The UN defines three principles as the core of a peacekeeping operation: Consent of the Parties, Impartiality, and Non-Use of force except in self- defense and defense of the mandate<sup>21</sup>. In other words, a UN peacekeeping operation should be approved by all of the major parties in an armed conflict, enforce their mandate without bias, and use force only as a last resort and to the minimum possible degree. After UN peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Rwanda and Yugoslavia encountered substantial resistance from combatants, making it difficult or impossible to achieve their mandates, the UN has become more willing to conduct peace enforcement missions in which the UN uses force against participants in an armed conflict in order to compel an end to the fighting.

Peacebuilding is focused on preventing a resurgence of violence by improving the nation's capacity to resolve conflict and carry out state functions<sup>22</sup>. Modern UN missions are frequently multidimensional operations that combine elements of peacekeeping, peacebuilding,

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<sup>19</sup>“United Nations Charter (full text) Chapter 5 Art. 24 | United Nations.” the United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

<sup>20</sup> “Mandates and the legal basis for peacekeeping.” United Nations Peacekeeping, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mandates-and-legal-basis-peacekeeping>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> “Terminology.” United Nations Peacekeeping, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology>.



and peace enforcement in order to address the demands of a complex, evolving situation.<sup>23</sup> UN missions conduct a wide range of activities aimed at preventing or resolving armed conflict. More traditional peacekeeping missions perform essentially military functions, such as observing and reporting on military forces to help enforce a ceasefire or conducting patrols between opposing forces to act as a buffer.<sup>24</sup>

While the mission is deployed, the SG will present to the Security Council reports that will then be used to review and evaluate the mission's performance to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and mandate. It is during this review period that adjustments to the mandate are made as necessary to improve the mission's effectiveness. Of course, this also leads to the question of withdrawal: during the review and evaluation process, if the situation on the ground is found to have improved, and the objectives of the mission have been met, the mission is withdrawn. Depending on the severity and need, the withdrawal can be immediate or over time. Since the first peacekeeping mission in 1948, there have been over 70+ missions deployed across the globe. While there are currently 12 active at this time, the previous missions have been both successes and failures by a variety of actors across the international stage. As you read earlier, during the review and evaluation of each active mission, the Security Council member states review the mandate and its scope based on the language attached to the UNSC resolution that forms the mission. Upon ensuring (from the perspective of the member states) that the objectives of the mission have been met, the mission and mandate are ended, though this can have a variety of reactions. Some will state that DPKO missions have been successful in preventing or resolving conflicts, protecting civilians and promoting stability and development in conflict

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<sup>23</sup> United Nations. United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2008, [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/capstone\\_eng\\_0.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/capstone_eng_0.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid p. 21

zones and their broader regions. Critics, on the other hand, will point out to the shortcomings of UN peacekeeping operations, including the lack of adequate resources, poor coordination among international and national actors, and instances of misconduct and abuse by the peacekeepers themselves, often against the civilians that they are mandated to protect.<sup>25</sup>

### **Current Situation:**

Since the conclusion of the Cold War, the United Nations has taken a number of institutional initiatives to enhance the efficacy of peacekeeping operations and adapt them to the evolving character of international crises. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the ensuing geopolitical realignments spawned a large number of international crises that the United Nations was called upon to manage; between 1989 and 1994<sup>26</sup>, the UN security council approved twenty new missions. The nature of the operations shifted from the relatively simple task of monitoring ceasefires in the aftermath of a conventional war to the more complex role of assisting in the resolution or amelioration of civil conflicts in which fighting is ongoing, front lines are fluid or nonexistent, and state authority is frequently destroyed. A greater emphasis on safeguarding civilians is a crucial conceptual change that has significant significance today. UNAMIR, the United Nations operation in Rwanda, failed to prevent the genocide of about 800,000 people in 1994, while a UN safe zone in Bosnia was the location of a 1995 massacre that resulted in the deaths of around 8,000 civilians who relied on the United Nations for protection. These incidents prompted significant criticism of the United Nations and serious introspection on the part of the United Nations. Subsequent reviews of both catastrophes revealed that UN efforts had been hampered by insufficient resources and political commitment, as well as the refusal of member

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<sup>25</sup> AFSA. "Why Peacekeeping Fails". <https://afsa.org/why-peacekeeping-fails>

<sup>26</sup> "Our history | United Nations Peacekeeping." UN Peacekeeping, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-history>

states and UN leadership to take decisive action.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the United Nations made the safety of civilians a top priority for future peacekeeping operations, commencing with Resolution S/RES/1265 of the Security Council from 1999.<sup>28</sup> Additional resolutions from the Security Council in 2006 and 2009, as well as a report from the Secretary General in 2017, have served to create a practical and conceptual basis for supporting civilians.<sup>29</sup>

### **Past UN Actions:**

The United Nations has also initiated several measures to enhance the efficiency of peacekeeping. The Brahimi Report of 2000 recommended longer-term strategic planning, more realistic mandates, and stronger information processing and analytical capability on the side of UN command structures, as well as increased stakeholder commitment<sup>30</sup>. This was followed by "Peace Operations 2010" in 2006, a long-term plan to enhance the efficacy of peace operations. This strategy centered on strengthening links with other organizations, enhancing the capabilities available to UN operations, and creating more integrated and adaptable command structures. In 2008, the United Nations issued a "Capstone Doctrine" consisting of essential concepts and best practices for commanders in the field to implement in their operations<sup>31</sup>. In 2009, the United Nations initiated the New Horizon project to identify long-term strategic and policy concerns for UN operations. The High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations was created in 2014

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations. Report of the Independent Inquiry into the actions of the United Nations during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. p.3 15 September 1999.

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/348/76/IMG/N9934876.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations. The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook. 2020, [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo\\_poc\\_handbook\\_final\\_as\\_printed.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> "Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect." United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml>.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations. A/55/305-S/2000/809.

<https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2F55%2F305&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>.

<sup>31</sup> United Nations. United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2008, [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/capstone\\_eng\\_0.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/capstone_eng_0.pdf).

by then-Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to examine the condition of UN operations and restore interaction with stakeholders. It published its final report in 2015, recommending additional resources for conflict prevention and mediation, a "field-focused" approach to operation management by the UN Secretariat, and more measures to protect civilians. The most recent endeavor to enhance peacekeeping is Action for Peacekeeping (A4P). This initiative established a set of eight priority commitment areas (politics, women, peace and security, protection, safety and security, performance and accountability, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, partnerships, conduct of peacekeepers and peacekeeping operations) as well as a set of metrics for measuring progress in these areas. As of 2023, continued efforts are being made to operationalize these principles and sustain advancement in these measures.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How is your country affected by UN peacekeeping operations?
2. What is your country's position on UN Operations?
3. If your country has contributed military personnel to DPKO missions, have you lost any personnel?

**Useful Links:**

- <https://peacekeeping.un.org>
- [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/capstone\\_eng\\_0.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/capstone_eng_0.pdf)
- <https://www.stimson.org/project/peacekeeping-reform/>