

Enhancing Diplomatic Effectiveness in Combating Terrorism: an Alliance of Regional Organizations?

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Terrorism is a global, regional and local phenomenon. Hence effective counter-terrorism work requires an approach which incorporates all these perspectives. The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy recognizes this and calls on regional organizations to take an active role in the fight against terrorism. The OSCE and other regional organizations have a lot to offer.

For those not familiar with my organization, let me briefly note that the OSCE is the world's **largest regional security arrangement**, in terms of membership, under the UN Charter. It brings together 56 countries from North America to Central Asia, including all member states of the EU, NATO and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). We work on the basis of a **comprehensive concept of security**, which includes a political/military dimension, an economic/environmental dimension, as well as the human dimension of security. My Unit, the **Action against Terrorism Unit – or ATU**, is the organization's focal point for OSCE counter-terrorism activities.

Now, what I thought I would do is to first share some of my thoughts on the importance of diplomacy in the fight against terrorism and the role of regional organizations in this context, including the possible need to forge an Alliance of Regional Organizations. I will then elaborate on the counter-terrorism role of the OSCE, which has been recognized as a regional best practice by several of its members and international partners (e.g. UNODC, ICAO). To conclude, I will identify some lessons that can be learned from the OSCE counter-terrorism experience.

Expanded diplomacy as a long term insurance policy against terrorism

One of the most frequent questions I am asked is what should countries focus on when confronting the threat of terrorism. **Where to put priorities; where to allocate resources?** Terrorism will clearly not disappear overnight and we won't be able to prevent *all* attacks from happening in the near future. Terrorism has long since become a **self-sustaining, transnational process**.

In my view, a reasonable approach to deal with terrorism as a **long-term threat in a world that is increasingly interconnected** should put a **strategic emphasis on four areas**:

- Increasing preventive measures to **counter the spread of violent extremism and radicalization so as to deny terrorists support and new recruits**;
- **Restricting the spread of weapons of mass destruction** and related technology to the extent possible;
- Improving **crisis management and recovery capacity**, in order to reduce the magnitude of damage when attacks occur; and
- Reinvigorating **diplomacy and international counter-terrorism co-operation**. Diplomacy is a pre-requisite for effective use of all tools in the counter-terrorism toolkit.

Regional organizations can play an important role in all of these areas. But first and foremost I regard enhanced diplomacy as one of our best "**insurance policies**" against terrorism in the long run. The money spent on diplomacy now is leveraged by a huge multiplier in terms of having more **effective co-ordination of intelligence and actions** against terrorism, thereby avoiding extra costs and casualties *in the future*. Expanded diplomacy and international co-operation are critical to **strengthen countries' commitments and capabilities** to combat terrorism **worldwide**, as we can afford no weak link. And I suggest that we should put a special emphasis on effective use of regional, co-operative diplomacy as a multiplier.

The role of regional organizations in the global fight against terrorism

In 2006 and 2007, my Unit organized two roundtables gathering counterparts from other organizations. We achieved a very clear understanding of how regional organizations can add value in the fight against terrorism, especially with regard to the implementation of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy.

Let me simply underline that regional organizations enjoy **several comparative advantages**. These notably include smaller memberships that are rather homogeneous and thus more conducive to agreement; substantive expertise; knowledge of the situation on the ground; and extensive local contacts. This is often gained through field offices such as those the OSCE has in 18 different countries in South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The contribution of regional organizations in the fight against terrorism is often described by the concept of "**transmission belts**" between the global and national levels. And this transmission **works both ways**. Regional organizations **channel down** objectives, approaches and measures agreed upon at the global level. But regional organizations also take **pioneering, region-specific initiatives** that complement and build upon global counter-terrorism objectives.

Forging an Alliance of Regional Organizations in Combating Terrorism

Regional organizations can be real force multipliers. Several, such as the OSCE, have already proven *individually* to be very effective. But I believe regional organizations could deliver even more *collectively*. One way for them to achieve greater impact would be, arguably, to unite into a sort of **Alliance of Regional Organizations in combating terrorism**.

The International Community has achieved over the past years great momentum in enhancing *vertical* co-ordination between global and regional organizations. We need to achieve similar momentum for enhancing *horizontal* co-ordination among regional organizations. We have, after all, a **common overarching framework** provided by the 16 universal instruments against terrorism, UN Security Council Resolutions such as 1267, 1373 and 1540, as well as the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy (2006).

My unit has since long been striving to engage other regional organizations, in order to **align priorities and approaches, better leverage resources, cross fertilize expertise and minimize unnecessary duplication of efforts**. These outreach efforts at their best resulted in the organizing of joint activities with the Council of Europe (2006 Expert Workshop on Preventing Terrorism, 2008 Legal Co-operation Workshop for Turkey, 2009 Legal Co-operation Workshop for BiH).

On a more routine basis, we involve experts in our activities from other regional bodies operating in the OSCE area, such as the EU, the CIS, NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to name only a few. Moreover, the OSCE has been called upon to share some of its counter-terrorism experience with other regional organizations outside the OSCE area such as the African Union, and the Organization of American States.

The OSCE regional counter-terrorism role as best practice

I would like now to go into more detail about the counter-terrorism role of the OSCE; a role that has been referred to as an **example of regional best practice**. But let me first stress that **operationally, the OSCE offers several advantages**. It is geographically **inclusive** and has the potential to serve as an effective forum for constructive engagement among countries across North America and Eurasia. It is **cost-effective** – the OSCE annual budget comprises some EUR 150m only (ca. \$215m), of which the U.S. pays roughly 12%; France, Germany, United Kingdom and Italy, each pay about 9.5%, and the Russian Federation 6%. The OSCE is **flexible**, with light bureaucratic structures, extensive field experience, and a comprehensive security mandate. And despite the limitations inherent to a decision-making process based on consensus, the OSCE has proven in many instances that it is flexible enough for individual participating States to advance their agendas.

Since 2001, the OSCE has established itself as an effective lever for enhanced counter-terrorism co-operation among its participating States. A co-operation based on shared commitments and a **comprehensive approach to countering terrorism**, which promotes and upholds human rights and the rule of law. An approach not only *comprehensive* in terms of issues, **but also inclusive** in terms of the stakeholders we involve in our activities: governments but also civil society and businesses. This is consistent with the concept of the OSCE as a platform for co-operative security, aiming to strengthen relationships among multiple entities to promote comprehensive security.

The OSCE counter-terrorism work follows **five strategic directions**. Our first objective is to **build consensus and political support** among our participating States. We raise awareness of the terrorist threat. We mobilize political will to address it in a comprehensive and expedient manner. We generate support for the implementation of universal conventions and protocols related to terrorism, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and other key documents. We provide methods and models for policy implementation, and we actively support the implementation of standards, recommendations and good practices developed by different specialized global organizations and agencies such as ICAO, the WCO, and the FATF.

Our second parallel goal is to **build state capacity** to implement and comply with those instruments and standards. The OSCE actively supports and facilitates capacity-building programmes of specialized international organizations. These include UNODC on promoting the international legal framework and legal co-operation against terrorism, ICAO on enhancing travel document security, and the WCO on container/supply chain security.

Third, my Unit seeks to **identify cutting-edge threats and options for response**. As a regional organization, we are uniquely well placed to know the concerns of our constituents and **to foster the sharing of information, good practices and lessons learned**. We have for instance organized workshops on suicide terrorism; urban transport security; public-private partnerships in countering terrorism; as well as on combating incitement to terrorism on the Internet.

Fostering international co-operation and co-ordination is a fourth core objective of the OSCE counter-terrorism work. We develop collaborative relationships **among our participating States**, notably by bringing officials together and co-ordinating a network of national counter-terrorism focal points. We also develop co-operation **between the OSCE and other organizations**. We regularly collaborate with more than twenty UN structures, international, regional, and sub-regional organizations. Such co-operation is crucial because, just as no single state can effectively combat terrorism alone, no single organization can do so alone.

Last but not least, **promoting security within the framework of human rights** is a cornerstone of OSCE counter-terrorism activity. OSCE commitments firmly reiterate that counter-terrorism measures are to be conducted in accordance with international law, in particular international human rights law, refugee law, and humanitarian law. The **OSCE has a specific body** dealing with the protection and promotion of human rights, including in the context of countering terrorism, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Lessons learned from the OSCE counter-terrorism experience

The counter-terrorism potential of a regional organization like the OSCE must not be underestimated. Let me share with you some lessons learned from the OSCE experience.

- Regional organizations play a key role in building **political will and momentum**. When a country undertakes a counter-terrorism commitment within a regional organization like the OSCE, it is yet another forum where national compliance can be monitored, discussed and encouraged.
- Regional organizations can **help ensure that co-operation takes place and progress is made in all areas** of counter-terrorism, including those where it is not necessarily easy, such as addressing the factors conducive to terrorism.
- Regional organizations are **effective mechanisms for disseminating information**, lessons learned and good practices in the fight against terrorism.
- Regional organizations can have a **key capacity-building role** by identifying gaps in policy implementation and in facilitating **tailored assistance**. They can help articulate the specific needs of their constituents and fine tune capacity building.
- Regional organizations can play a pivotal **role of interface** between recipients of assistance, providers of specialized expertise and fund providers. They can develop **platform projects** on counter-terrorism issues, integrating the expertise of different specialized organizations.

The potential that I have just outlined should be **fully exploited through sustained engagement, political support and funding**. The mandates of regional organizations should be adapted to match what they are expected to do by their members. And further **attention should be devoted to enhancing the capacities of regional organizations** if they are to be – or continue to be – effective partners.

- Regional organizations are **under funded** in the counter-terrorism area. And because the budget of an organization like this OSCE is modest, relatively small cuts can have a big impact on the organization's ability to effectively operate.
- Countries have often the option to provide extra-budgetary funding for specific projects. But such **ad hoc type of funding is not ideal** for medium-term planning of activities and developing partnerships with other organizations over time.
- Due to competing priorities, regional organizations are hindered not only by a lack of money but also a **lack of human resources**. Positions should be created to match workload.
- Besides, there is real competition for recruiting **specialized counter-terrorism expertise**, and regional organizations do not always come out as winners. Countries should draw further on the mutual benefits in seconding qualified experts to regional organizations.
- A more **even distribution of counter-terrorism capacity should be leveraged** across regions in order to exploit the latent potential for pooling resources, expertise and contacts.

To conclude, I must caution all of us to be realistic. Future terrorist incidents are inevitable; we will not be able to prevent them all. Diverting more funds towards diplomacy and multilateral organizations, especially regional organizations, is a decision we should take.

I acknowledge the dilemma and trade-offs we face concerning short-term or long-term actions. If we fail to put forth maximum effort to stop immediate threats, there can be serious consequences should a terrorist attack take place. On the other hand, if we fail to devote sufficient resources towards the mitigation of future terrorism, the threats may eventually multiply beyond our capability to defend. This in my view is the greater danger.

Further leveraging regional organizations, say in the form of an Alliance of Regional organizations in combating terrorism, is a vital investment in our future.