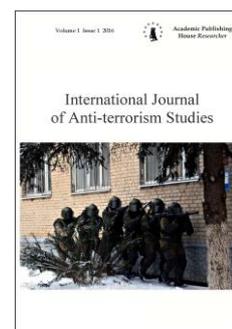


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Russia and the UN: Countering the Root Causes of Terrorism

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Abstract

This article examines the international community's efforts in elaborating and enacting counterterrorism preventive measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. Special emphasis is placed on the comprehensive approach to counterterrorism, which provides for the inclusive participation of non-state actors in the fight against violent extremism. The authors argue that the task of strengthening the preventive pillar of international cooperation is hampered by multiple tensions and divergent views that have, inter alia, hindered the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism with its universal definition of terrorism.

The authors also analyze the growing influence of the Russian Federation within the UN's counterterrorism entities, as well as its position regarding the new participatory trend of international security policies. Russia's national approach to counterterrorism involves the close collaboration between state and non-state actors with the purpose of fostering multiethnic and interreligious tolerance through counterterrorism propaganda and the promotion of patriotism. Accordingly, Russia strongly supports international initiatives to counter the ideology of terrorism through the regulation of the virtual space, while fervently upholding the principles of the sovereignty of States and non-interference in domestic affairs.

The authors concluded that Russia's perspective on counterterrorism openly clashes with the Western approach centered on the democratic community-based response to terrorism. Moreover, the human rights driven approach for military interventions in sovereign States, promoted by Western countries, is not compatible with the principles of sovereignty defended by Russia. In the light of the increasing leverage of Russia and of regional platforms, such as the Shanghai cooperation organization, within the counterterrorism branches of the UN, the authors suggest that the Russian vision of international counterterrorism policies grounded in values of State sovereignty could eventually prevail over the Western stance of democracy promotion through the prism of the Global War on Terror.

The sources used in this paper include official UN documents such as resolutions, statements and press releases. Academic and NGO studies on counterterrorism, newspaper articles as well as declarations of the Russian government also complete the authors' reflections.

Keywords: counterterrorism, the United Nations, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the Shanghai cooperation organization, Russia, preventive measures, counternarratives, the ideology of terrorism, inclusive participation, civil society.

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1. Introduction

One of the major challenges facing the international community is to build, develop and coordinate a comprehensive and inclusive response to the growing global threat of terrorism. Nowadays, international organizations and their Member States share the observation that the regal powers of sovereign States do not suffice to tackle violent extremism.

Encouraging non-state actors, including civil society, to lend a hand to state and law enforcement actors in the fight against terrorism is a strategy that United Nations (UN) Member States perceive as necessary and innovative. What is more, bringing together the anti-terrorist potential offered by all state and non-state actors has become an inescapable imperative, which falls within the context of international efforts aimed at developing consistent counterterrorism preventive measures to address and combat the root causes of terrorism.

A great player in the prevention of terrorism on the international stage is Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council which has, in recent years, increased its geopolitical and diplomatic influence over the counter-terrorism architecture of the UN. Russia is very proactive in promoting international legal tools to broaden the fight against terrorism and to give a new impetus to the UN's counterterrorism mandate. However, long-standing disputes regarding the nature and implementation of counterterrorism measures stall the development of a universal strategic approach to global security which leaves the future of international counterterrorism cooperation widely open and uncertain.

2. Discussion

The UN and counterterrorism: building complexity and defining the undefinable

The founding stones of the UN's counter-terrorism architecture were laid in 1999 when the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team to report to a Sanctions Committee of the Council in 1999 was created following Al-Qaeda's simultaneous attacks on two American embassies in 1998. 9/11 triggered the creation of a new Counter-Terrorism Committee which was complemented, in 2004, by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). During the same year, the counter-terrorism structure of the UN was further modified by the creation of a Committee of the Council and a Group of Experts to prevent non-state actors from getting hold of weapons of mass destruction. In 2006, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), composed of many entities from within and outside the UN system, was established. The CTITF brings together Thematic working groups which echo the UN's responses to terrorism and its Global Strategy main guidelines. In 2011, further extra-budgetary funds from various Member States were channeled into the creation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) to ensure optimal support of Member States seeking to implement the Global Strategy.

The complex counterterrorism architecture, characterized by multilayered and overlapping mechanisms, had long been subject to criticism and led to the creation of a new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism following the adoption of resolution 71/291 in June 2017. Vladimir Ivanovich Voronkov of the Russian Federation was appointed as Under-Secretary-General and head of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, a decision firmly supported by the Russian delegation ([Ambassador V. Nebenzia, 28/06/2017](#)). A 2 million US dollars voluntary contribution was allocated to the budget of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT) by the Russian Government. In addition, from 2019 onwards Russia will allocate 500 thousand US dollars per year to finance the activities of the OCT ([Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation, 2018](#)). The aim of the new office is to strengthen coordination and efficiency, as well as to provide a strategic leadership to the UN in its counterterrorism efforts ([Baage, Stoffer, 2017](#)). Countering the root causes of terrorism and enacting counterterrorism preventive measures is among the chief priorities of the OCT.

The first UN counterterrorism treaties were signed in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the widespread practice of hijacking and unlawful seizure of aircrafts ([UN Action against Terrorism](#)). In this regard, one can recall the Conventions on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft (1963), for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft (1970) and the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation (1971) ([UN Action Against Terrorism](#)). The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted by consensus in the form of a

resolution on 8 September 2006, reflects the goal of the General Assembly of redoubling efforts to combat terrorism at the national, regional and international levels and marks the first time “*that all UN Member States of the United Nations have agreed to a common strategic and operational framework to fight terrorism*” (UN Action Against Terrorism).

Its Plan of Action is based on 4 pillars: addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, preventing and combatting terrorism, building Member States’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism, and ensuring the respect for human rights and the rule of law (UN Action Against Terrorism). The strategy calls for collective counterterrorism measures and smart policies encompassing all segments of society: civil society, regional organizations and the private sector. Moreover, it expands the field of conflict resolution by introducing two new dimensions: on the one hand, the inclusive participation of civil society organizations and, on the other hand, informal collective measures in the fight against terrorism. If the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy calls for the engagement of the civil and business sectors in the fight against terrorism, as well as for the facilitation of inter-civilization dialogue and religious tolerance, it is Russia that advocated these pioneering initiatives within the United Nations General Assembly (Rogachev, 2007).

Yet it is known that Russia strongly upholds the respect of the principles of sovereignty and equality of States, as well as non-interference in domestic affairs in the frame of international antiterrorism cooperation. As such, the Russian position vehemently opposes any attempt, within counterterrorism efforts, to disregard legitimate governments’ proprieties in support of “independent” actors or “international civil society”, which in Russia’s view, are likely to destabilize countries and exacerbate terrorist threats (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation). This said, the comprehensive and participatory component of the international approach to counterterrorism was further reinforced through the adoption of resolution 2250 on 9 December 2015. This unprecedented resolution, which strengthens the foundations of the preventive pillar of the fight against terrorism at the international level, encourages UN Member States to put in place inclusive mechanisms at the national level to ensure youth participation, especially in the fight against violent extremism (Security Council Resolution 2250, 2015).

According to Anne Aly, Australian professor and expert in terrorism, the inclusive participation of companies, regional and transnational actors and civil society organizations in the fight against violent extremism is a new trend in international security policies. This “smart” counterterrorism strategy is also in line with the conclusions reached in 2008 by former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: “*The best response to a corrosive, malevolent ideology is a strong assertion of collective resistance.*” However, some scholars might argue that the malleable and broad interpretation of terrorism in the national laws of Member States, gives a deeply ambivalent role to civil society in the security field. In this regard, the greatest concern is that States may be given the green light to clampdown on civil society and opposition groups under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

In this context, the outstanding issue, of course, remains the absence of a universal definition of the concept of terrorism. In 1996, India first pushed for the ratification of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism providing a universal definition of terrorism and enhancing prosecution and extradition of terrorists. Yet the negotiation process surrounding the adoption of the Convention is in a limbo since 1996 due to a lack of consensus over the definition of terrorism. The question of integrating the notion of the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence and self-determination into the wording of the Convention provoked considerable tensions which hindered its adoption. More specifically, the *Ad Hoc* Committee, in charge of drafting the Convention when negotiations started in 2001, faced two divergent trends. On the one hand, the Organization of the Islamic Conference supported a clear distinction between the generic term of “terrorism” and acts committed to defend the right to self-determination. On the other hand, many Western-European States favored a criminal law definition omitting self-determination which was perceived as a broader political issue.

The United Nations provided its first definition of “terrorist acts” in resolution 49/60, adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1994 which draws a parallel between terrorism and “provoking a state of terror”. In turn, it deflects the issue of drawing a line between the concepts of “freedom fighters” and “terrorists” defining terrorist acts 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" (UN General Assembly, 09/12/1994).

Spreading terror or intimidating the population are also key elements of Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004) on Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. As in the previous case, no mention is made of the distinction between "terrorists" and "freedom fighters". Terrorist acts are summed up once more as criminal acts, including against civilians: "*Committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, [...] are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature*" (Security Council Resolution 1566, 2004).

The main pitfalls which are associated with the ratification process of the Convention on International Terrorism also concern the open question of whether to exclude potential offenses perpetrated by national armed forces from the definition of terrorism. Christian Walter, co-author of "Defining Terrorism in National and International Law", explains the failure of the United Nations to define terrorism in the following terms: "*UN action against terrorism reveals that freedom fighters and the question of whether or not the official forces of a State can commit terrorist offenses has always rendered debates on defining terrorism very difficult*" (Walter, 2004: 23-45).

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) including China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as its founding State Members is, unlike the UN, very proud of its accomplishments in defining the phenomenon of terrorism. SCO Secretary-General Alimov Rašid Kutbiddinovič claimed in 2016 that the SCO is the only organization that has so far developed and unanimously adopted a definition of terrorism (SCO, 2016). Article 1 of the 2001 Shanghai Convention on Combatting Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism presents the organization's first definition of terrorism: "*Terrorism means: (a) Any act recognized as an offence in one of the treaties listed in the Annex to this Convention (hereinafter the Annex) and as defined in that treaty; (b) Any other act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, or to cause significant damage to any physical object, as well as the organization, planning, abetting or incitement of such an act, when the purpose of the act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, disrupt public security or compel the authorities or an international organization to carry out or abstain from carrying out an act, and subject to criminal prosecution under the national legislation of the Parties*" (Shanghai Convention on Combatting Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, 15/06/2001).

The SCO's definition of terrorism contains many elements that echo international standards. For instance, it emphasizes the intentional nature of the act (to cause death), its purpose (to provoke terror), its victims (civilians) and the perpetration of the act itself. However, the rather vague expression "disrupting public safety" seems to broaden the scope of the act of terrorism, thereby including in its definition crimes against the state. As suggested by Human Rights in China: "*This ambiguity could permit a state to cast as terrorism those social movements it characterizes as a threat to "public security", without any evidence of actual or threatened harm to individual members of a population*" (HRIC, 2011: 43). The SCO definition of terrorism is enshrined in the broader doctrine of the "three evils": terrorism, separatism and extremism. The Chinese government has played a leading role in formulating this very particular conceptual triad, which has oftentimes been criticised of favouring an interchangeable use of the three crimes it rests upon. For its part, the Russian antiterrorism legislation has been a major source of inspiration for SCO security definitions.

Russia's journey to counterterrorism leadership

Since the attacks of 11 September 2001, the Russian Federation suggests it has played a dynamic and leading role in the consolidation and strengthening of the international coalition against terrorism in the framework of the UN (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation). Furthermore, Russia regularly asserts it attaches paramount importance to the UN's security coordination function: "*The Russian Federation is firmly convinced that the global*

terrorist threat should be tackled jointly on the basis of a truly collective approach with the central coordinating role of the United Nations and respect for international law while refraining from double standards” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation).

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai cooperation organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are the regional organizations in which Russia plays a dominant role. They have all signed memorandums of understanding with UN structures and actively cooperate in the security field. Strengthening collaboration between the UN and these international regional organizations is a great priority for Russia, as stated by Vladimir Putin in 2003: *“I think it will be useful to increase work within the framework of the UN with regional international structures. This is the direct path to the growth of economic prosperity in various parts of the world. And accordingly, to limit potential threats, and support a general strategic balance in the world” (Putin, 2003).*

The Russian Federation underscores it has long-standing experience in the fight against terrorism and has embraced, since the early 2000s, a cross-cutting and inclusive approach to the prevention of terrorism. Moreover, following the adoption of the UN Global Strategy, Russia states it has *“established a completely new security system for combating terrorism, and in those 11 years, the terrorist threat in Russia has been drastically reduced” (Ambassador A Nebenzia, 28/06/2017).* More should be done, in Russia’s view, to enhance international counterterrorism cooperation which, however, faces the obstacle of a lack of consensus regarding its nature and implementation. The Russian delegation has long been encouraging the drafting of the Comprehensive Convention Against International Terrorism, a Convention Against Nuclear Terrorism (Fedotov, 18/08/2003), as well as a Universal Convention to combat cybercrime under the umbrella of the United Nations. On another note, both Russia and China have even advocated the creation of a global “united front” to combat terrorism after the terror attacks in Paris (Aneja, 2015). Already in 2003, Deputy Russian Foreign minister Yuri Fedotov asserted: *“We highlight the task of forming a truly universal antiterrorist front, with the Security Council Counter-Terrorist Committee playing the central role and developing interaction with regional and subregional organisations. Russia will continue to assist the Counter-Terrorist Committee to develop working contacts with the antiterrorist bodies of the CIS and the Shanghai Co-operation Organization” (Fedotov, 18/08/2003).*

In Vladimir Putin’s annual address to the Federal Assembly in 2015, the Russian president once more stressed the need to discard all disputes and differences to create a “powerful fist”, i.e. a single anti-terrorist front founded on the basis of international law and under the auspices of the United Nations (Kremlin, 03/12/2015). Russia’s disappointment vis-à-vis the international community’s counterterrorism strategy stems from its reluctance to invoke the principle of reciprocity. Indeed, the UN has not yet harmonized existing treaties on extradition and the transfer of criminal proceedings. Resolution 2322, adopted by the Security Council in 2016, enhances international judicial cooperation in the fight against terrorism as well as information sharing but does not call for the harmonization of extradition proceedings (Security Council Resolution 2322, 2016). Instead, extradition agreements have been signed within the CSTO and the CIS. Likewise, the SCO has enshrined the principle of mutual recognition in the 2005 Concept of Cooperation, leading to the unconditional expulsion and extradition of suspects (Zaum, 2013: 175), which has very much been criticized by human rights defenders and Western countries.

Russia believes the most urgent tasks in the global fight against terrorism are related to six key areas: *“strengthening international counter-terrorism cooperation; preventing violent extremism; addressing the use of the Internet by terrorists; enhancing intercultural dialogue; addressing the threat of foreign terrorist fighters; and increasing the exchange of information and good counter-terrorism practices.” (Voronkov, 2017)* Russia’s national contribution to enhance the global fight against terrorism is in part linked to the detecting and blocking of the illicit financial flows of drug trafficking. It was indeed under Russian initiative that the Financial Action Task Force’s (FATF) main task became to counter terrorist financing with a special focus on identifying the channels of ISIL’s financial support. Moreover, it should be stressed that: *“For the first time in the 25-year history of the FATF, upon the initiative of Russia, changes were made to the universal standards for combating the financing of terrorism, which now explicitly prohibit not only financial, but also any other kind of material support to ISIL, including trade in*

hydrocarbons and other natural resources” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Russian Federation).

Such accomplishments are due to Russia’s efforts leading to the amendment of FATK standards to ensure the comprehensive implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 2199 and 2253 (Feoktistov, 12/12/2016). Also, it was the Russian Federation which sponsored in 2015 the adoption of the milestone UN Security Council resolution 2199 on countering the financing of ISIL, Al-Nusrah Front, Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups (Voronkov, 04-05/04/2018). Likewise, Russia initiated the draft resolution *Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security*. This resolution established the UN Group of Governmental Experts on International Information Security in 2016, which analyses the application of international law in the field of States’ use of ICTs and examines the norms and principles of responsible behavior of States, confidence-building and capacity-building (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Russian Federation).

At the core of Russia’s counterterrorism concerns lies the digital sphere and the fight against the propaganda of terror on the Internet. Virtual space is to be steadily regulated and is in need, in Russia’s opinion, of the adoption of “universal rules of responsible behavior of States” to ensure greater international information security cooperation. As specified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation: *“Such rules should enshrine in the digital sphere the principles of the non-use of force, respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as equal rights of all States to participate in the governance of the Internet”* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Russian Federation).

Together with the Member States of the SCO, Russia submitted in 2011 “The International Code of Conduct for Information Security” (the “Code”) to the UN General Assembly. The document was later revised in 2015 and aims to develop rules of behavior in the digital space, as well as to extend the notions of sovereignty and territorial integrity to the virtual sphere, which according to scholars, may be problematic under international human rights law. Unrestricted control over the digital medium and its content could indeed contradict to rights to privacy, freedom of opinion and expression (McKune, 2015).

Over the past years, the Kremlin has prioritized the counteraction of terrorist ideology not only on the international level, but also in its national antiterrorist measures. It therefore comes as little surprise that Russian legislation defines terrorism both as a practice of provoking terror and as an ideology of violence. As stated by Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism at the VII Moscow Conference on International Security, in 2018: *“We can put terrorists in jails, but we cannot put ideas in jail. We must confront terrorism on the emotional and ideological level to win hearts and minds, and in the first place - of the youth. This has become an essential component of our fight against terror – perhaps the most difficult yet most important part of our battle for ultimate victory”* (Voronkov, 04-05/04/2018). Tackling the scourge of homegrown terrorism is a task that countries carry out in accordance with their own historical background, norms and system of values. For example, Western countries, namely the US, the United Kingdom and EU States, resort to enhancing the community-based, democratic civil society response to the threat of domestic terrorism. In contrast, Russia’s approach to the prevention of terrorism involves fostering mutual respect and understanding among its multiple ethnic and religious groups and promoting national patriotic values (UN, 2016). This is because the Kremlin considers that the strength of Russia lies in the free development of its peoples, in the harmonious diversity of cultures, languages and traditions, as well as in the mutual respect and dialogue between Orthodox, Muslims, Hebrew and Buddhist followers (Kremlin, 2015). Russia has for centuries contained the threat posed by the radicalization of its native Muslim population. Only recently is it also facing the menace of radicalized Muslim migrants whilst the Western approach to counterterrorism mainly focuses on first and second generation Muslim migrant diasporas. As Ekaterina Stepanova, Lead Researcher and Head of Peace and Conflict Studies at the Institute of the World Economy & International Relations, puts it while comparing the US and Russian approach to counterterrorism: *“Russia’s experience may actually be of high relevance for the United States on how to avoid “securitizing” large well- integrated domestic Muslim populations (despite heavy security pressures and a harsh stance against fringe Islamist extremists)”* (Stepanova, 2016).

Russia strongly believes that only a strong full-fledged civil society can ensure the success of its national counterterrorism strategy. However, the Russian perspective underpins civil society organizations sponsored by the State which have demonstrated their readiness to collaborate with governmental entities. Nowadays in Russia, there are many federal and regional programs that promote the counterterrorism partnership between the government and civil society organizations to address the conditions conducive to the spread of the ideology of terrorism. In 2015, Russia established its Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, which focuses on inculcating multiethnic and interreligious tolerance in Russian society, and the youth is undoubtedly under the spotlight of the Kremlin's preventive counterterrorism efforts. The Federation's Comprehensive Plans of Terrorism-Supportive Ideology Counteraction (for the periods of 2008-12 and 2013-18) provide the outline of preventive measures to counter the spread of terrorist narratives and to preserve the "hearts and minds" of its citizens. Municipal commissions for the reconciliation, social reintegration and adaptation to peaceful life foster sports activities, cultural projects and works of charity to ensure the positive development of the Russian youth, keeping it away from violent external influence. Moreover, according to the decree "On the Terms of Reference of the Federal Executive Authorities Answerable to the Russian Federation Government in the Field of Counterterrorism", federal agencies must actively participate in the prevention of terrorist ideology on Russian grounds. For example, the Education and Science Ministry introduced materials aimed at counteracting terrorist narratives in the curricula of all education institutions across Russia and provides training programs for higher education institutions focused on terrorism ideology counteraction. Other counterterrorism governmental commissions publish positive antiterrorist messages on the Internet and organize events to promote patriotism and multiethnic harmony in collaboration with Russian civil associations (UN, 2016).

With its extensive national experience in this field, Russia is unsurprisingly a driving force on the counternarrative front of the international fight against terrorism. In 2006, the Russian delegation submitted a draft resolution on Counteraction to terrorist and radical extremist ideology to the Security Council. Fraught with controversy and fierce criticism, this resolution was "*the first international call for criminalizing the instigation to terrorism and public advocacy thereof*" (UN, 2016). The torch of countering terrorist narratives was later taken up by Egypt, member of the non-aligned movement, which sponsored resolution 2354, unanimously adopted by the Security Council in 2017. The new framework encourages various actors of civil society, including the youth, families and education leaders to engage in the counteraction of terrorist narratives. It also calls for States to:

"Consider supporting the efforts aimed at raising public awareness regarding counter terrorist narratives through education and media, including through dedicated educational programs to pre-empt youth acceptance of terrorist narratives" (Security Council Resolution 2354, 2017).

According to human rights defenders, the Security Council's new guidelines on countering terrorist narratives fail to deploy a human rights approach. For instance, FIDH reports that the document does not take into due consideration the human rights abuses conducive to terrorist violence, leaves the definition of "narratives" open to national interpretation and does not provide recommendations as to how freedom of expression should be preserved while countering terrorism (FIDH, 2017). In addition, the resolution was drafted and approved without consultation of civil society human rights associations. In the light of this, the assumption put forward by human rights activists is the following: "*This rhetoric of targeting terrorism and extremism on the internet and eradicating terrorist ideologies has been used against human rights defenders, civil society organizations, the press, bloggers, and individuals*" (FIDH, 2017).

Within this framework, a thorny issue which goes to the root of political differences is Russia's and the non-aligned movement's will to place national sovereignty as the foundation of the international response to global security challenges. Such a position openly contradicts the human rights driven approach for military interventions in sovereign States promoted by Western countries, as well as the effort to stand for civil liberties while pursuing security interests. Besides, if Western countries uphold the view of independent civil society promoting and protecting human rights, Russia in contrast sponsors government-led civil society defending national values of patriotism and multiethnic harmony.

3. Conclusion

On the international stage today, Russia's comparative strength in countering terrorism is reflected through the areas of cooperation it is promoting: the fight against the ideology of terrorism and its narratives through the regulation of the virtual space and the strengthening of interethnic and interreligious tolerance together with the suppression of the financing of terrorism. Further, Russia calls upon the overall enhancement of international judicial cooperation in the aim of harmonizing, amongst other things, extradition proceedings of terrorist suspects. In this sense, enhanced interregional judicial cooperation has been achieved within the SCO, the CSTO and the CIS, which increasingly interact with UN structures, namely in the security field. The appointment of Vladimir Ivanovich Voronkov, head of the new Office of Counter-Terrorism, also casts a light onto Russia's growing influence within the counterterrorism entities of the UN, providing it leeway to push its national agenda on international counterterrorism policies.

The analysis of the UN counterterrorism strategy reveals the discrepancies between Member States in addressing the root causes of terrorism and in elaborating efficient preventive measures to tackle the spread of the ideology of violent extremism. Striking a balance between the Western and the Russian approach to countering terrorism is a difficult task, unveiling ideological and political confrontations. The increasing leverage of Russia within the counterterrorism architecture of the UN could lead to a shift of paradigm whereby the principle of sovereignty of the State, legitimizing the strict regulation of the digital sphere and encouraging government-led civil society groups to counter terrorist ideologies in collaboration with State entities, could replace the Western approach of democracy promotion through the prism of the Global War on Terror. One thing is certain, in a context in which the ratification process of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism is in a deadlock and a universal definition of terrorism fails to reach international consensus, Russia unceasingly pushes for greater global security collaboration mirroring, when possible, its national approach to counterterrorism.

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