Chapter 35

Conclusions: Terrorism Prevention – The UN Plan of Action (2015) and Beyond

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This concluding chapter compares some of the findings and recommendations of the contributors of this *Handbook* with the observations and recommendations of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (reproduced in full in the Appendix to this chapter).[1] There are various similarities, which will be highlighted in this chapter. It then compares the findings of the UN Plan of Action with findings based on the science of System Analysis and looks at statistical correlations of terrorism. In other words, the preventive measures presented in this volume and in the UN Plan of Action are based on solid foundations. If fully and universally implemented by all UN member states, the recommendations of the UN Plan of Action could go a long way to reduce the emergence of violent extremism and terrorism. Its ultimate success stands and falls with national implementation plans. However, many UN members States hesitate to implement its evidence-based findings on the prevention of terrorism, probably due to their undemocratic regimes. Finally, the chapter looks at a few of the regional and national plans of action and sketches the elements for a generic strategy for the prevention of terrorism.

Keywords: extremism, lessons learned, plan of action, prevention, strategy, terrorism, united nations

> *"....too much of the focus of the past two decades has been on the symptoms of terrorism and that, going forward, more attention needs to be given to prevention. This involves addressing conditions that include poor governance, corruption, inequality, human rights abuses, marginalization, and exclusion. These factors are often due to or exacerbated by predatory and other government behavior. Terrorists exploit them to recruit and radicalize supporters, which then drives other forms of violence and conflict and fragility. Emphasizing prevention also means including a wide array of actors outside the law enforcement and broader security fields ...."*

– Eric Rosand and Alastair Miller (2021)[2]

In the context of this *Handbook*, prevention is about avoiding unwanted and harmful future violence of a terrorist kind. Since the future is to a considerable extent unknowable, it is often assumption-based rather than evidence-based. However, to the extent that the past is prologue of the future and that history-based forecasts are grounded in empirical evidence of known causal chains rather than mere assumptions, a degree of prevention is possible. In addition, we not only have the past as yardstick to prepare prevention measures, but we also have the experience of countries with no or low levels of terrorism. This chapter used both types of evidence to make the case for better prevention and preparedness policies.

Benjamin Franklin's advice from 1736, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," begs the question: what exactly goes into that ounce of prevention? Policy-makers, PVE practitioners, and researchers have come up with many answers – but often also with empty hands.[3] Rather than deepening research into prevention, they have often widened it. Prevention, which was once thought to be a narrow task, has become a task assigned to many – but often without much guidance.

Anti-terrorism in the form of preventing and countering terrorism has traditionally been the task of national law enforcement and intelligence and security agencies. Since 9/11, with the American declaration of a Global War on Terror (GWOT), it expanded – first in the US and soon thereafter in more countries - to the armed forces. The increased securitization of anti-terrorism ended up in many countries in a "whole-of-government" approach. In recent years, preventing terrorism and countering violent extremism has been pushed beyond this to a "whole-of-society" approach. This means that various actors and institutions (e.g. mothers, families, youth, teachers, schools, social services, prison and probation officers, sport clubs, moderate Muslims, places of worship, academia, local communities, cities and local government, business, human rights, NGOs, and social media) have been encouraged or tasked in some countries to assume prevention functions as well as de-radicalization roles.[4]

Regional security actors (e.g., OSCE, NATO) and multi-purpose international organizations (e.g., EU and UN) have become involved. The UN is involved in an "All-of-UN" effort to promote its Prevention of Violent Extremism Plan of Action. Under-Secretary General V.I. Voronkov, heading the UN Counter-Terrorism Office (UNOCT) since 2017, is the main focal point in the UN system for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE). He chairs the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Working Group on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism, which by early 2020 included no fewer than 43 in-house UN entities as well as international partners. V.I. Voronkov's office also serves as the secretariat to the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Action Group on Preventing Violent Extremism, which provides strategic level guidance to the P/CVE work of the UN system. All this would seem to suggest that the issue of

extremism/terrorism prevention – which was already addressed in the four pillars of the UN Strategy against Terrorism from September 2006[5] - has finally become mainstream – next to the traditional core tasks of the UN: peace, human rights and development.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had first announced the new Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in December 2015 with these opening words:

> "Violent extremism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It undermines peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. No country or region is immune from its impacts. The present Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism considers and addresses violent extremism as, and when, conducive to terrorism."[6]

The Plan of Action was officially "welcomed" and "taken note of" by the UN General Assembly at a time when IS was at the height of its power, with tens of thousands of foreign fighters joining it. It was presented by the outgoing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who in early 2015 had been persuaded by US President Obama to develop such an instrument.[7] Its future soon passed into the hands of the UN Secretary General António Guterres and his Under-Secretary-General V.I. Voronkov, and, even more so, rests in the hands of individual UN member states. If fully and universally implemented by all 193 UN members, the recommendations of this Plan of Action could go a long way to inhibit the emergence of violent extremism and terrorism.

The Plan of Action consists of a series of recommendations for member states, regional organizations as well as UN entities. As explained in a study by Saferworld:

> "The UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism describes PVE as systematic preventive measures that directly address the drivers of violent extremism. Setting out the UN's intention to take a practical and comprehensive approach to address these drivers, it put forward more than 70 recommendations for concerted action at global, regional and national levels."[8]

These seven substantive priority areas of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism are:

1. dialogue and conflict prevention;
2. strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law;
3. engaging communities;
4. empowering youth;
5. gender equality and empowering women;
6. education, skill development and employment facilitation; and
7. strategic communications, the internet and social media.[9]

At the time of this writing (June 2021), the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism is the closest thing in the real world we have to parallel the concerns and findings of the contributors of this *Handbook*.[10] In fact, many of the recommendations of this UN Plan of Action come close, or are almost identical, to those proposed by contributors of this Handbook as will be shown below.

The UN Plan of Action in the Light of Findings by the Contributors of this Handbook

In the following section, we will compare some of the recommendations by the contributors of this volume with those of the UN Plan of Action, following the seven substantive priority areas

of the UN Plan (see Appendix of this chapter for complete text of the UN plan).

1. Dialogue and Conflict Prevention

In the UN Plan of Action, it is noted under point 30 that,

> "Prolonged and unresolved conflicts tend to provide fertile ground for violent extremism, not only because of the suffering and lack of governance resulting from the conflict itself but also because such conflicts allow violent extremist groups to exploit deep-rooted grievances in order to garner support and seize territory and resources and control populations. Urgent measures must be taken to resolve protracted conflicts. Resolving these conflicts will undermine the impact of the insidious narratives of violent extremist groups. When prevention fails, our best strategy towards securing lasting peace and addressing violent extremism entails inclusive political solutions and accountability."

This is in line with observations made by several contributors to this volume, notably by A. Schädel, H.-J. Giessmann, C. McCauley, and A.P. Schmid. In an important sense, conflict prevention is terrorism prevention. Schmid, in his *Twelve Rules for Preventing and Countering Terrorism* places this even at the top of his list: **"**Try to address the underlying conflict issues exploited by the terrorists and work towards a peaceful solution while not making substantive concessions to the terrorists themselves."[11]

Unfortunately, there are a growing number of conflicts that form breeding grounds for terrorism. While there were 37 state-based armed conflicts worldwide in 2005, their number has increased to 54 by 2019, including seven full-scale wars. The rise of armed conflicts has been particularly significant in Africa, where the increase in the same period was from eight to 25 conflicts.[12]

In the present *Handbook*, Clark McCauley also stresses the importance of conflict prevention as terrorism prevention:

> "The time to prevent terrorism is early in the escalation of intergroup conflict. (…) Politicide and terrorism emerge out of asymmetric conflicts - political conflicts with histories of action and reaction over time. It is these trajectories of conflict that must be understood to prevent and reduce the extremes of violence against civilians…."[13]

Andreas Schädel and Hans-Joachim Giessmann, in turn, note that "that terrorism and its effective prevention can only be understood as part of a wider political conflict and in combination with the surrounding structural power relationships…."[14] They plead for conflict transformation which

> "… does not build interventions around the terrorist group as the only actor and violent perpetrator in a conflict but allows for a wider understanding of violent extremism and terrorism as the result of structural drivers (e.g. repression, inequality, poor governance, violations of human rights, discrimination, unemployment, foreign interventions), individual motivations (e.g., a sense of purpose, victimization, belonging, identity, acceptance, status, expected rewards, material enticements) and enabling factors (e.g. presence of radical mentors, access to radical communities and ideologies, access to weapons, lack of state presence, absence of family support)."[15]

A. Schädel and H.-J. Giessmann also stress - despite the bleak human rights record of terrorist groups - the importance of dialogue with them and observe that "… the instruments of negotiations and dialogue, although still categorically refused by some terrorism scholars and policymakers, can prove valuable additions to existing approaches to terrorism prevention."[16]

Further findings by the authors of this *Handbook* paralleling those in the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action can also be found when it comes to the second substantive priority area.

2. Strengthening Good Governance, Human Rights and the Rule of Law

In his Plan of Action to the General Assembly, UN Secretary-General stressed under point 27:

> "Violent extremism tends to thrive in an environment characterized by poor governance, democracy deficits, corruption and a culture of impunity for unlawful behavior engaged in by the State or its agents. When poor governance is combined with repressive policies and practices which violate human rights and the rule of law, the potency of the lure of violent extremism tends to be heightened. Violations of international human rights law committed in the name of state security can facilitate violent extremism by marginalizing individuals and alienating key constituencies, thus generating community support and sympathy for and complicity in the actions of violent extremists. Violent extremists also actively seek to exploit state repression and other grievances in their fight against the state."

Some of the contributors of this *Handbook* have arrived at similar conclusions. The editor argued in chapter 2, when discussing upstream prevention on the national level, that there should be four pillars to build successful preventive anti-terrorist measures on:

- "Good Governance – because, when governance is bad, resistance against corrupt rule gains followers and support and might take the form of terrorism;
- Democracy – because, when unpopular rulers cannot be voted away by democratic procedures, advocates of political violence find a wider audience;
- Rule of Law – because, when rulers stand above the law and use the law as a political instrument against their opponents, the law loses its legitimacy and credibility and encourages people to turn to alternative normative systems;
- Social Justice – because, when long-standing injustices in society are not addressed but allowed to continue for years, without any light in sight at the end of the tunnel, desperate people, and some others championing their cause, are willing to die and to kill for what they perceive to be a just cause."[17]

Further parallels between the UN Plan of Action and findings by contributors of this volume can also be found when it comes to the importance of involving civil society.

3. Engaging Communities

The UN Plan of Action noted, regarding the importance of engaging communities, in point 51:

> "For their survival, violent extremists require the tacit support of a wider circle of sympathizers. If violent extremists can be deprived of this support, their capacity to cause harm and evade justice will be greatly reduced. While

engagement with communities marked by a long history of distrust of the government can pose a challenge, there are a number of community engagement strategies that hold promise. I therefore recommend that Member States: (a) Develop joint and participatory strategies, including with civil society and local communities, to prevent the emergence of violent extremism, protect communities from recruitment and the threat of violent extremism, and support confidence-building measures at the community level by providing appropriate platforms for dialogue and the early identification of grievances…."

Again, this is in line with observations made by some contributors of this *Handbook*. For instance, Rob de Wijk emphasizes the same point in different words:

"Military establishments have learned that insurgency and terrorism are part of a broader political struggle with the populace as center of gravity. Consequently, both COIN and CT doctrine should be population centric. Protecting the population is the key to success in any counterinsurgency campaign. A "hearts and minds" campaign is a prerequisite for gaining the support of the population. This should not be confused with softness. It is an essential activity to prevail in a political struggle. It requires responsible leaders to abstain from harsh rhetoric stigmatization of sectors of society vulnerable to terrorist appeals and refraining to contribute to polarization between majority and minority groups in society. Political leaders ought to respect group identities and grievances, and should take socio-economic measures to take away (some of) the grievances. At the same, they should be aware that jihadists and other militants will try to deprive the population from a sense of security."[18]

It is common knowledge that youth are especially vulnerable to the lure of terrorism. Yet, young people can also become a crucial actor in preventing and countering terrorism.

4. Empowering Youth:

In his Plan of Action, Ban Ki-moon observed under the heading Empowering Youth (Point No. 52):

"We must pay particular attention to youth. The world's 1.8 billion young women and men constitute an invaluable partner in our striving to prevent violent extremism. We have to identify better tools with which to support young people as they take up the causes of peace, pluralism and mutual respect. The rapid advance of modern communications technology also means that today's youth form a global community of an unprecedented kind. This interconnectivity is already being exploited by violent extremists; we need to reclaim this space by helping to amplify the voices of young people already promoting the values of mutual respect and peace to their peers."

This emphasis on the role of youth is also present in Thomas Samuels' contribution to this *Handbook*:

"….the authorities would be missing a golden opportunity should they not realize that not only are educational institutions vulnerable to violent

extremism but ironically, given the right support, they have the potential of becoming citadels for *preventing and countering* violent extremism among the youth. Simply put, schools and universities can move from being possible breeding grounds for potential sympathizers and recruits to *instead* actively preventing and countering violent extremism. "….the best defense against extremist ideologies taking over our institutions of learning is to develop an education system that will prepare and equip the students to take on, debate and defeat extremist thoughts where it first takes roots - in the hearts and minds of young people."[19]

Regarding the next substantive priority area in the UN Plan of Action, gender equality and empowering women, the Plan of Action has more to say than the *Handbook's* contributors.

5. Gender Equality and Empowering Women

The Plan of Action notes in section No. 53 that:

> "Women's empowerment is a critical force for sustainable peace. While women do sometimes play an active role in violent extremist organizations, it is also no coincidence that societies for which gender equality indicators are higher are less vulnerable to violent extremism. We must therefore ask ourselves how we can better promote women's participation, leadership and empowerment across society, including in governmental, security sector and civil society institutions. In line with Security Council resolution 2242 (2015),[20] we must ensure that the protection and empowerment of women is a central consideration of strategies devised to counter terrorism and violent extremism. (…) (c) Include women and other underrepresented groups in national law enforcement and security agencies, including as part of counter-terrorism prevention and response frameworks…."[21]

Andreas Schädel and Hans-Joachim Giessmann make the same point when they write:

> "Research has shown that peace processes are – on average – more sustainable and more effective if they are inclusive and participatory. This applies in particular to the inclusion of representatives of civil society (e.g. religious leaders, women organizations, youth groups), which have been shown to make a successful negotiation and implementation of a peace process more likely.[22] Research by Ricigliano (2005), Dudouet (2009) and Toros (2012) has shown that this positive effect is also pertinent for non-state armed groups.[23] Expanding inclusion in their direction reduces incentives for the strategic use of spoiler violence during negotiations and has a strong potential to limit post-agreement violence."[24]

Parallel findings between the UN Plan of Action and this *Handbook* can also be found in the sixth issue area addressed in the Secretary-General's plan.

6. Education, Skill Development and Employment Facilitation

The UN Plan of Action noted in its point 54 on the issue of education, skills development and employment facilitation:

"As part of the struggle against poverty and social marginalization, we need to ensure that every child receives a quality education which equips him or her for life, as stipulated under the right to education. Education should include teaching respect for human rights and diversity, fostering critical thinking, promoting media and digital literacy, and developing the behavioral and socioemotional skills…. (…) (b) Implement education programs that promote "global citizenship," soft skills, critical thinking and digital literacy, and explore means of introducing civic education into school curricula, textbooks and teaching materials. Build the capacity of teachers and educators to support this agenda…."

Thomas Samuels, in his chapter for this *Handbook*, also stressed the role of education, writing:

"The education sector could conceptualize, develop and impart both mental and emotional 'firewalls' into the hearts and minds of the students. In this regard, certain values, skill-sets and awareness such as: (i) Critical thinking; (ii) Empathy; (iii) Diversity; (iv) Resilience; and (v) Awareness on the failures of violent campaigns and the power of non-violent social movements should be developed and institutionalized into the education system. These firewalls could provide a barrier against the radicalization process targeting the students.(…)Institutions of learning such as schools and universities should play an essential role in developing and facilitating a critical mind among their students to enable them to make sound choices and decisions when confronted with the ideology, rhetoric and propaganda of violent extremists.[25] All students should be taught basic cognitive skills such as how to distinguish facts from opinions, identify unstated assumptions and biases in an argument, evaluate the reliability of evidence presented to them…."

7. Strategic Communications, the Internet and Social Media

When it comes to the last of the seven substantive priority areas, strategic communications, the internet and social media, the Plan of Action of the UN notes in section No. 55:

"The manipulative messages of violent extremists on social media have achieved considerable success in luring people, especially young women and men, into their ranks. While violent extremists have demonstrated some sophistication in their use of old and new media tools, it is equally true that we who reject their message have largely failed to communicate to those who are disillusioned and disenfranchised a vision of the future that captures their imagination and offers the prospect of tangible change. Thousands of young activists and artists are fighting back against violent extremism online through music, art, film, comics and humor, and they deserve our support. I therefore recommend that Member States: (a) Develop and implement national communications strategies, in close cooperation with social media companies and the private sector, that are tailored to local contexts, gender sensitive and based on international human rights standards, to challenge the narratives associated with violent extremism…"

In this *Handbook*, several contributors have addressed the crucial role of media, and in particular the Internet and social media. In chapter three, Sarah Zeiger and Joseph Gyte examined areas of how prevention of radicalization online might be possible:

> "1) preventing the spread of terrorist content online (deterring producers), 2) empowering online communities to counter the narratives of violent extremism and terrorism online and promote positive and alternative messages, and 3) building digital resilience and media literacy (reducing the appeal)."

Regarding the third area - building online resilience and literacy – Zeiger and Gyte observe:

> "A third and final strategy for the prevention of terrorism online is through building digital resilience and media literacy skills. This is premised on two assumptions: 1) that by building digital resilience and media literacy, the average citizen is able to peacefully overcome grievances that might lead to radicalization that are based incorrectly on misinformation or disinformation; and 2) that a citizen that is able to evaluate both the content of the information provided and the credibility of the source more effectively, would less likely be persuaded by terrorist propaganda. (…) It is important, therefore, that skills and mechanisms for building digital and media literacy are enhanced as part of a comprehensive way of preventing terrorism online and in social media. This means that potentially vulnerable youth should be equipped with the appropriate skills to navigate the challenging communications environment they experience every day, including a large social media presence online."[26]

In sum, these seven substantive priority areas of the UN Plan of Action are well supported by the evidence assembled by the contributors of this *Handbook*. There are more similarities between the UN Plan of Action of 2015 and the qualitative findings and suggestions of the contributors of this *Handbook*. The Appendix to this chapter reprints the entire UN Plan of Action so that the reader can explore these parallels in more detail.

The UN Plan of Action in the Light of Quantitative Statistical Evidence

While the overlap between the UN Plan of Action and the qualitative findings of the contributors of this volume are encouraging, it is also worth looking whether these are also supported by more quantitative scientific evidence on terrorism that is based on cross-country and longitudinal comparisons. It is to this we turn next.

The most widely used database on terrorism has been developed at the University of Maryland where its START project maintains a Global Terrorism Database (GTD) listing over 170,000 terrorist incidents since 1970. Based on this and other datasets, the Australian Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) in Sidney has applied structural equations modelling and correlation analysis using data covering the period 2002-2019. It has done so for countries with advanced economies as well as for developing countries. IEP found that while there is substantial overlap in the strength of association between terrorism and structural indicators, there is also divergence between these two groups of countries.[27]

The researchers at the Institute for Economics and Peace looked at 13 indicators and their relationship with terrorism. The higher the correlations (i.e., closer to 1), the stronger the association between indicators and terrorism.

Based on its statistical data analysis, the Institute for Economics & Peace arrived at findings such as, "Some socio-economic factors associated with terrorism include:

• High levels of group grievance and a weak rule of law is correlated with terrorism across all countries.
• In the more economically developed countries, social disenfranchisement and exclusion play an important role in terrorism.
• In less economically developed countries, religious or ethnic ruptures, and corruption are more strongly associated with high levels of terrorism."[28]

The more than 70 recommendations contained in the UN Plan of Actions (which profited from the advice of "internal and external experts, scholars and practitioners"[29]) address many of these relationships between terrorism and IEP indicators. Here are some examples in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Correlations between Socio-economic Factors and the Global Terrorism Index, 2002–2019 (IEP, 2020)[30]

Indicator	Countries with Advanced Economies	Rest of the World
1. Group grievance	0.25	0.67
2. Factionalized Elites	0.12	0.48
3. Prosperity	0.04	0.38
4. Corruption	0.02	0.33
5. Religious and Ethnic Tension	0.32	0.58
6. Rule of Law	0.05	0.29
7. Human Rights Protection	0.42	0.63
8. Equality and Liberty	0.2	0.63
9. Military Expenditure	0.17	0.28
10. Internal Conflict	0.62	0.69
11. Organized Crime	0.33	0.34
12. Physical Violence	0.47	0.42
13. NEET (%)	0.26	0.15

The factor of internal conflict measures politically motivated violence and its impact on governance scored highest, (0.62 for economically advanced countries and 0.69 for the rest of the world in the table above). The researchers of the IEP therefore concluded:

"….that although internal conflict has different characteristics and levels of intensity in countries with advanced and non-advanced economies, the overall impact of this indicator on terrorism is similar in both sets of countries. Over the past two decades, conflict has been one of the strongest predictors of the impact of terrorism, with just under 95 per cent of deaths from terrorism occurring in countries involved in conflict."[31]

This is also reflected, in point 30 of the UN Plan of Action:

"Prolonged and unresolved conflicts tend to provide fertile ground for violent extremism, not only because of the suffering and lack of governance resulting from the conflict itself but also because such conflicts allow violent extremist groups to exploit deep-rooted grievances in order to garner support and seize territory and resources and control populations. Urgent measures must be taken to resolve protracted conflicts."

The researchers who wrote the IEP report also looked at the impact of government repression which is represented in the indicator "physical violence" (meaning "violence committed by government agents" in the IEP report[32]). This factor (0.47 for economically advanced countries, 0.42 for the rest of the world) has also been addressed in the UN Plan of Action's point 27:

> "….Governments that exhibit repressive and heavy-handed security responses in violation of human rights and the rule of law, such as profiling of certain populations, adoption of intrusive surveillance techniques and prolongation of declared states of emergency, tend to generate more violent extremists."

The factor "issues related to insufficient human rights protection" of the IEP report (scoring 0.47 for economically advanced countries and 0.63 for the rest of the world) is addressed in the UN Plan of Action under points 18,19, and 20.

> "We need to end impunity for all those committing violations and crimes, including crimes under international law. At the same time, we must be vigilant in ensuring that Member States' efforts to address violent extremism are respectful of the rule of law, and in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law, as well as international humanitarian law…."

It is well known that in many countries there is a nexus between terrorist groups and organized crime groups. The factor "strength of organized crime groups," identified by the Institute of Economics and Peace (scoring 0.33 for economically advanced countries and 0.34 for the rest of the world), is reflected in the UN Plan of Action under point 14:

> "….terrorist groups are also benefiting from transnational organized crime. Some violent extremist groups have developed connections with transnational organized crime to increase their financial resources. They generate significant revenue form human trafficking and the slave trade, trafficking in antiquities, and the illicit sale of oil. Many of these groups are also involved in kidnapping for ransom."

The issue of "religious and ethnic tensions," identified by the IEP as a correlating factor (scoring 0.32 for economically advanced countries and 0.58 for the rest of the world) and probable cause is partly addressed in the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action under points 28 and 36:

> "The lack of adequate efforts, in line with international obligations, towards the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, exacerbated by discrimination against ethnic, national, gender, racial, religious, linguistic and other groups and the absence or curtailment of democratic space, can provide opportunities for exploitation by violent extremists.
>
> Violent extremist groups cynically distort and exploit religious beliefs, ethnic differences and political ideologies to legitimize their actions, establish their claim on territory and recruit followers. Distortion and misuse of religion are utilized to divide nations, cultures and people, undermining our humanity. Faith and community leaders are critical in mentoring vulnerable followers so as to enable them to reject violent ideologies and in providing opportunities for intra- and interfaith dialogue and discussion as a means of promoting tolerance, understanding and reconciliation between communities. Leaders,

> Governments, the international community and the media have to work together to prevent confrontation and polarization within and between countries, faiths, nations and peoples."

The issue in the IEP report, "high share of youth Not in Education, Employment or Training," abbreviated by IEP as NEET (scoring 0.26 for economically advanced countries and 0.15 for the rest of the world) as a probable cause of terrorism, is partly covered in the UN Plan of Action under the heading "Lack of socioeconomic opportunities" (No. 25):

> "Countries that fail to generate high and sustainable levels of growth, to create decent jobs for their youth, to reduce poverty and unemployment, to improve equality, to control corruption and to manage relationships among different communities in line with their human rights obligations, are more prone to violent extremism and tend to witness a greater number of incidents linked to violent extremism. Citizens may consider weak development outcomes as confirmation of the lack of a government's legitimacy, making state institutions less effective in responding to violent extremism when it arises. The absence of alternative employment opportunities can make violent extremist organizations an attractive source of income."

The issue of "group grievances" which IEP found to be a probable causal factor in both advanced and developing countries, (scoring 0.25 for economically advanced countries and 0.65 for the rest of the world) can be found in the Plan of Action at various points, e. g. under points 23 and 35:

> "Qualitative research, based mainly on interviews, suggests that two main categories of drivers can be distinguished: "push factors," or the conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which it emerges; and "pull factors," or the individual motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action.

> Historical legacies of, or collective grievances stemming from, domination, oppression, subjugation or foreign intervention can enable narratives of victimization to take hold. These narratives can provoke simple and powerful emotional reactions which may then be exploited by violent extremists: the memory of past or present actual or perceived oppressions is upheld so as to fuel the thirst for revenge against oppressors."

The issue of "lack of prosperity" (scoring 0.04 for economically advanced countries and 0.38 for the rest of the world) has been addressed in the Plan of Action under point 25 ("Lack of socioeconomic opportunities") mentioned above.

In sum, it can be concluded that the observations, findings and recommendations of the UN Plan of Action have a solid empirical basis since its main points are not only supported by the findings of the expert contributors to this *Handbook* but also by the statistical evidence gathered by the Institute of Economics and Peace. Given the soundness of the UN Plan of Action, one would expect that the international community would make good use of this solid plan and member states would immediately recalibrate their national responses to terrorism in its light. However, the UN Plan of Action has, in the last six years, not made as much progress as one could have hoped for. There are several reasons for this.

The Reception of the UN Plan of Action by UN Member States

The UN Secretary-General, in his Plan of Action from late 2015, left the definition of "violent extremism" to national authorities, although he cautioned that national definitions must be consistent with international law and international human rights law.[33] The UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy of September 2006 had already avoided defining "terrorism" since the discussion of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in the Ad Hoc Committee of the 6th (legal), Committee of the General Assembly, initiated in 2000, had not produced a consensus on this issue by 2006 (or for that matter: by 2021).[34] Later, the UN also did not manage to arrive at a common definition of "violent extremism." Therefore, both-terms - "terrorism" and "violent extremism" - can be interpreted by each UN member state more or less as convenient for itself. Just how divergent UN member states interpret (violent) extremism, emerged from an analysis of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights from October 2016:

> "Some domestic laws and policies address the phenomenon of 'extremism' without qualifying it as 'violent'. They define 'extremism' as 'vocal or active opposition' to the values of the respective country or society, including 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs'. Some definitions of 'extremism' refer to notions or aims which are racist, anarchist, nationalist, authoritarian or totalitarian regardless of their political, ideological, religious or philosophical character, and which are contrary, in theory or in practice, to principles of democracy or human rights, to the good functioning of the democratic institutions of the State or to other basic principles of the rule of law. Some laws and policies go further and describe extremism as encompassing non-violent conduct, including conduct deemed to insult national pride or breach national dignity, or knowingly disseminating false accusations against federal or regional officials, such as allegations that they have committed illegal or criminal act in their official capacity. If they are not limited to 'violent' extremism, such measures risk targeting the holding of an opinion or belief rather than actual conduct."[35]

Another problem which the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism of 2015 shares with the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy of 2006 is its non-binding character. In the new Plan of Action UN member states were only invited to ".... consider the implementation of relevant recommendations of the Plan of Action, as applicable to the national context."[36] Since the UN is an international and not a supra-national organization, it can only "....support Member States and regional organizations at their request and only with their consent."[37] This is a major obstacle to creating a seamless and effective international regime against terrorism. Some UN resolutions, such as UN Security Council 1373 of 28 September 2001, were passed under chapter VII of the UN Charter and, therefore, became binding for all member states. They require member states to periodically report on their national implementation. No such monitoring mechanism exists for the Plan of Action - a Plan of Action which was not formally adopted by the General Assembly but only "welcomed" and "taken note of."[38]

The Plan of Action was presented to the General Assembly at a time when IS (Daesh) was at the height of its power by the outgoing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who earlier that year had been prodded by US President Obama.[39] However, the Plan of Actions reception in the General Assembly was muted: The national representatives first merely "noted" its existence and later, during a periodical review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy of 2006, member states were merely invited to "consider" the Plan of Action "in accordance with their priorities."[40] When the UN promotion of the Plan of Action passed into the hands of a senior Russian diplomat ,V.I. Voronkov, it ended up at the end of his list of priorities.[41]

The traditional Russian approach to terrorism has generally been characterized by a preference for repression rather than prevention – an approach shared by China, like Russia a permanent member of the Security Council with veto power. Resistance to the Plan of Action came from other sides as well (e.g., Egypt). As David Ucko explained, there was

> "….a perception of some member-states that the Secretary-General had forced PVE through without adequate capturing their concerns. The Global South tends to seen the UN as dominated by the West …and its work with counter-terrorism as answering to a distinct American call. (…) At Turtle Bay [area of the UN headquarters in New York], governments and NGOs alike greeted PVE with caution and became reliant, once more, on old talking points. PVE's thinly concealed American provenance, alongside the unchanged structural inequities of the UN, produced legitimacy problems, particularly for those who felt most slighted by the UN's earlier work on counter-terrorism, specifically Muslim-majority countries. Others, like Russia and China, resisted the PVE's elevation of civil society and human rights and worked hard to limit the effect of such language. (…) In June 2018, during a period review of the UN Global Strategy of 2006, some UN member states tried (but failed) to erase mentioning the Plan of Action. However, they managed to ensure that the resolution did not include a full endorsement of the Plan of Action which some other UN member states sought."[42]

The lack of enthusiasm for a preventive approach to terrorism involving the "whole-of-society" (read, civil society in many countries) reflects a global shift of governance away from democracy, accompanied with higher levels of repression of even peaceful dissent.[43]

While democracy first spread on all continents after the end of the Cold War, it has receded considerably since the beginning of the 21st century when there were 120 democracies in the world. By 2019, more than one third of humankind lived under authoritarian rule. Among 167 major states monitored by The Economist's Intelligence Unit, there were, by 2019, only 22 "full democracies" and their population amounted to only 5.7 percent of the world's population. The rest of humankind have to live in "flawed democracies" (54 countries with 42.7 percent of the world population); or under "hybrid regimes" (37 countries with 16 percent of the world population) or, even worse, under "authoritarian regimes" (54 countries with 35.6 percent of the world population) according to The Economist's report on the world's "Status of Freedom and Democracy." The downwards trend continued since 2019: democratic freedoms became less in 116 out of 167 countries in 2020 (Economist Intelligence Unit).[44]

The decline of democracy matters when it comes to levels of terrorism. While free and open societies are more vulnerable to terrorism, they also tend to produce less (domestic) terrorism due to the greater responsiveness of democratic governments to the will of the (majority of the) people and the government's adherence to the rule of law.[45] This is also confirmed by the IEP report, which concluded, on the basis of statistical analysis:

> "The prevalence of violence will be greater where groups feel unable to seek peaceful resolution and remediation because the political or judicial systems are perceived as ineffective or biased. (…) Deficient protection of human rights is associated with terrorism in nations of all stages of development. (…) Deficient rule of law and equality before the law can promote terrorist activity among developing nations. This is because marginalized groups cannot address their grievances and demands through the courts or political systems in a peaceful manner."[46]

In the case of the UN Plan of Action, active or passive resistance came mainly from non-democratic member states, in particular Muslim-majority countries. The outgoing Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon was a "lame duck" as his term was about to expire. In the negotiations for his succession, Russia demanded and got (among other concessions) the chief mandate for counter-terrorism in return for not objecting to António Guterres becoming Secretary-General. At the same time, the new American President, Donald Trump, was no believer in his predecessor's proposed alternative to the War on Terror, which under president Obama, went under the caption "Countering Violent Extremism" (CVE).[47] While President Trump allowed the State Department to switch terminology from CVE to Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE), few new resources and initiatives resulted from this change.[48] Until 2021, UN Secretary-General Guterres lacked the backing of the US government in pushing the Plan of Action further; putting a Russian diplomat in charge of the Plan of Action was not considered particularly helpful to its implementation.

While various UN agencies have be tasked to take initiatives for the promotion of the Plan of Action, it is ultimately the duty of member states and, secondarily, regional organizations, to take the necessary steps. A brief look at this does not give much cause for optimism.

Regional and National Plans of Actions

Various regional organizations have, in the wake of the UN Plan of Action, formulated their own prevention-oriented plans, or adapted and updated existing ones. Among these are the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, (OSCE),[49] the European Council,[50] and the European Union.[51]

For instance, the Council of Europe (which has 47 member states, 27 from the European Union, and includes Russia), launched a Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2018-2022). It highlights, next to emphasizing the role of prosecution and protection, also prevention. In the Annex to this strategy document, the Council of Europe proposed prevention activities such as a "…compilation of best practices on how to prevent and counter terrorist public provocation, propaganda, radicalization, recruitment and training on the internet, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and democracy." It also proposed "….establishing a set of risk indicators for identifying individuals likely to become "terrorists acting alone."[52]

The European Union developed a new prevention-orientated program in December 2020, following a series of terrorist attacks in major European cities, including one in Vienna, titled "A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond." Its two prevent elements were described in these terms:

> "Firstly, we need to be able to better anticipate existing and emerging threats in Europe. Information sharing and a culture of cooperation that is multi-disciplinary and multi-level remain key for a solid threat assessment that can form the basis of a future-proof counter-terrorism policy.

> Second, we need to work to prevent attacks from occurring, by addressing and better countering radicalization and extremist ideologies before they take root, making clear that respect for the European way of life, its democratic values and all it represents is not optional. This Agenda sets out ways of supporting local actors and building more resilient communities as a matter of priority, in close coordination with Member States, taking into account that some attacks have also been carried out by Europeans, raised within our societies, who were radicalized without ever having visited a conflict zone."[53]

The European Commission proposed "….setting up an EU Knowledge Hub on the prevention of radicalization and support[ing] national networks of stakeholders and national centers" as well as "….Build community resilience through the measures included in the Action Plan on integration and inclusion."[54]

Since 2016, a substantial number of UN member states have elaborated national Plans of Action, generally assisted by UN entities like UNDP,[55] and UNOCT.[56] Various think tanks also developed helpful suggestions on how to turn the UN Plan of Action into a national reality. One such plan was developed by the Washington-based Global Center on Cooperative Security. It consists of six steps:[57]

1. **Establish:** Countries should systematically identify stakeholders to ensure that a wide range of interest groups are considered in shaping, informing, and legitimizing the development and adoption of a national strategy. (…) Countries should work to sustain the involvement of multi sector stakeholders at all stages of the strategy development process, incorporating perspectives, experiences, and recommendations in the prioritization of policy measures.
2. **Gather:** Countries should ensure that a baseline of relevant research is assessed prior to strategic adoption. This baseline must be sufficient to justify the need for the strategy and the relevance of its policy measures and to identify knowledge gaps to target future research activities. (…).
3. **Analyze:** Countries should define the problems that the strategy seeks to address, distinguishing among key terms and describing their conceptual relationships. Definitions should be locally relevant, used consistently, and developed in line with international law. (…) Countries should describe the national drivers of violent extremism, explicitly referencing the available evidence and its relationship to the problems the strategy aims to address**. (…)
4. **Develop:** When evidence about problems identified at a national level is limited, the policy measures developed should be modest, prioritizing research on the problems and their causes to better inform the identification of future policy measures. Countries should present the objectives of policy measures and outline these measures are intended to contribute to strategy outcomes. When policymakers propose targeted policies to reduce support for violent extremist groups, causes, or ideologies, these policies should be connected to specific domestic drivers and a target group.
5. **Implement:** Countries should identify the role of different stakeholders in the implementation of policy measures, describing their working relationships and the mechanisms established to share information and coordinate strategy implementation. (…) Countries should include an implementation road map that includes milestones and dates for completion of specific policy measures and resources secured or required to implement each measure successfully.
6. **Monitor:** Countries should identify mechanisms for monitoring strategy implementation and impact, including when evaluation will take place, who will conduct it, how and where the evaluation will be made available, and how the road map will contribute to future strategy revisions. Countries should ensure that their strategies are the product of an evidence-based process that sets out the proportionality of identified interventions, establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that are sensitive to the impact of the strategy on human rights and fundamental freedoms of citizens.[58]

The UN, in its *Reference Guide on Developing National and Regional Action Plans to Prevent Violent Extremism*, recognized that "A one-size-fits-all model for a PVE plan does not

exist."[59] For this as well as other reasons, regional organizations and member states felt encouraged to find their own solutions.

It would go beyond the scope of this chapter to analyze all regional and national plans of actions that emerged since 2016. Unfortunately, in many cases, these national plans of action remained little more than paper exercises since many governments lack either the political will or the economic resources (or both) to effectively implement them.[60] An example of this can be found in Lebanon. The author of a case study on this country noted:

> "The real efforts from the Lebanese government to quickly implement the United Nations Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism should be acknowledged, encouraged and supported. Indeed, Lebanon can be seen as a pioneer amongst other countries in the Middle East for its swift welcoming of this initiative, and its readiness to develop a national strategy. This said, a close analysis of the Lebanese Strategy reveals major shortcomings which might affect its internal coherence. Lebanon's lack of the necessary means or capacity only years of development can provide will encumber the effective implementation of the policies introduced in the strategy. More importantly, no significant reforms, necessary to the effective implementation of the Strategy will happen without a profound break from the political paradigm that emerged in the aftermath of the civil war, marked by sectarianism, feudalism, clientelism, nepotism and corruption on every decision made at every level of government.(…) Without abandoning the very system that has been the root cause of people's mistrust in the state including poor governance, sectarianism and corruption among other grievances, the government will fail to tackle the drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the country. Beyond the empty words of its PVE Strategy, the Government's inaction to address the legitimate grievances of the people … have clearly shown that the political apparatus has no real desire to make such a drastic change."[61]

Rather than further elaborating on the incomplete implementation of the UN Plan of Action, this final chapter of the *Handbook* will be concluded with some reflections on strategy.

From Plans of Action to an Action Strategy

The UN Plan of Action is a plan, not a strategy.[62] Lawrence Friedmann explained the difference: "A plan supposes a sequence of events that allows one to move with confidence from one state of affairs to another. Strategy is required when others might frustrate one's plans because they have different and possibly opposing interests and concerns."[63] In this narrow sense, the UN Plan of Action is not even a plan as it lacks the element of sequencing and sufficient commitment from UN member states. It is certainly not a strategy - but then, again, the definition issue arises.

What is strategy? Like with many other key concepts in the field of security studies, there is no single, commonly accepted, definition. The short classic 19th century definition of Carl von Clausewitz, describing strategy as "… the doctrine of the use of individual battles for the purposes of war"[64] will no longer do. The 21st century thinker who has explored the concept of strategy most thoroughly for our times is Lawrence Freedman.[65] The following definition of strategy, developed by the editor of this volume, is indebted to Lawrence Freedman, Gregory Miller,[66] as well as Tore Bjørgo,[67] but goes beyond their definitions. Strategy refers, usually in a situation of competition or conflict:

1. To a flexible plan to determine and pursue, for the short-, medium- or long term, the best possible course of action, given the prevailing constraints and foreseeable circumstances, to advance desirable, but realistic objectives.
2. This can be achieved by judicious and creative utilization of available resources - including the mobilization of human, spiritual (cultural or religious narrative themes) and material (natural, financial and technical) resources - as well as
3. The building of coalitions with third parties who have similar interests or objectives.
4. With the combined application of political, diplomatic, military, economic, intellectual (Research & Development) and media (incl. cyber & propaganda) instruments – and
5. Based on sufficient insight into the adversary's current and evolving interests, objectives and strategy (including its strengths and weaknesses).

As a consequence of the more skillful utilization of these five elements than the opponent, the relative power distribution between "us" and "them" can be expected to be shifting to one's own advantage, leading to strategic success.[68]

What are some of the implications of this conceptualization of strategy when it comes to developing strategies of terrorism prevention? Here are some, admittedly rudimentary, reflections on each of these five points as these relate to the prevention of terrorism.

Regarding the first point: To a flexible plan to determine and pursue, for the short-, medium- or long term, the best possible course of action, given the prevailing constraints and foreseeable circumstances, to advance desirable but realistic objectives. The objectives not only need to be desirable but also realistic. To "… completely eradicate radical Islamic terrorism from the face of the earth," as US president Donald Trump announced when he took office on 20 January 2017 was not realistic.[69] If the tool to engage in an act of terrorism is as widely available as a truck that can be driven into a crowd by a single person, it is not realistic to expect this to end. Nor is it realistic to assume that the mass and social media will not report it and thereby create feelings of terror beyond the immediate witnesses to the crime. The ubiquity of tools and the wide presence of (social) media are "prevailing constraints" under present circumstances. Making "flexible plans" is possible, based on various scenarios (e.g., for "high impact but low probability attacks," and for "low impact but high probability attacks"). What is important is not only to make short-, medium and long-term plans but also to *pursue* these through training, involving, inter alia, "Red Teaming," that is, testing existing defenses with the help of an attack team playing the role of terrorists in a realistic scenario. The UN Plan of Action was also stressing the "flexible" nature of plans by writing,

> "….our actions have to be as agile and far-reaching as the phenomenon itself. We have to improve our set of tools dynamically and keep reviewing our responses. The Plan of Action constitutes the inaugural basis for a comprehensive approach to this fast evolving, multidimensional challenge."[70]

When it comes to "foreseeable circumstances" in the definition of strategy, this means constructing various scenarios with different potential future outcomes and engage in role-playing to explore each of these more or less likely "foreseeable circumstances."

Regarding the second point: the judicious and creative utilization of available resources, including the mobilization of human, spiritual (cultural, religious, normative narrative themes) and material (natural, financial and technical) resources. The availability of resources varies from actor to actor. The terrorist needs only a few: he (or she) has the element of surprise on his/her side and might, with a weapon be dominant at a place and time of his (or her) own choosing for just a few minutes, counting mainly on the media-based reverberations of the terrorist act in and beyond the community where the attack takes place. The government's side has vastly more resources but these are generally not available in time for prevention without

advance intelligence (human or signal) about the where, when and from whom to expect what kind of attack. If the government is democratically elected and society is not too polarized, it can speak from the moral high ground and thereby has a normative advantage over those who commit what would be "war crimes" in war. This moral high ground is an enormous resource if properly utilized. A sizeable part of terrorism is, however, the result of governments acting unjustly and thereby forfeiting the normative advantage.

One of the best ways for governments to prevent (some if not all) terrorism is to stick to the rule of law and to treaty-based human rights and humanitarian law obligations. For all we know there will, as a consequence, be less (domestic) terrorism.[71] Since terrorism relies on communication, governments have many technical and legal instruments to control communication channels in combination with mass media editors and technological service providers on the internet. However, such control not only reduces the effectiveness of terrorism as a communication strategy but also tends to reduce ordinary people's right to express themselves and their right to know. Terrorists admit that more than half of their struggle is in the media but when it comes to preventing terrorism, few resources are devoted to this area, except for the creation and distribution of "counter-narratives" which tend to be of very limited effectiveness as long as words and deeds of governments do not match. Attempts to take down terrorist messages from social media, while increasing, are post-hoc in character and limited to a few languages only. Since terrorism is violence as, and for, communication, more resources ought to be devoted to neutralize terrorist communication efforts. This can only be done in cooperation with owners and editors of mass media and service providers of social media.

Regarding the third point: the building of coalitions with third parties who have similar interests or objectives. Pooling resources and capabilities with others, is the most direct way in what Lawrence Freedman calls "the art of creating power."[72] The temptation here is to seek also "unholy alliances" with partners who interests might be temporarily similar but whose ultimate objectives might create problems further down the timeline. Seeking cooperation with only nominally non-violent extremists (like the Muslim Brotherhood) to fight violent extremists (like Al Qaeda), as has occurred in some Western countries after 9/11, is a case in point. A more positive example of coalition-building is how the international resistance against ISIS in Syria and Iraq brought together in 2014 a coalition of 59 states plus the European Union.[73] Yet this point about coalition building applies not only to international coalitions. On the domestic front, government, civil society, business and other stakeholders, including from minority communities and diasporas have to get together and confront terrorism collectively.

Regarding the fourth point: the combined application of political, diplomatic, military, economic, intellectual (Research & Development) and media (incl. cyber & propaganda) instruments. This point roughly coincides with the idea of whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. Such a broad securitization of counter-terrorism will, like the coalition building of point 3, augment existing strengths. However, such a combination might not only create the specter of a national security state but might also direct attention away from other, and in some cases, more serious problem areas where government and societal action is sorely needed (such as the threat from organized crime, fighting pandemics, reversing climate change). In the cyber sphere where control is weak, governments have yet to learn how to optimize (and regain) control of hardware infrastructures and software programs to be on the winning side.

Regarding the fifth point: obtaining sufficient insight into the adversary's current and evolving interests, objectives and strategy (including its strengths and weaknesses). A strategy that does not have a good idea about the opponent's strategy is generally doomed to failure. So far, this has been one of the weakest elements in efforts to prevent non-state terrorism. It is also almost absent in the UN Plan of Action. There , the only general reference to terrorists' strategy is the following passage: "Analyses of local and national drivers of violent extremism form and important point of departure for developing national plans."[74] This is followed by the

recommendation of "Establishing early warning centers for the exchange of information on violent extremist activities…."[75] The earlier UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, unanimously approved by the General Assembly on 8 September 2006[76] is, despite its name, also only a plan of action, not a strategy in the sense of our definition of strategy and it is also almost totally silent about the strategy of the terrorist side. The most important thing to remember when it comes to terrorist strategy from non-state actors is that the success of terrorists largely depends on the indirect effects caused by the reactions of governments, media, society and other parties to terrorist provocations and acts of revenge.[77] Yet, these reactions by government and society can, to a considerable extent, be controlled and modified.

There are at several ways in which this last insight can contribute to the prevention of terrorism. Here, to conclude, we only highlight four of these which are also lessons that the attentive reader of this *Handbook* will already have learned:

1. **Lesson Learned I**: One important cause of non-state terrorism is a desire to exact revenge for some perceived or real injustice that has not been adequately addressed by the existing political system. ` is a greatly underestimated cause of terrorism. If government actions are within the rule of law, respecting basic human rights and supported by the majority of citizens, there will be fewer people driven to terrorist acts by feelings of revenge. In other words, many acts of retaliatory terrorism by non-state actors will be prevented. by avoiding acts of revenge (as opposed to rule of law-based law enforcement).

2. **Lesson Learned II**: Another way of reducing non-state terrorism relates to those acts of terrorism which are acts of *provocation*. Many terrorists want to produce an over-reaction with their atrocities, expecting that the government will target and repress the terrorists' professed constituency as a whole, which is likely to drive new recruits into the arms of the terrorist organization. Governments should avoid falling into the trap of doing what terrorists expect. By not falling into the provocation trap, governments can prevent some further acts of terrorism.

3. **Lesson Learned III**: A third way to prevent terrorism is to limit the possibilities for terrorists to obtaining free publicity with their public outrages. If half or more of the terrorist struggle is in the media, prevention should shift more strongly *to targeting the communication channels* and the mass and social media terrorists seeks to instrumentalize to reach various audiences. Without publicity for their cause, terrorists cannot hope to get very far. However, to reduce the amount of publicity for acts of terrorism, governments have to work closely with editors of mass media and operators of social media and mobilize public support for applying selective news blackouts. This too, will prevent some acts of terrorism.

4. **Lesson Learned IV**: A fourth way of reducing terrorism is based on the fact that *terrorism is intimately linked to armed conflict*. Becoming a party to an armed conflict abroad might not always be avoidable for governments but should only be done as a last resort in cases of humanitarian emergencies and then only with a strong mandate from the United Nations. Resistance against foreign interventions allows local terrorists to gain support and leads to radicalization among sectors of the public abroad. Terrorism is intimately linked to conflict not only abroad but also on the domestic front. Preventing polarization in society, protecting minorities against hate crimes while engaging in strengthening social cohesion and resilience and engaging in conflict resolution goes a long way in preventing terrorism at home.

These are four clear lessons that have emerged from empirical research on terrorism. Why do many governments not (fully) apply them? It has often been said that there is no glory in prevention. Spectacular counter-terrorist operations, like the assassination of a terrorist leader

or the dramatic rescue of hostages are portrayed as "successes." Prevention is largely silent; its success is a non-event - but one arising from foresight and preparedness rather than inaction or reaction only. While much of military counter-terrorism has serious negative repercussions, prevention policies, sensitively applied, are unlikely to do harm as there is no significant collateral damage while significant ancillary societal benefits can result from prevention policies which go far beyond counter-terrorism. Preventive measures are not cheap but they are nowhere as expensive as the Global War on Terror. The outcome of effective prevention is greater security. Yet to become effective, we have to get better at foresight and at identifying possible intervention points – upstream, midstream and downstream – for taking appropriate preventive measures.

The contributors to this volume have offered many thoughtful suggestions about what could and should be done as has the solid, but under-valued UN Plan of Action. As this volume makes clear, solid knowledge about prevention of terrorism exists but implementation of adequate preventive measures still has to wait for *political will* which, unfortunately, is still in short supply in many places.[78]

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Appendix: UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2015)[79]

I. Introduction

1. Violent extremism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It undermines peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. No country or region is immune from its impacts.

2. The present Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism considers and addresses violent extremism as, and when, conducive to terrorism. Violent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief. Nevertheless, in recent years, terrorist groups such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Qaida and Boko Haram have shaped our image of violent extremism and the debate on how to address this threat. These groups' message of intolerance — religious, cultural, social — has had drastic consequences for many regions of the world. Holding territory and using social media for the global and real-time communication of their ideas and exploits, they seek to challenge our shared values of peace, justice and human dignity. The spread of violent extremism has further aggravated an already unprecedented humanitarian crisis which surpasses the boundaries of any one region. Millions of people have fled the territory controlled by terrorist and violent extremist groups. Migratory flows have increased both away from and towards the conflict zones, involving those seeking safety and those lured into the conflict as foreign terrorist fighters, further destabilizing the regions concerned. While the Plan of Action has been developed within this context, it is intended to address violent extremism in all its forms and wherever it occurs.

3. Nothing can justify violent extremism but we must also acknowledge that it does not arise in a vacuum. Narratives of grievance, actual or perceived injustice, promised empowerment and sweeping change become attractive where human rights are being violated, good governance is being ignored and aspirations are being crushed. Violent extremists have been able to recruit over 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters from over 100 Member States to travel to the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, as well as to Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen. Some of them will no doubt be horrified by what they see and anxious to put the experience behind them, but others have already returned to their home countries — and more will undoubtedly follow — to spread hatred, intolerance and violence in their own communities.

4. Over the past two decades, the international community has sought to address violent extremism primarily within the context of security-based counter-terrorism measures adopted in response to the threat posed by Al-Qaida and its affiliated groups. However, with the emergence of a new generation of groups, there is a growing international consensus that such counter-terrorism measures have not been sufficient to prevent the spread of violent extremism. Violent extremism encompasses a wider category of manifestations and there is a risk that a conflation of the two terms may lead to the justification of an overly broad application of counter-terrorism measures, including against forms of conduct that should not qualify as terrorist acts.

5. In its resolution 2178 (2014), the Security Council makes explicit the link between violent extremism and terrorism, underscores the importance of measures being in line with international norms and recognizes the need for prevention: "violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism," requires collective efforts, "including preventing radicalization, recruitment and mobilization of individuals into terrorist groups and becoming foreign terrorist fighters." In that resolution, the Council "calls upon Member States to enhance efforts to counter this kind of violent extremism," recognizing that "international cooperation and any measures taken by Member States to prevent and combat terrorism must comply fully with the Charter of the United Nations." Definitions of "terrorism" and "violent extremism" are the prerogative of Member States and must be consistent with their obligations under international

law, in particular international human rights law. Just as the General Assembly has taken a practical approach to counter- terrorism through the adoption by consensus of the United Nations Global Counter- Terrorism Strategy, this Plan of Action pursues a practical approach to preventing violent extremism, without venturing to address questions of definition.

6. There is a need to take a more comprehensive approach which encompasses not only ongoing, essential security-based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventive measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism that have given rise to the emergence of these new and more virulent groups. In the Charter of the United Nations, Member States resolved to "take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace." I have made it a priority to re-energize the Organization's prevention agenda, especially with respect to preventing armed conflict, atrocities, disasters, violence against women and children, and conflict-related sexual violence, and have launched a dedicated initiative to place human rights upfront. The 2015 report of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (see A/70/95- S/2015/446), the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (see A/69/968-S/2015/490), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [General Assembly resolution 70/1] and the women, peace and security agenda have all stressed the need to build a collective commitment to making prevention work. The spread of violent extremism makes preventive efforts all the more relevant.

7. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted unanimously by the General Assembly by its resolution 60/288, explicitly addresses prevention and foresees balanced implementation across all four of its pillars: (a) tackling conditions conducive to terrorism; (b) preventing and combating terrorism; (c) building countries' capacity to combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard; and (d) ensuring respect for human rights for all and the rule of law while countering terrorism. Over the last decade, there has been a strong emphasis on the implementation of measures under pillar II of the Global Strategy, while pillars I and IV have often been overlooked. Ahead of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Strategy, in 2016, I am launching this Plan of Action, with a focus on preventive measures for addressing violent extremism, including by reinvigorating those measures covered under pillars I and IV of the Strategy, ensuring a more comprehensive implementation of the Strategy in view of the lessons learned over the past decade and the challenges that may lie ahead. In the context of its most recent review of the Strategy, the Assembly urged Member States "to unite against violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations." In doing so, we must be principled and strategic and must calibrate our response carefully. We must refocus our priorities, strengthen our application of justice, and rebuild the social compact between the governing and governed. We need to pay attention to why individuals are attracted to violent extremist groups. I am convinced that the creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralist societies, based on the full respect of human rights and with economic opportunities for all, represents the most tangible and meaningful alternative to violent extremism and the most promising strategy for rendering it unattractive.

8. While our understanding of the drivers of violent extremism has improved, enabling us to adapt and refine our actions, we have to accelerate our learning process to counter the speed with which this threat is evolving. While, collectively, we have the tools with which to address many of the grievances driving violent extremism, we have to learn to use and resource them effectively. United Nations entities, including the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the

Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and my Envoy on Youth, as well as many other members of the United Nations family, have been working on issues relevant to preventing violent extremism. We need to build on lessons already learned to refine our actions and render them more effective.

9. We will not be successful unless we can harness the idealism, creativity and energy of young people and others who feel disenfranchised. Young people, who constitute the majority of the population of an increasing number of countries today, must be viewed as an asset and must be empowered to make a constructive contribution to the political and economic development of their societies and nations. They represent an untapped resource. We must offer them a positive vision of their future together with a genuine chance to realize their aspirations and potential.

10. In developing this Plan of Action, I have listened closely to the views of Member States and regional organizations. We also consulted internal and external experts, scholars and practitioners. I welcome the multilateral initiatives that have stressed the need for creative and innovative action to address violent extremism.

11. The founders of the United Nations believed in the power of our shared principles, purposes and values. Member States are obliged to adapt their actions to new realities without reneging on our common commitments. The moment we consider these common commitments dispensable we help those who disrespect them to achieve their goals. With this Plan of Action, I intend to stimulate global debate on how we can best leverage our comparative advantages to effectively prevent violent extremism.

II. Impact of violent extremism

12. Violent extremism undermines our collective efforts towards maintaining peace and security, fostering sustainable development, protecting human rights, promoting the rule of law and taking humanitarian action.

A. Peace and security

13. Violent extremist groups are contributing significantly to the cycle of insecurity and armed conflict affecting many regions of the world. Al-Qaida and its affiliates have sought to intimidate Governments into changing their policies through virulent propaganda campaigns and by staging spectacular attacks. The latest iteration of violent extremist and terrorist groups, ISIL in particular, has transformed the challenge further: benefiting from existing armed conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic and instability in Iraq and in Libya, its members have managed to take over large swaths of territory and "govern" it according to their rules. They are mobile, well-armed, tech-savvy and well organized. History has shown that volatile security situations and conflicts tend to be further exacerbated by "proxy" wars. Regional and international actors bear a particular responsibility for assisting countries in strife in returning to peace. I therefore welcome the recent constructive initiatives taken in the context of the International Syria Support Group, working in concert with the Security Council to promote a comprehensive solution to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.

14. In seeking to supplant existing States and erase established borders, ISIL and Boko Haram are undermining state authority and destabilizing not just the territories most directly concerned, but also the surrounding regions. In Mali, terrorists came close to destroying the basic state structure, thereby affecting the stability of a country and of an entire region. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and other groups continue their activities in northern Mali with spillover effects in neighboring countries. They put the presence and activities of the United

Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) at risk. As I noted in a recent report (S/2015/366), terrorist groups are also benefiting from transnational organized crime. Some violent extremist groups have developed connections with transnational organized crime to increase their financial resources. They generate significant revenues from human trafficking and the slave trade, trafficking in antiquities, and the illicit sale of oil. Many of these groups are also involved in kidnapping for ransom.

15. It is critical that in responding to this threat, we recognize that violent extremists aim at provoking States into overreacting, and then exploit ill-conceived government action for their own propaganda ends. In killing 77 people in 2011, the Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik was explicitly aiming at destabilizing Norway's tolerant society by dividing local communities and provoking an overreaction. The obligations that Member States have undertaken in line with international law, including human rights instruments, provide a sound framework within which to respond to such attacks.

B. Sustainable development

16. Countries struggling to cope with widespread violence have fared poorly in reaching the Millennium Development Goals which have shaped the development agenda over the last 15 years. Violent extremism aggravates perceptions of insecurity and can lead to repeated outbreaks of unrest which compromise sustained economic growth. In establishing the Sustainable Development Goals to guide our work over the next 15 years, Member States warned that violent extremism threatens to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades. By exploiting development challenges, such as inequalities, poverty and poor governance, violent extremism further exacerbates these grievances and thereby creates a vicious cycle of decline which affects marginalized groups in particular. Moreover, considering education a particular threat to the spread of their ideologies, terrorists have targeted young people, in particular girls, for their pursuit of a modern education as the path to a better life for themselves and their families and better societies. The kidnapping of girls by Boko Haram in Chibok, Nigeria, in April 2014; the killing of students by Al-Shabaab in Garissa, Kenya, in April 2015; and the attack by Tehrik-i-Taliban on the Army Public School in Peshawar, Pakistan, in December 2014, are just some of the most egregious recent examples of the threat of violent extremism.

17. Violent extremists are also disrupting the day-to-day work of development actors, including United Nations development agencies and United Nations country teams, which are trying to help Member States eradicate poverty, and reduce social inequalities and exclusion. As a consequence, United Nations field personnel and peacekeepers have been targeted.

C. Human rights and the rule of law

18. Violent extremists pose a direct threat to the enjoyment of human rights, ranging from the right to life and the right to liberty and security of person, to freedom of expression, association, and thought, conscience and religion.

19. There is credible information indicating that terrorists and violent extremist groups like ISIL and its affiliates may have committed serious violations of international law, including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. These groups also violate the rights of women and girls, including through sexual
enslavement, forced marriages and encroachment on their rights to education and participation in public life. In areas where ISIL and other terrorist and violent extremist groups currently operate, it appears that religious communities, and women, children, political activists, journalists, human rights defenders and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and

intersex community are being systematically targeted, abducted, displaced and murdered. Torture, and sexual and gender-based violence, are also reportedly widespread. Items and sites of great historical, religious and cultural significance are being wantonly destroyed in violation of the protection afforded to the cultural heritage under international humanitarian law.

20. A lack of accountability in conflict areas is contributing to an increase in these atrocious crimes. Impunity and injustice create an environment of insecurity and helplessness, undermining conflict mediation and resolution efforts, including political transitions. We need to end impunity for all those committing violations and crimes, including crimes under international law. At the same time, we must be vigilant in ensuring that Member States' efforts to address violent extremism are respectful of the rule of law and in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law, as well as international humanitarian law, if applicable. Certain rights are non-derogable even in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation.

D. Humanitarian action

21. At the end of 2014, the world was facing a situation where the number of forcibly displaced persons was the highest on record, a situation to which violent extremism was a significant contributing factor. It is not just the volume of displaced persons that is alarming, but also the rapid increase in their numbers, which has risen 40 per cent, from 42.5 million to 59.5 million in just three years. Internally displaced persons and refugees, particularly children, are at an increased risk of forced recruitment, including by violent extremist groups.

22. Violent extremist groups actively interfere with the provision of international humanitarian assistance, including food and vital medical aid, to populations in need by limiting the access of humanitarian actors to the areas controlled by those groups, or by seizing relief supplies. In situations of armed conflict, violent extremists routinely disregard the traditional protection, enshrined in international humanitarian law, accorded to humanitarian actors in conflict zones. As a result, many humanitarian workers have become targets themselves: 329 aid workers were killed, injured or kidnapped in 2014. While violent extremists groups are not the only actors using these despicable tactics, their growing influence is a significant contributory factor to the challenging operating environment confronted by humanitarian organizations.

III. Context and drivers of violent extremism

23. In the past decade and a half, research has been conducted on the drivers of violent extremism. However, there is no authoritative statistical data on the pathways towards individual radicalization. While there are some recognizable trends and patterns, there are only a few areas of consensus that exist among researchers. Qualitative research, based mainly on interviews, suggests that two main categories of drivers can be distinguished: "push factors," or the conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which it emerges; and "pull factors," or the individual motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action. More research, both qualitative and quantitative, is required on this evolving phenomenon.

A. Conditions conducive to and the structural context of violent extremism

24. The available qualitative evidence points to the presence of certain recurrent drivers, which are common among a wide variety of countries and regions and which lead, sometimes in

isolation and sometimes in combination with other factors, to radicalization and violent extremism.

Lack of socioeconomic opportunities

25. Countries that fail to generate high and sustainable levels of growth, to create decent jobs for their youth, to reduce poverty and unemployment, to improve equality, to control corruption and to manage relationships among different communities in line with their human rights obligations, are more prone to violent extremism and tend to witness a greater number of incidents linked to violent extremism. Citizens may consider weak development outcomes as confirmation of the lack of a government's legitimacy, making state institutions less effective in responding to violent extremism when it arises. The absence of alternative employment opportunities can make violent extremist organizations an attractive source of income.

Marginalization and discrimination

26. No country is completely homogeneous. Diversity in and of itself does not lead to or increase a country's vulnerability to violent extremism. However, when a country experiences insecurities such as scarce resources, and when one group, whatever its demographic weight, acts monopolistically in political and economic sectors at the expense of other groups, the potential for intercommunal tensions, gender inequality, marginalization, alienation and discrimination increases, as expressed through restricted access to public services and job opportunities and obstructions to regional development and freedom of religion. This, in turn, may incite those who feel disenfranchised to embrace violent extremism as a vehicle for advancing their goals.

Poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law

27. Violent extremism tends to thrive in an environment characterized by poor governance, democracy deficits, corruption and a culture of impunity for unlawful behaviour engaged in by the State or its agents. When poor governance is combined with repressive policies and practices which violate human rights and the rule of law, the potency of the lure of violent extremism tends to be heightened. Violations of international human rights law committed in the name of state security can facilitate violent extremism by marginalizing individuals and alienating key constituencies, thus generating community support and sympathy for and complicity in the actions of violent extremists. Violent extremists also actively seek to exploit state repression and other grievances in their fight against the state. Thus, Governments that exhibit repressive and heavy-handed security responses in violation of human rights and the rule of law, such as profiling of certain populations, adoption of intrusive surveillance techniques and prolongation of declared states of emergency, tend to generate more violent extremists. International partners that are complicit in such action by States further corrupt public faith in the legitimacy of the wider international system.

28. The lack of adequate efforts, in line with international obligations, towards the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, exacerbated by discrimination against ethnic, national, gender, racial, religious, linguistic and other groups and the absence or curtailment of democratic space, can provide opportunities for exploitation by violent extremists. State institutions that do not adequately fulfil their international obligations to uphold these rights can fuel grievances and undermine not only their own effectiveness but also social norms and social cohesion.

29. In addition, more attention needs to be paid to devising efficient gender- and human rights-compliant reintegration strategies and programmes for those who have been convicted of terrorism-related offences as well as returning foreign terrorist fighters.

Prolonged and unresolved conflicts

30. Prolonged and unresolved conflicts tend to provide fertile ground for violent extremism, not only because of the suffering and lack of governance resulting from the conflict itself but also because such conflicts allow violent extremist groups to exploit deep-rooted grievances in order to garner support and seize territory and resources and control populations. Urgent measures must be taken to resolve protracted conflicts. Resolving these conflicts will undermine the impact of the insidious narratives of violent extremist groups. When prevention fails, our best strategy towards securing lasting peace and addressing violent extremism entails inclusive political solutions and accountability.

Radicalization in prisons

31. Research shows that harsh treatment in detention facilities can play a disconcertingly powerful role in the recruitment of a large number of individuals who have joined violent extremist groups and terrorist organizations. Several factors have been identified as spurring prisoners to seek protection by joining groups, including inhumane prison conditions and inhumane treatment of inmates, corrupt staff and security officers, gang activity, drug use, lack of security and proper facilities, and overcrowding. Safeguards need to be put in place to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies to other prisoners while upholding the protection afforded under international law to persons deprived of their liberty, including with respect to international standards and norms relating to solitary confinement.

B. Processes of radicalization

32. Although the conditions conducive to violent extremism affect entire populations, only a small number of individuals are actually radicalized and turn to violence. Both complex individual motivations and human agency play a key role in exploiting these conditions and transforming ideas and grievances into violent action.

Individual backgrounds and motivations

33. A negative personal experience which resonates with the narrative of violent extremist ideologies can heighten the chances that an individual will embrace violent extremism. Individual motivations vary from the serious to the routine: researchers have reported precipitating events as diverse as experiencing or witnessing torture, the death of a relative or friend at the hands of the security forces or a foreign power, unfair trials, the loss of property and the humiliation of a parent — and even the refusal of a personal loan.

34. While some highly educated individuals have played consequential roles in violent extremist organizations, many members are poorly educated, often not having completed secondary education. A large number have only rudimentary literacy levels and almost no religious knowledge or education, making them vulnerable to indoctrination. It is quite likely that they may have been engaged in petty crimes and illicit activities prior to their involvement with violent extremist groups. Membership in a group also promotes a sense of belonging or relief from the burden of alienation, isolation or anomie.

Collective grievances and victimization

35. Historical legacies of, or collective grievances stemming from, domination, oppression, subjugation or foreign intervention can enable narratives of victimization to take hold. These narratives can provoke simple and powerful emotional reactions which may then be exploited by violent extremists: the memory of past or present actual or perceived oppressions is upheld so as to fuel the thirst for revenge against oppressors.

Distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences

36. Violent extremist groups cynically distort and exploit religious beliefs, ethnic differences and political ideologies to legitimize their actions, establish their claim on territory and recruit followers. Distortion and misuse of religion are utilized to divide nations, cultures and people, undermining our humanity. Faith and community leaders are critical in mentoring vulnerable followers so as to enable them to reject violent ideologies and in providing opportunities for intra- and interfaith dialogue and discussion as a means of promoting tolerance, understanding and reconciliation between communities. Leaders, Governments, the international community and the media have to work together to prevent confrontation and polarization within and between countries, faiths, nations and peoples. We have to work jointly to halt this vicious cycle of provocation and response which often fuels the forces governing the nexus between conflict, terrorism and violent terrorism, as seen in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and other countries.

Leadership and social networks

37. While contextual factors, personal experiences and collective grievances can all contribute to the emergence of violent extremism, there must also be a social context that provides some form of organization and direction for these elements. This is often established through the intervention of a charismatic leader or political entrepreneur, and through informal family and social networks. It can be difficult to join violent extremist organizations unless you already know one of their members, this being an inevitable consequence of the fact that their activities are often exclusive and clandestine. However, in recent years, online tools have served as an additional, and more accessible, pathway to group membership.

IV. An Agenda for Action: recommendations on preventing violent extremism

38. I have consistently called for the balanced implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. While we need to continue our concerted efforts to counter violent extremism, we have to broaden our responses, engage earlier and address the drivers of violent extremism. We need to complement the countering of violent extremism with preventive measures. Making prevention an integral part of our comprehensive approach will help us tackle many of the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups. As with the practice of prevention more generally, results may not be visible immediately and will require our long-term and patient engagement.

39. I therefore put forward for the consideration of Member States the following recommendations, which I believe will prevent and reduce the space for violent extremism while simultaneously addressing the immediate peace and security challenges through ongoing counter-terrorism measures. My recommendations identify actions that can be taken at the global, national and regional levels with a view to promoting a comprehensive and balanced implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

A. Setting the policy framework

A global framework for preventing violent extremism

40. Preventing violent extremism is a commitment and obligation under the principles and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [General Assembly Resolution 217A (III)] and other international human rights instruments. To be effective and sustainable and in line with Member States' obligations under international law, all legislation, policies, strategies and practices adopted to prevent violent extremism must be firmly grounded in the respect for human rights and the rule of law.

41. Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have acknowledged that violent extremism has reached a level of threat and sophistication that requires concerted action beyond law enforcement, military or security measures to address development, good governance, human rights and humanitarian concerns. Strengthening the rule of law, repealing discriminatory legislation and implementing policies and laws that combat discrimination, marginalization and exclusion in law and in practice must be an essential component of any response to the threat posed by violent extremism.

42. In the past two years, the General Assembly has emphasized the need for united action on violent extremism: in the fourth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; [See General Assembly resolution 68/276.]in Assembly resolution 68/127, entitled "A world against violence and violent extremism"; and during the high-level thematic debate of the Assembly on the topic "Promoting tolerance and reconciliation: fostering peaceful, inclusive societies and countering violent extremism," convened by the President of the Assembly in conjunction with the Secretary-General and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and held on 21 and 22 April 2015, as well as in the recent general debate of the Assembly at its seventieth session. The Security Council emphasized the need for measures to address violent extremism and stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters in its resolution 2178 (2014), during the high-level open debate of the Council on the topic "The role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace," held on 23 April 2015, and in the statement by the President of the Council of 29 May 2015 (S/PRST/2015/11).

43. While we can set parameters at the global level, it is action at the local, national and regional levels that will have the most impact. I therefore count on Member States to translate our common commitment and political will to effect real change into new ways of formulating public policy so as to prevent violent extremism in their respective countries and regions. The Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Member States' obligations under international law — in particular under international human rights law, refugee law and, if applicable, international humanitarian law — provide a strong foundation, and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the guiding principles for counter-terrorism strategies, as identified at the International Conference on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies, held in Bogota from 31 January to 1 February 2013, provide additional guidance for national and regional plans of action. The processes for establishing national plans and regional strategies or refining existing ones should complement both the present Plan of Action and each other. The United Nations, through the 36 entities of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and an "All United Nations" approach, is ready to support Member States in developing such policies and plans. I will also direct resident coordinators, United Nations country teams and the regional United Nations Development Group teams to support Member States, upon their request, in developing their plans at the national and regional levels.

National plans of action for preventing violent extremism

44. Each Member State should consider developing a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism which sets national priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism and complements national counter-terrorism strategies where they already exist. Based on the principle of national ownership and in accordance with international law, Member States may wish to consider the following elements in establishing such plans:

(a) National plans should be developed in a multidisciplinary manner, to include countering and preventing violent extremism measures, with input from a wide range of government actors, such as law enforcement, social service providers and ministries of education, youth and religious affairs, as well as non-governmental actors, including youth; families; women; religious, cultural and educational leaders; civil society organizations; the media; and the private sector. Analyses of local and national drivers of violent extremism form an important point of departure for developing national plans;

(b) National plans should fortify the social compact against violent extremism by promoting respect for the principle of equality before the law and equal protection under the law in all government-citizen relations, and developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, as well as ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making. I encourage parliamentarians to provide the legislative foundation for national plans of action for preventing violent extremism consistent with their national and international obligations, where necessary;

(c) National plans should address the issue of foreign terrorist fighters, as called for in Security Council resolution 2178 (2014). In that resolution, the Council decided that States should ensure that their legal systems provide for the prosecution of travel for terrorism or related training; and that States should also address the financing or facilitation of such activities and prevent entry or transit through their territories, including through the usage of internationally accepted databases, of any individual with respect to whom there is credible information that provides reasonable grounds for believing that this travel is undertaken for the purpose of participating in a terrorist act. The guiding principles on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters agreed at the special meeting of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism, held in Madrid on 28 July 2015, could be useful in this regard;

(d) National plans should prevent violent extremist and terrorist groups from trading in oil and antiquities, hostage-taking, and receiving donations, in line with Member States' obligations under Security Council resolution 2199 (2015);

(e) One means of addressing many of the drivers of violent extremism will be to align national development policies with the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (Goal 1); ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (Goal 4); achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (Goal 5); promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (Goal 8); reducing inequality within and among countries (Goal 10); making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Goal 11); and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Goal 16);

(f) National plans should dedicate funding for implementation by government and non-governmental entities and promote public-private partnerships, where applicable;

(g) Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for these plans are essential to ensuring that policies are having the desired impact.

Regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism

45. As violent extremism does not respect borders, national and global action has to be complemented by enhanced regional cooperation. Several subregions and regions have already adopted comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies. Member States should come together to complement those strategies or adopt new regional or subregional plans of action to prevent violent extremism, facilitated by regional or subregional organizations and the United Nations, with a view to complementing and reinforcing their national plans. To this end, Member States should:

(a) Strengthen subregional and regional organizations, including by creating and maintaining regional contact lists of focal points, monitoring the trafficking of small arms and heavy weapons, and facilitating intergovernmental communication and cooperation. Establishing early warning centres for the exchange of information on violent extremist activities could render this interaction more predictable and could thus be of additional value;
(b) Enable subregional and regional organizations to provide technical assistance to Member States in the respective subregion or region in building capacity for preventing violent extremism and support effective cooperation, for example, on border management.

Mobilizing resources

46. To transform our commitment into lasting change, we need to make more efficient use of existing funds and consider how, based on the interdependence of political, social and economic drivers of violent extremism, we can create synergies in our resource allocation. Moreover, within the peace and security sector, there is a growing understanding that many preventive measures, traditionally understood to be part of development efforts, can help address these drivers. The newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals explicitly include goals and targets related to preventing violence and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.
    47. Investment in prevention is far more cost-effective than allocating resources to mitigating consequences. I therefore recommend considering:

(a) Adjusting the focus of existing funds dedicated to countering terrorism and violent extremism to enable them to also address the drivers of violent extremism, and thereby ultimately using available resources more effectively;
(b) Identifying other funding sources across sectors and evaluating how Governments and regional and international institutions could adapt existing funds so as to expand programming that is sensitive to preventing violent extremism.

B. Taking action

48. In developing national plans of action and regional strategies, Member States should consider addressing the elements outlined below.

Dialogue and conflict prevention

49. In my report to the Security Council entitled "The United Nations and conflict prevention: a collective recommitment" (S/2015/730), I noted that the risk of violent extremism often increases in the same conditions that lead to heightened risk of conflict. Where conflict already exists, we must redouble our efforts to promote and sustain dialogue between warring parties, since persistent unresolved conflict is proving to be a major driver of violent extremism. While we may benefit in these situations from using some of the tools already developed to prevent

conflict, we have also started developing specific initiatives for the prevention of violent extremism through the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, such as a Task Force working group on the prevention of violent extremism and a Task Force working group on the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and a regional youth engagement and skills development programme. I therefore recommend that Member States:

(a) Ensure that, in circumstances where military action becomes necessary to counter the expansion of violent extremist groups, any such response is in full compliance with international law, in particular with the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law;

(b) Engage opposing parties and regional actors earlier on and seek to forge international consensus so as to give regional and United Nations diplomacy the leverage that it needs to broker solutions. Delaying engagement reduces options, and increases financial and human costs;

(c) Encourage individuals to leave violent extremist groups by developing programmes that place an emphasis on providing them with educational and economic opportunities. To avert perceptions of injustice which might result from extending assistance to these perpetrators, such programmes should not draw from initiatives addressing the needs of the wider civilian population;

(d) Explore opportunities to introduce alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as mediation, arbitration and restorative justice, to resolve conflict and achieve sustainable peace;

(e) Engage religious leaders to provide a platform for intra- and interfaith dialogue and discussions through which to promote tolerance and understanding between communities, and voice their rejection of violent doctrines by emphasizing the peaceful and humanitarian values inherent in their theologies. Religious leaders also have a responsibility to themselves to seek such understanding. Tolerance is not passive: it demands the active choice to reach out on a basis of mutual understanding and respect, especially where disagreement exists;

(f) Preserve the heritage of cultural and religious diversity against the attempts by violent extremists to destroy manuscripts, objects and sites that are symbols of pluralism and tolerance;

(g) Convene regional and national dialogues on preventing violent extremism with a range of actors, encompassing youth engagement, gender equality, the inclusion of marginalized groups, the role of municipalities, and positive outreach through social media and other virtual platforms.

Strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law

50. When Governments embrace international human rights norms and standards, promote good governance, uphold the rule of law and eliminate corruption, they create an enabling environment for civil society and reduce the appeal of violent extremism. Policies and initiatives that are firmly grounded in human rights are essential to ensuring the inclusion of individuals or communities that are vulnerable to violent extremism. We need to find ways to strengthen trust between government institutions and communities to prevent real or perceived marginalization and exclusion. I therefore recommend that Member States:

(a) Review all national legislation, policies, strategies and practices aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism to ascertain whether they are firmly grounded in respect for human rights and the rule of law, and whether they put in place national mechanisms designed to ensure compliance. This may also involve taking measures to strengthen the rule of law, repealing discriminatory legislation and implementing policies and laws that combat discrimination and exclusion;

(b) Provide access to justice for all and strengthen fair, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(c) Foster non-discriminatory basic service provision, ensure accountability for service delivery, and extend state services to remote areas and create an environment where entrepreneurship can flourish and societies can become more peaceful, just and inclusive;

(d) Strengthen the professionalism of security forces, law enforcement agencies and justice institutions; and ensure effective oversight and accountability of such bodies, in conformity with international human rights law and the rule of law. This may involve providing dedicated human rights training to security forces, law enforcement agents and all those involved in the administration of justice regarding the prohibition of incitement to hatred and, more broadly, respect for human rights within the context of measures taken to counter violent extremism and terrorism;

(e) Ensure accountability for gross violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including those amounting to crimes under international law, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity, through criminal procedures adhering to due-process guarantees. Accountability mechanisms should have relevant gender expertise to fulfil their mandates. In cases where national procedures are not able or are unwilling to address such crimes, the international community should support accountability efforts, including through a referral of such situations by the Security Council to the International Criminal Court or to an ad hoc tribunal, where appropriate;

(f) Reform national legal frameworks and penitentiary systems to ensure the security of inmates, personnel and facilities and establish procedures to prevent and counter radicalization in prisons based on human rights and the rule of law;

(g) Introduce disengagement, rehabilitation and counselling programmes for persons engaged in violent extremism which are gender-sensitive and include programmes for children to facilitate their reintegration into society. These programmes must be in full compliance with international human rights norms and standards, including the rights to freedom of movement, freedom of expression and privacy, gender equality and the principle of non-discrimination;

(h) Promote the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including through human rights-based initiatives that help eliminate the conditions conducive to violent extremism. Such programmes can be particularly helpful when one group, whatever its demographic weight, behaves monopolistically in the political and economic sectors at the expense of other groups;

(i) Implement Security Council resolution 1624 (2005), promoting a comprehensive approach to incitement and violent extremism, and the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (A/HRC/22/17/Add.4, appendix), involving all relevant actors, such as national human rights institutions, civil society, political parties and the media;

(j) Prevent the subversion of the work of educational, cultural and religious institutions by terrorists and their supporters, as highlighted in Security Council resolution 1624 (2005); take appropriate measures against all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, as exhibited in particular in the curricula of formal and non-formal educational institutions, and textbooks and teaching methods;

(k) Ensure that any restrictions on freedom of expression are clearly and narrowly defined and meet the three-part test of legality, proportionality and necessity.

Engaging communities

51. For their survival, violent extremists require the tacit support of a wider circle of sympathizers. If violent extremists can be deprived of this support, their capacity to cause harm and evade justice will be greatly reduced. While engagement with communities marked by a long history of distrust of the government can pose a challenge, there are a number of

community engagement strategies that hold promise. I therefore recommend that Member States:

(a) Develop joint and participatory strategies, including with civil society and local communities, to prevent the emergence of violent extremism, protect communities from recruitment and the threat of violent extremism, and support confidence-building measures at the community level by providing appropriate platforms for dialogue and the early identification of grievances;

(b) Adopt community-oriented policing models and programmes that seek to solve local issues in partnership with the community and are firmly based on human rights so as to avoid putting community members at risk. This would increase public awareness and vigilance and improve police understanding and knowledge with regard to communities, thus enhancing their ability to be proactive and identify grievances and critical issues at an early stage;

(c) Develop local and family-based mentorship programmes, based on a one- to-one relationship between mentor and mentee, focusing on vulnerable individuals or those who have been convicted of or charged with criminal acts related to violent extremism;

(d) Provide medical, psychosocial and legal service support in communities that give shelter to victims of violent extremists, including victims of sexual and gender-based crimes;

(e) Encourage civic and professional associations, unions and chambers of commerce to reach out through their own networks to marginalized groups so as to address challenges together through inclusive dialogue and consensual politics;

(f) Support the establishment of regional and global networks for civil society, youth, women's organizations and religious leaders to enable them to share good practices and experience so as to improve work in their respective communities and promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue;

(g) Promote, in partnership with civil society and communities, a discourse that addresses the drivers of violent extremism, including ongoing human rights violations. Address any existing human rights violations, as a matter of both legal obligation and credibility.

Empowering youth

52. We must pay particular attention to youth. The world's 1.8 billion young women and men constitute an invaluable partner in our striving to prevent violent extremism. We have to identify better tools with which to support young people as they take up the causes of peace, pluralism and mutual respect. The rapid advance of modern communications technology also means that today's youth form a global community of an unprecedented kind. This interconnectivity is already being exploited by violent extremists; we need to reclaim this space by helping to amplify the voices of young people already promoting the values of mutual respect and peace to their peers. I therefore recommend that Member States:

(a) Support and enhance young women's and young men's participation in activities aimed at preventing violent extremism by prioritizing meaningful engagement mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels, as laid out in the 2015 Amman Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security; and provide a physically, socially and emotionally safe and supportive environment for the participation of young women and men in preventing violent extremism;

(b) Integrate young women and men into decision-making processes at local and national levels, including by establishing youth councils and similar mechanisms which give young women and men a platform for participating in mainstream political discourse;

(c) Foster trust between decision makers and young women and men, especially through intergenerational dialogue and youth-adult confidence-building activities and training;

(d) Involve hard-to-reach young women and men, such as those from underrepresented groups, in efforts to prevent violent extremism, as laid out in the Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding;

(e) Establish national mentoring programmes for young women and men, create space for personal growth in their chosen fields, and offer opportunities for community service which can enable them to become leaders and actors for constructive change;

(f) Ensure that a portion of all funds dedicated to addressing violent extremism are committed to projects that address young people's specific needs or empower them and encourage international financial institutions, foundations and other donors to provide small grant funding mechanisms to women and young social entrepreneurs to enable them to develop their own ideas on strengthening community resilience against violent extremism.

Gender equality and empowering women

53. Women's empowerment is a critical force for sustainable peace. While women do sometimes play an active role in violent extremist organizations, it is also no coincidence that societies for which gender equality indicators are higher are less vulnerable to violent extremism. We must therefore ask ourselves how we can better promote women's participation, leadership and empowerment across society, including in governmental, security sector and civil society institutions. In line with Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), we must ensure that the protection and empowerment of women is a central consideration of strategies devised to counter terrorism and violent extremism. There is also a need to ensure that efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism do not impact adversely on women's rights. I therefore recommend that Member States:

(a) Mainstream gender perspectives across efforts to prevent violent extremism;

(b) Invest in gender-sensitive research and data collection on women's roles in violent extremism, including on identifying the drivers that lead women to join violent extremist groups, and on the impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on their lives, in order to develop targeted and evidence-based policy and programming responses;

(c) Include women and other underrepresented groups in national law enforcement and security agencies, including as part of counter-terrorism prevention and response frameworks;

(d) Build the capacity of women and their civil society groups to engage in prevention and response efforts related to violent extremism;

(e) Ensure that a portion of all funds dedicated to addressing violent extremism are committed to projects that address women's specific needs or empower women, as recommended in my recent report to the Security Council on women and peace and security (S/2015/716).

Education, skills development and employment facilitation

54. As part of the struggle against poverty and social marginalization, we need to ensure that every child receives a quality education which equips him or her for life, as stipulated under the right to education. Education should include teaching respect for human rights and diversity, fostering critical thinking, promoting media and digital literacy, and developing the behavioural and socioemotional skills to contribute to peaceful coexistence and tolerance. Young women and men entering the workplace need our support — both in gaining access to continued learning and vocational resources, and in incubating their entrepreneurial talent. I therefore recommend that Member States:

(a) Invest in education, in particular early childhood education, from ages 3 to 8, to ensure that all children have access to inclusive, high-quality education, taking into account diverse social and cultural settings;

(b) Implement education programmes that promote "global citizenship," soft skills, critical thinking and digital literacy, and explore means of introducing civic education into school curricula, textbooks and teaching materials. Build the capacity of teachers and educators to support this agenda;

(c) Provide comprehensive primary through tertiary education, including technical and vocational education, and mentoring for all vulnerable people, including the displaced, by leveraging online and mobile technology;

(d) Collaborate with local authorities to create social and economic opportunities, in both rural and urban locations; invest in equipping people with the skills needed to meet local labour demands through relevant education opportunities;

(e) Provide young people with additional career options by fostering an entrepreneurial culture and offering entrepreneurship education, facilitating employment searches and job-matching, enacting regulations to promote the development of micro and small enterprises, easing access to finance and microcredit and increasing the range of support services such as marketing and distribution, so as to unleash the full economic potential of youth;

(f) Invite the private sector and other civil society actors to contribute to post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction efforts, especially job creation, facilitation and training opportunities.

Strategic communications, the Internet and social media

55. The manipulative messages of violent extremists on social media have achieved considerable success in luring people, especially young women and men, into their ranks. While violent extremists have demonstrated some sophistication in their use of old and new media tools, it is equally true that we who reject their message have largely failed to communicate to those who are disillusioned and disenfranchised a vision of the future that captures their imagination and offers the prospect of tangible change. Thousands of young activists and artists are fighting back against violent extremism online through music, art, film, comics and humour, and they deserve our support. I therefore recommend that Member States:

(a) Develop and implement national communications strategies, in close cooperation with social media companies and the private sector, that are tailored to local contexts, gender sensitive and based on international human rights standards, to challenge the narratives associated with violent extremism;

(b) Encourage more research on the relationship between the misuse of the Internet and social media by violent extremists and the factors that drive individuals towards violent extremism;

(c) Promote grass-roots efforts to advance the values of tolerance, pluralism and understanding;

(d) Ensure that national legal frameworks protect freedom of opinion and expression, pluralism, and diversity of the media;

(e) Empower and enable victims to transform their loss and suffering into a constructive force for preventing violent extremism by providing them with online forums where they can tell their stories;

(f) Protect journalists, who play a crucial role in democratic societies, by ensuring the prompt and thorough investigation of threats to their safety, and encourage journalists to work together to voluntarily develop media training and industry codes of conduct which foster tolerance and respect.

C. Supporting Member States, regional bodies and communities through the United Nations

56. The primary responsibility for preventing violent extremism rests with Member States. As they develop their response, the United Nations can act as a natural partner. The United Nations can help foster global dialogue, uniting countries, people and communities on the basis of universally shared values and principles as enshrined in international law, including human rights instruments.

57. In cooperation with Member States, United Nations missions, programmes and projects are already addressing the underlying drivers and triggers of violent extremism. Violent extremist groups, which recognize the power of these tools, are targeting peacekeepers, human rights advocates, educators, civil society activists and aid workers in order to weaken our resolve and our results. We need to be more strategic and better coordinated in our activities in order to enhance coherence across the full spectrum of security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian assistance. This will require that United Nations peace and security efforts and sustainable development policy frameworks address the drivers of violent extremism, that we further strengthen the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and the rule of law and that humanitarian principles are respected, that humanitarian actors have the necessary space within which to operate and that our humanitarian work is people-centred, supports resilient communities and does not fuel conflict.

58. I have instructed United Nations entities to redouble their efforts in coordinating and developing activities with Member States, to prioritize, sensitize and adapt existing programmes to permit them to target the drivers of violent extremism more precisely and to introduce new initiatives to close potential gaps. I therefore intend to:

(a) Adopt an All-of-UN approach to supporting national, regional and global efforts to prevent violent extremism through the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination, as well as through existing United Nations inter-agency bodies and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and its entities, which bear the primary responsibility for supporting Member States in implementing all four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. By adopting an All-of-UN approach through the Task Force framework, the Organization will coordinate its action more closely and help channel and share initiatives that have proved effective;

(b) Integrate preventing violent extremism into relevant activities of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions in accordance with their mandates, as well as into relevant activities of United Nations country teams in order to build the capacity of Member States through such mechanisms as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, the United Nations common country assessments, youth advisory Boards, the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform programming;

(c) Encourage United Nations governing and executive boards to enhance the capacities of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to support Member States in developing and implementing their national plans of action for preventing violent extremism;

(d) Offer capacity-building programmes aimed at strengthening national and regional capacities to develop institutional plans designed to prevent violent extremism and share good practices, and assist Member States in adopting relevant legislation and policies in close coordination with the relevant United Nations country teams, special representatives of the Secretary-General, peace operations where deployed, and entities of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, including the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre;

(e) Launch a United Nations global communications strategy to prevent violent extremism, grounded in United Nations core values of peace, justice, tolerance and human dignity as they are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments, reinforcing these shared values around the world and supporting Member States in tailoring their own national and local communication strategies, upon their request;

(f) Further strengthen early and effective action through the Human Rights Upfront Initiative to prevent or respond to large-scale violations of international human rights law or international humanitarian law, at both the policy and the operational level;

(g) Develop a standing United Nations prevention of violent extremism platform to direct the implementation of this Plan, facilitated by the Counter- Terrorism Implementation Task Force and supported by the United Nations Counter- Terrorism Centre. This platform would coordinate policy within the United Nations system and support Member States in developing their institutional responses to violent extremism at the local, national and regional levels by sharing lessons learned. It should foster cooperation between Member States, including through South-South and triangular partnerships;

(h) Support Governments seeking to develop and implement education programmes that promote civic education, soft skills, critical thinking, digital literacy, tolerance and respect for diversity, including, for example, peace education modules for the use of school-age children, in order to promote the culture of non-violence;

(i) Launch a global awareness campaign to support victims of violent extremism and provide them with a global platform within which to share their stories by expanding the Victims of Terrorism Support Portal;

(j) Encourage youth exchange programmes within and among Member States, which could be further developed into global community service and global youth programmes to enhance cross-cultural understanding, promote learning of new skills and support development initiatives;

(k) Invite relevant private actors, including communications and social media companies, to support the prevention of violent extremism initiatives and generate creative ideas to help the international community effectively address the spread of violent extremism through the Internet;

(l) Develop a proposal for a Secretary-General's fund to support innovative projects aimed at preventing violent extremism, especially in the fields of communications and community empowerment.

V. An appeal for concerted action

59. Undermining our common humanity, violent extremism is inherently global. It is driven by a mixture of personal, societal and ideational factors whose manifestations vary from one individual to the next. Violent extremism has affected different societies during different eras and in different regions of the world. The present plan of action does not provide a single solution to this challenge — there is no one tool or approach that will put it to rest forever. Instead, we need to broaden the way we think about this threat and take measures to prevent it from proliferating. What is most alarming in the present context is the rapid expansion of violent extremist ideologies in different parts of the world, which is being facilitated by the technological revolution. In the true spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, we must take action now in order to save succeeding generations.

60. To be effective in preventing violent extremism, our actions have to be as agile and far-reaching as the phenomenon itself. We have to improve our set of tools dynamically and keep reviewing our responses. The Plan of Action constitutes the inaugural basis for a comprehensive approach to this fast evolving, multidimensional challenge. I have asked my

staff to keep the action of the United Nations under constant review and to provide me with updates regarding what we might also be doing.

61. I am convinced that unity in principled action will overcome the rhetoric and appeal of violent extremism and, ultimately, the violent extremist groups themselves. At a time of growing polarization on a number of national, regional and global issues, preventing violent extremism offers a real opportunity for the members of the international community to unite, harmonize their actions and pursue inclusive approaches in the face of division, intolerance and hatred.

62. The General Assembly is the only body that can speak with a global voice to all parts of the world where violent extremists seek to spread intolerance and division. I therefore call upon all Member States to use that voice to send forth a resounding appeal for unity and action.

Endnotes

[1] The UN Secretary-General presented this plan to the General Assembly in late 2015.

[2] Eric Rosand and Alastair Millar, "Where is UN Counter-Terrorism Heading 20 Years after 9/11?" *IPI Global Observatory,* 26 February 2021. Available at: https://theglobalobservatory.org/2021/02/where-is-un-counterterrorism-headed-20-years-after-9-11/ .

[3] One study from 2019, surveying 111 key publications of the existing literature concluded: "The results of this scoping review of P/CVE interventions show that at the moment there are no evidence-based interventions that prevent and counter the development of the intention to commit acts of violent extremism, at least not according to the definition of an "evidence-based intervention" suggested in this review. This conclusion is motivated by the lack of studies evaluating the comparative effectiveness of the outcomes of interventions relevant to P/CVE." (…) 'In the included literature, two publications measured the comparative effectiveness of interventions. The results of these studies imply that educational interventions increase knowledge about, and change attitudes towards, violent extremism. No studies evaluating outcomes of the comparative effectiveness of interventions relevant to preventing or countering the development of the intention to commit violent extremism were found in the literature." – Pistone, Isabella et al. (2019, Summer): "A Scoping Review of Interventions for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Current Status and Implications for Future Research". *Journal for Deradicalization* 19, p. 25 and p. 25. Available at: http://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/213 .

[4] See for instance: Barna, Cristian (2018): The Role of the Family in Preventing the Transformation of Western Youngsters into Jihadi Fighters. *International Annals of Criminology,* 56(1-2), 157-177. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2018.13.Christensen, Tina Wilchen (2019, October): *Lessons Learned from P/CVE Youth Mentorship.* (RUSI Conference Report). Available at: https://rusi.org/publication/conference-reports/lessons-learned-pcve-youth-mentorship; De Jonge Oudraat, Chantal (2016): Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: The Role of Women and Women's Organizations. In: Naureen Chowdhury Fink; Sara Zeiger; Rafia Bhulai (eds.) (2016). *A Man's World? Exploring the Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism.* [e-Book]. Abu Dhabi / New York: Hedayah / Global Center on Cooperative Security, 18-35. Available at: https://www.globalcenter.org/publications/a-mans-world-exploring-the-roles-of-women-in-countering-terrorism-and-violent-extremism; El Benni, Ammar; Troncota, Cristian (2018, April): *The Need for a Closer Collaboration between Education Institutions and Law Enforcement Agencies to Prevent Radicalisation.* (RIEAS Article). Available at: https://www.rieas.gr/images/islamic/ammarandcristian99.pdf; Executive Office of The President of the United States. "Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States". December 2011; Fink, Naureen Chowdhury et al. (2015, February): *Thinking Outside the Box: Exploring the Critical Roles of Sports, Arts, and Culture in Preventing Violent Extremism.* (Global Center on Cooperative Security / Hedayah Policy Brief). Available at: https://www.globalcenter.org/publications/thinking-outside-the-box-exploring-the-critical-roles-of-sports-arts-and-culture-in-preventing-violent-extremism; Nowak, Manfred & Charbord, Anne (2018): *Using Human Rights to Counter Terrorism.* Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/jli.2019.4; OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2007): *"The Role of Civil Sciety in Preventing Terrorism"*. (Report on Informal Working Level Meeting held on 14–16 March 2007, Barcelona). Spain; Schlaffer, Edith; Kropiunigg, Ulrich (2015): Mothers against Terror. *per Concordiam*, 6(4), 18-25. Available: https://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/mcdocs/files/College/F_Publications/perConco

rdiam/pC_V6N4_en.pdf ; Spalek, Basia; Weeks, Douglas (2017), "The Role of Communities in Counterterrorism: Analyzing Policy and Exploring Psychotherapeutic Approaches within Community Settings". *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 40(12), 991-1003. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1253985; UNESCO, *Preventing violent extremism through education*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 6, 2019, from UNESCO website. Available at: https://en.unesco.org/preventing-violent-extremism/education .

[5] UN General Assembly, *United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/RES/60/288, 20 September 2006 (adopted 8 September 2006) The first of four pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly in 2006 covers measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; the second pillar, measures to prevent and combat terrorism; pillar three, measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and pillar four, measures to facilitate the promotion and protection of human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism. Available at: https://undocs.org/A/RES/60/288 .

[6] United Nations, General Assembly 70th Session, Agenda items 16 and 117. Culture of Peace. *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Report of the Secretary-General*. A/70/674; 24 December 2015.

[7] Ucko, David H., "Preventing violent extremism through the United Nations: The rise and fall of a good idea". *International Affairs* 94 (2) February 2016, p. 260 [quoted from pre-print version].

[8] Altiok, Ali and Jordan Street,'A fourth pillar for the United Nations? The rise of counter-terrorism'. *Saferworld,* June 2020, p. 12 (Box 3). Available at: www.saferworld.org .

[9] United Nations General Assembly, "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary General" (New York, December 24, 2015). Available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674.

[10] However, in May 2021, the post-Trump US Department of Homeland Security established a new Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) which might also reinvigorate international efforts of terrorism prevention. Cf. 11 May 2021 Press Release "DHS Creates New Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships and Additional Efforts to Comprehensively Combat Domestic Violent Extremism". Available at: dhs.us.

[11] Cf. Appendix to chapter 27.

[12] Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, (2021) The Global Illicit Economy: Trajectories of Transnational Organized Crime. Geneva: GIATOC, March 2021. Available at: https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Global-Illicit-Economy-GITOC-Low.pdf. One of the world's most detailed monitoring project on conflicts, based in Heidelberg, Germany, and operating since 1991, arrived at different figures: it counted 40 wars – 21 full scale and 19 limited wars in 2020. The Heidelberg research team, monitoring also violent crises and non-violent conflicts, provided in its most recent report these figures: "In 2020, HIIK observed a total of 359 conflicts worldwide. About 60 percent, 220, were fought violently, while 139 were on a non-violent level. Compared to 2019, the overall number of full-scale wars increased from 15 to 21. The number of limited wars decreased from 23 to 19. (…) In 2020, HIIK observed 21 wars, six more than in the previous year. On par with 2014, this was the highest number of wars ever recorded by HIIK. Three limited wars escalated to full-scale wars. All three were located in Sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, four violent crises escalated to wars.(…) The number of limited wars decreased by four from 23 in 2019 to 19 this year. Nine conflicts continued on the same level as in the previous year. Eight violent crises escalated to limited wars, while at the same time, ten limited wars de-escalated to the level of a violent crisis. Three limited wars escalated to full-scale wars, while two conflicts de-escalated from war-level to limited war-level." Heidelberg

Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK), Conflict Barometer 2020. Heidelberg: HIIK, 2021, pp. 15-16. Available at: https://hiik.de/

[13] Cf. Chapter 6.

[14] Chapter 4, Abstract.

[15] Chapter 4, Conclusion.

[16] Chapter 4, Abstract.

[17] Schmid, Alex P., *'Prevention of Terrorism. Towards a Multi-pronged Approach'*; in: Bjørgo, Tore (ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*. London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 226-227.
Schmid first formulated ten of these principles between 1999 and 2005 when he was working for the United Nations as Officer-in-Charge of the Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

[18] Schmid, Alex P. "Prevention of Terrorism. Towards a Multi-pronged Approach*"*; in: Bjørgo, Tore (ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*. London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 226-227. This volume was the outcome of a conference held in 2003.

[19] Th. Samuels, chapter 7.

[20] Resolution 2242 (2015) Adopted unanimously by the Security Council at its 7533rd meeting, on 13 October 2015.

[21] United Nations, Plan of Action 2015.

[22] Papagianni, Katia (2009). 'Political Transitions after Peace Agreements: The Importance of Consultative and Inclusive Political Processes'. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 3(1), pp. 47-63; Paffenholz, Thania, Nick Ross, Steven Dixon, Anna-Lena Schluchter and Jacqui True (2016). *Making Women Count - Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations*. Geneva: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies); Dudouet, Véronique and Stina Lundström (2016). *Post-war Political Settlements: From Participatory Transition Processes to Inclusive State-building and Governance*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

[23] Ricigliano, Rob (ed.). *Choosing to Engage: Armed Groups and Peace Processes*. London: Conciliation Resources 2005; Dudouet, Veronique 2009; Toros, Harmonie 2012.

[24] Blaydes, Lisa, and Jennifer De Maio (2010). 'Spoiling the Peace? Peace Process Exclusivity and Political Violence in North-Central Africa'. *Civil Wars* 12(1), pp. 18–21.

[25] Lelo, S.M., C*ountering Terrorism Through Education of Populations: The Case of African Countries* in *Counter Terrorism in Diverse Communities*, NATO Science for Peace and Security Series, Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2011 pp. 249-260.

[26] UNESCO, *A Teacher's Guide to Preventing Violent Extremism*. Paris: UNESCO, 2016. Available at: https://www.unesco-vlaanderen.be/media/84650/teacher_guide_prevention_violent_extremism.pdf .

[27] Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) *Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney*, November 2020, pp. 67-68; Available at: https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf . However, the authors of this report stress that "….the correlations for developing countries are often different from the one found in countries with advanced economies. The authors also caution that "As it is a characteristic of systems analysis, the notion of [direction of – APS] causality is not always clear." IEP, pp. 67-68.

[28] IEP, p.3.

[29] Point 10 of UN Plan of Action.

[30] Source: Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) Global Terrorism Index 2020, op. cit., p.68. NEET stands for Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training.

[31] IEP, p.68. - The IEP also noted that "There were 236,422 deaths from terrorism between 2002 and 2019. Of these deaths,… 224,582, occurred in countries involved in conflict" (p. 41).

[32] Ibid., p. 99: "Physical integrity is understood as freedom from political killings and torture by the government. (…) The index is based on indicators that reflect violence committed by government agents and that are not directly referring to elections".

[33] UN OCT, Reference Guide, op. cit., p.23. The unwillingness or inability of the drafters of the Plan of Action to define 'violent extremism' was one of the plan's weaknesses. One astute observer of the UN, David H. Ucko, commented: "….the Plan of Action never defined "violent extremism," but noted instead it "encompassed a wider category of manifestations" than terrorist acts. If making definitions "the prerogative of Member-States" was meant to avoid an endless, and perhaps fruitless, discussion of terminology, this so-called "practical approach" also had the effect of creating ambiguity, which greatly undercut the new concept. In the absence of definitions of violent extremism, member-states looked to the examples provided in the Plan, nearly all of which cited groups that self-identify as Islamic: IS, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, and so on. (…) Instead, Egypt, Pakistan, and other members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) felt targeted and, in discussing the plan, repeatedly stressed the need to distance Islam from the conversation. In fact, the Plan of Action never mentions Islam, or the Muslim religion, and yet Islam appeared more than 40 times in the related GA discussion. In terms of achieving buy-in with the countries at the frontline of the counter-ideological struggle against violent Islamism, this was an own goal." Ucko 2016, p. 265.

[34] Cf. Chapter 2 of this *Handbook* for text of the draft definition of the Ad Hoc Committee of the 6th (legal) Committee of the UN General Assembly.

[35] Human Rights Council, 33rd session, Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General Report on best practices and lessons learned on how protecting and promoting human rights contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism, 21 July 2016 (A/HRC/33/29).

[36] Ibid. Cf. Available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674 .

[37] Cf. /RES/70/291, para 39,40, UN PVE Plan of Action, A/70/674, para 7, UN Secretary-General's Statement at the first meeting of the High Level PVE Action Group on 27 October 2016; International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 12 Principles for National Action planning, No. 2; cit. UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, Reference Guide, op. cit., p.10. [violent extremism, 21 July 2016 (A/HRC/33/29)].

[38] Ucko 2016, p.252; comment by one of the drafters of the Plan of Action to author of this chapter.

[39] Ibid., p..255.

[40] Ibid., p. 259. Cf. also Eric Rosand and Leanne Erdberg, *"*Win the Battle, Lose the War: How the U.S. Can Sustain Counterterrorism Gains," *Just Security*, 28 June 2018; Available at: https://www.justsecurity.org/58592/win-battle-lose-war-u-s-sustain-counterterrorism-gains/.

[41] David Ucko has pointed out that "It may just be telling that in listing the priorities of the new under-secretary-general of the UN Counter-Terrorism Office, PVE comes in at the fifth and final place." Ucko 2016, p. 266.

[42] Ucko 2016,.p. 260. Cf. also: Cf. Rosand, Eric and Leanne Erdberg, *"*Win the Battle, Lose the War: How the U.S. Can Sustain Counterterrorism Gains," *Just Security,* 28 June 2018, https://www.justsecurity.org/58592/win-battle-lose

[43] Cf. Ucko, David J.: "….many governments are deeply suspicious of civil society, and would actively resist any international effort to boost its power relative to the state. Even in elaborating the Plan of Action, drafters faced immediate problems with Russia wanting to

downplay the role of civil society and China resisting the language of human rights" (Ucko 2016, p. 267). Eric Rosand observed: "The UN General Assembly has only been able to "take note" of the Secretary-General's PVE Plan of Action, with Egypt and Russia foremost among the nations preventing an endorsement of the framework. See, for example, the statement by Oleg Syromolotov, deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Russian Federation, at the OSCE Counter-Terrorism Conference in Rome, May 10, 2018, arguing that P/CVE is "pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states and destabilize legitimate governments" (https://osce.mid.ru/web/osce-en/-/oleg-syromolotov-at-the-osce-counter-terrorism-conference)." Rosand, Eric. *Preparing the Global Counterterrorism Forum for the Next Decade.* Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace. Special Report No. 476, August 2020, p. 22.

[44] The Economist Group. *Democracy Index 2019.* London: The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020, p. 3. The fact that not all 193 UN member states are covered by the survey (but only 167) is due to the fact that the 26 missing countries are small in terms of population. Therefore, the overall percentage distribution is not seriously affected. – On the decline of democracy in the 21st century, see also: Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, (2021) *The Global Illicit Economy: Trajectories of Transnational Organized Crime.* Geneva: GITOC, March 2021. Available at: https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Global-Illicit-Economy-GITOC-Low.pdf

[45] Schmid, Alex P. Terrorism and Democracy. In: Alex P. Schmid and Ronald D. Crelinsten (eds.) *Western Responses to Terrorism.* London: Frank Cass, 1993, pp.23-24.

[46] IEP, p.68-70.

[47] Cf. Seamus Hughes' statement in 2017 when Donald Trump became president: "Countering violent extremism at the [US] federal level is dead. (…) Indeed, the new CVE terminology introduced under the Trump administration, "terrorism prevention," could help narrow the issue. This term makes clear that the discussion is about programs and individuals crossing a particular threshold. Nevertheless, it only addresses violence, failing to acknowledge that extremism is also a large part of the issue". – Quoted in: Levitt, Matthew (ed.) (2018): *Neither Remaining nor Expanding: The Decline of the Islamic State.* (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Policy Focus 155 / Counterterrorism Lectures 2016-2017). Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, pp. 83-88. Available at: https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/neither-remaining-nor-expanding.

[48] The "Prevention of Violent Extremism" (PVE) terminology was originally proposed by the State Department under the Obama administration. See also: Ingram, Haroro J. (2018, November): *Terrorism Prevention in the United States: A Policy Framework for Filling the CVE Void.* (GW Program on Extremism Policy Paper). Available at: https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Terrorism%20Prevention%20Policy%20Paper.pdf

[49] Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *A Whole-of-Society Approach to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism. A Guidebook for Central Asia.* Vienna: OSCE, March 2020. Available at: http://www.osce.org/pc/98008 .

[50] Cf. Council of Europe. *Counter-Terrorism Strategy* (201802020). Available at: https://coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Objectid=0900000168afcpr

[51] Cf. European Commission. 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The European Council, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions'. *A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond.* Brussels, 9.12.2020 COM(2020) 795 final. - For an overview of some of these plans of action, see Annex 1 of: Hedayah, The International

Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, *Guidelines and Good Practices. Developing National P/CVE Strategies and Action Plans.* Abu Dhabi: Hedayah, September 2016. Available at: http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-1792016192156lpdf; see also: Feve, Sebastian and David Dews. *National Strategies to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism: An Independent Review*. Washington, DC: Global Center on Cooperative Security, September 2019. Available at: globalcenter.org; and: UN General Assembly, The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategic Review, 2 July 2018 (A/RES/72/284).
[52] Council of Europe. Counter-Terrorism Strategy (201802020), pp. 3-4. Available at: https://coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Objectid=0900000168afcpr .
[53] European Commission. 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The European Council, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions.' *A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond.* Brussels, 9 December 2020 COM (2020) 795 final.
[54] Ibid., p.10.
[55] Cf. UNDP, *Improving the Impact of Preventing Violent Extremism Programming: A Toolkit for Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*, 2018; Available at: https://www.undp.org/content/dam /undp/library/Global%20Policy%20Centres/OGC/PVE_ImprovingImpactProgrammingToolkit_2018.pdf .
[56] Cf. UNOCT, Programs and Projects. New York: UN, 2020. Available at: https://www.un.org/
[57] Feve, Sebastian and David Dews. *National Strategies to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism. An Independent Review*. Washington, DC: Global Center on Cooperative Security, September 2019, pp. 37-38. Available at: globalcenter.org. (The categorization is from Reference Guide: Developing National and Regional Action Plans to Prevent Violent Extremism', n.d. Available at: https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism.ctitf/files/UNOCT_PVEReferenceGuide_FINAL.pdf).
[58] A similar plan was developed by the Abu-Dhabi-based think tank Hedayah. Its guidelines and good practices for developing national P/CVE strategies and action plans to facilitate implementation of the UN Plan of Action, included 14 steps:
1. Conduct an analysis of the threat;
2. Assess the current status of CVE strategies and policies that exist in that country;
3. Review the existing relevant research on violent extremism and CVE;
4. Review other existing national CVE strategies, good practices and lessons learned internationally to draw on the existing body of knowledge;
5. Identify the key actors and stakeholders to consult and involve throughout the process;
6. Create designated forum;
7. Create timeline for the development process of the strategy;
8. Set priorities for AVE activities and concrete measurable goals in alignment with existing good practice;
9. Determine budgetary resources and capacity (including staffing) needed, and assess availability;
10. Develop and disseminate the strategy document to all relevant stakeholders and partners;
11. Develop a strategic communications plan;
12. Review local push and pull factors, analysis of the threat, and strategy systematically and periodically;

13. Build local, particularly community-based awareness of the general violent extremist threat, to include recruitment narratives, techniques, and avenues of communication;

14. Monitor programs during implementation and evaluate results based on goals established in step 8. [Hedayah (2016): *Guidelines and Good Practices: Developing National P/CVE Strategies and Action Plans.* (September 2016 Edition)]. For a similar instrument, see also: UNDP, *Improving the Impact of Preventing Violent Extremism Programming: A Toolkit for Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*, 2018.

[59] United Nations, *Reference Guide. Developing National and Regional Action Plans to Prevent Violent Extremism.* New York: UN, n.d. p.6.

[60] Feve, Sebastian and David Dews. *National Strategies to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism.* Washington DC: Global Center on Cooperative Security, September 2019, Appendix A. National Strategies P/CVE analyzed in this Report, pp. 41ff.

[61] Hussein, Sharaf, "Preventing Violent Extremism the Lebanese Way: A Critical Analysis of the Lebanese PVE Strategy". *Perspectives on Terrorism,* Vol. 15, forthcoming, 2021.

[62] The UN Reference Guide. *Developing National and Regional Action Plans to Prevent Violent Extremism.* New York: UN, n.d.. It noted that "A one-size-fits-all model for a PVE plan does not exist." (p.6)

[63] Lawrence Freedman. *Strategy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. xi.

[64] Clausewitz, Carl von, *Vom Kriege*, Vol. II, p.1; Based on Clausewitz, Richard English defined strategy as ... the art of using military means to achieve specific political ends and policy objectives; tactics operate at a lower level, constituting the detailed, day-to-day choices involved in using organized, armed forces in line with strategic aims. (R. English. *Modern War,* 2016, p.16; cit.in: R. English. *Does Terrorism Work?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p.277, note 144).

[65] Lawrence, Freedman, the author of *Strategy* (2013), made some important observations leading him to a short definition (below, at the end of this footnote). He started by observing that "….*strategy* remains the best word we have for expressing attempts to think about actions in advance, in the light of our goals and our capacities. (…) There is no agreed-upon definition of *strategy* that describes the field and limits its boundaries. One common contemporary definition describes it as being about maintaining a balance between ends, ways and means; about identifying objectives; and about the resources and methods available for meeting such objectives. (…) By and large, strategy comes into play where there is actual or potential conflict, when interests collide and forms of resolution are required. This is why strategy is more than a plan. (…) Strategy is often expected to start with a description of a desired end state, but in practice there is rarely an orderly movement to goals set in advance. (…) ….the realm of strategy is one of bargaining and persuasion as well as threats and pressure, psychological as well as physical effects, and words as well as deeds. This is why strategy is the central political art. It is about getting more out of a situation than the starting balance of power would suggest. It is the art of creating power". - Lawrence Freedman. *Strategy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. x-xii, pp.72-75, p. 88, pp. 607-608

[66] Gregory Miller is Professor of Strategy at the US National Defense University. He offered this definition*:* 'A strategy is a plan and iterative process for achieving broad political objectives, that continually takes into account one's environment, goals, resources, and constraints, as well as those of other interested parties'. Personal communication from G. Miller, 25 August 2017.

[67] Tore Bjørgo's definition: "*Strategy* is here about putting the available measures and resources into an action plan to achieve a specified effect, e.g., to reduce a specified actor's capacity to carry out specific actions, such as acts of terrorism. Strategies are therefore based on conceptions of certain *mechanisms* – a process in which some factors or means influence

the elements and bring about a specific effect. (…) *Measures* are the methods or deliberate courses of action implemented to activate a specific mechanism and through this they achieve an intended effect.(…) It is important to differentiate between a strategy/mechanism and the measures used to activate it. The same measures (e.g., arrest) can trigger different mechanisms (e.g., deterrence, disruption or incapacitation) and this be included in several prevention strategies at the same time, but have a different preventive function in each of these strategies. Similarly, different measures can activate the same mechanisms, e.g., both arrest and exposure in the media can help to disrupt a terror plot." Bjørgo, Tore *Strategies for Preventing Terrorism.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 5.

[68] If a strategic plan does, despite its flexibility, not work within a pre-determined period of time, it is important to move to a Plan B. The period of time when Plan A has to be given up and one has to move to a different Plan B should be based on perceived shifts in the balance of power between the opponents as time goes by.

[69] *The Economic Times*, 20 January 2017. Available at: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/.

[70] UN Plan of Action, point 60.

[71] Cf. Tom Parker. *Avoiding the Terrorist Trap. Why Respect for Human Rights is the Key to Defeating Terrorism*. London: World Scientific, 2019. See also Tom Parker's chapter in this *Handbook* making a strong case in this regard. Parker was also one of the primary drafters of the UN Plan of Action.

[72] Lawrence Freedman. *Strategy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 607.

[73] US. Department of State, 3 December 2014, Joint Statement Issued by Partners at the Counter-ISIL Coalition Ministerial Meeting. Available at: https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/12/234627.htm .

[74] UN Plan of Action point 44 (a).

[75] Ibid., point 45 (a).

[76] A/RES/60/288, 8 September 2006. The Plan of Action in the Annex to the resolution covers four areas:

1. Pillar: Measures to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism (e.g. A. Countering the appeal of terrorism; B. Preventing and resolving conflicts; C. Fostering Dialogue and understanding; D. Promoting economic and social development);
2. Pillar II: Measures to prevent and combat terrorism (A. Activities on law enforcement and border control; B. Activities on preventing and responding to attacks by means of weapons of mass destruction; C. Activities on combating the financing of terrorism; D. Activities on protecting vulnerable targets, critical infrastructure and the Internet).
3. Pillar III. Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard (A. Facilitating the integrated implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; B. Enhancing the capacity of criminal justice officials and law enforcement officers).
4. Pillar IV: Measures to ensure the protection of human rights and the rule of law while combating terrorism (A. Training and capacity-building for law enforcement officials on human rights, the rule of law and the prevention of terrorism; B. Basic human rights reference guides C. Support for victims of terrorism).

[77] Tomasiewicz, Jaroslav. "Terrorism Strategies. An Attempt at Conceptualisation". *Przeglad Policy JNY*, Nr. 3 (139) November 2020 ORCID:0000-0001-9750-5256, pp.120-138. DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0014.5583 .

[78] The absence of "political will" can be linked to an absence of "political insight." However, sad enough, there is also a more sinister explanation for the lack of political will by some

regimes. Having a "public enemy" whether in the form of one or more enemy "rogue states" abroad or in the form of one or more domestic or foreign terrorist groups, serves some demagogic regimes well. It allows them to "play politics" with the public's fear of terrorism – a fear that can be manipulated, and one that has in some cases even led to 'false flag' operations. This author remembers, while he was on an official UN mission, a sentence from a briefing he received from a local expert: "Not all bombs that explode here are the work of terrorists".

[79] UN General Assembly, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: report of the Secretary General* (New York, 24 Dec. 2015). Available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674. General Assembly Seventieth session Agenda items 16 and 117 Culture of peace. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism Report of the Secretary-General 24 December 2015 A/70/674.

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