Peace Operations and Countering Violent Extremism
Challenges and Opportunities for the United Nations and its Partners

JANUARY 2016

BACKGROUND

The deployment of United Nations peace operations in countries where there is not only little or no peace to keep, but where there is a threat of terrorism and violent extremism, presents complex challenges to the United Nations system, member states, and national and local partners. These UN field missions range from small political missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, and Syria, to the larger multidimensional peacekeeping stabilization mission in Mali, and some of these missions operate in parallel to national or regional counterterrorism forces. While high level discussions and reports have narrowly focused on the question of whether or not peacekeeping operations can undertake offensive kinetic counterterrorism, there is comparatively little exploration about the political and practical challenges, opportunities, and implications for UN peace operations when operating in complex security environments that include a violent extremist dimension.

As the UN Secretary-General noted in his recent report on peacekeeping, the labels traditionally used to define conflicts are no longer applicable when the lines between rebels, insurgents, terrorists, and criminals, for example, are increasingly blurred. The complexity and increasingly transnational dimension of conflict requires more nuanced analysis and integrated responses that collectively leverage the comparative advantages of the various relevant parts of the multilateral system, member states, and other stakeholders. In his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the Secretary-General also recommended that member states “integrate preventing

---

violent extremism into relevant activities of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions in accordance with their mandates.**2

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The Global Center on Cooperative Security and the International Peace Institute (IPI) are developing innovative analysis on the potential intersections between peace operations and efforts aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) with support from the governments of Norway and France. Research and analysis on this issue remains relatively underdeveloped as commentary has focused primarily on kinetic elements. Therefore the Global Center and IPI will produce a report exploring key strategic questions facing practitioners, policymakers, and personnel in the field in relation to global P/CVE efforts. The report will draw on an extensive set of consultations with UN officials, member states, and experts, and will be supplemented by desk research and experiential reflections. Initial findings will be presented at a high level roundtable hosted by IPI, which will focus on new challenges for UN peace operations in violent and asymmetric threat environments. A final report is anticipated following the roundtable and will be presented at a launch event hosted by the Global Center where recommendations for the way forward will also be explored.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL CENTER ON COOPERATIVE SECURITY

The Global Center works with governments, international organizations, and civil society to develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable responses to complex international security challenges through collaborative policy research, context-sensitive programming, and capacity development. In collaboration with a global network of expert practitioners and partner organizations, the Global Center fosters stronger multilateral partnerships and convenes key stakeholders to support integrated and inclusive security policies across national, regional, and global levels.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE

The International Peace Institute is an independent, international not-for-profit think tank dedicated to managing risk and building resilience to promote peace, security, and sustainable development. To achieve its purpose, IPI employs a mix of policy research, strategic analysis, publishing, and convening. With staff from more than twenty countries and a broad range of academic fields, IPI has offices facing United Nations headquarters in New York and offices in Vienna and Manama.

For more information about this project, please contact Ms. Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Head of Research and Analysis at the Global Center (nfink@globalcenter.org) and/or Mr. Arthur Boutellis, Director of the Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations at IPI (boutellis@ipinst.org).

---