

Committee: SPECPOL 2

Topic: The Question of State Backing of Terrorist organisations

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Summary

In the current global landscape, many United Nations member states support non-state armed groups to pursue their interests, often while publicly denying any affiliation. This trend includes backing paramilitary and terrorist organizations, which destabilize regions and undermine international security. Such groups are equipped and funded by member states, allowing them to operate on a larger scale. This issue is not new, as states have historically used third-party militias to destabilize their adversaries. Today, extremist groups are often supported to achieve political gains, weakening national sovereignty and impeding geopolitical progress.

Definition of Key Terms

Sanctions – Punitive measures imposed on member states that violate international norms, ranging from trade embargos to military interventions. These must be approved by the UN Security Council.

Terrorist Organization – A group that uses violence to advance political or social goals, distinct from paramilitaries, which are armed groups unaffiliated with recognized states.

State Backed Terrorism – The support of terrorist organizations by a state, either financially, militarily, or through advisory means.

Proxy War – A conflict where states indirectly engage by supporting third-party groups in another country's territory.

States of Concern – Countries that violate UN mandates or the UN Charter.

Acts of Terror – Violent actions aimed at destabilizing a state and threatening its citizens' security.

Accountability – Holding states responsible for violations of international law, including the imposition of sanctions or military interventions.

Background Information

The use of non-state actors and third-party organizations for state interests dates back centuries, with powerful states employing independent groups to weaken rivals. For instance, the Roman Empire supported Gothic tribes, while the Ottoman Empire backed the Barbary pirates. This trend continued into the Cold War, when states like the USA and USSR began to utilize proxy groups to engage in indirect conflicts and avoid direct confrontation or international accountability.

The Cold War set a precedent for modern state-sponsored terrorism. Global powers provided financial and military assistance to insurgent groups that aligned with their geopolitical interests, even when these groups operated through violent means. Examples include US support for the Mujahideen in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, which fostered the growth of extremist groups that contributed to decades of civil war.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, politically motivated terrorist attacks against civilians, especially in urban areas, increased dramatically. Some of these attacks were traced to organizations backed by Warsaw Pact countries, highlighting the complicity of states in enabling extremist groups. The legacy of these state-sponsored activities can still be seen today in various conflict zones around the world.

The September 11 attacks in 2001 further illuminated the dangers of state-backed terrorism. Following these events, the international community became more concerned with non-state actors receiving state support. Countries that provide logistical or financial backing to terrorist organizations are in direct violation of international law and UN mandates, yet many states continue to do so. Accountability mechanisms, including sanctions and military interventions, have been established but remain inconsistently enforced.

In recent years, the international landscape has been further complicated by the rise of new technology and social media, which facilitate the communication and coordination of extremist groups. State sponsors have exploited these platforms to disseminate propaganda, recruit

fighters, and secure funding, further blurring the lines between state and non-state actors. As a result, traditional methods of counterterrorism are increasingly inadequate in addressing the complex realities of modern conflicts, necessitating innovative approaches to international security.

Additionally, the ongoing crises in regions such as the Middle East and North Africa have resulted in the proliferation of non-state armed groups, some of which have been directly supported by foreign powers. The Syrian Civil War is a prime example, where various states have provided assistance to factions aligned with their interests, leading to a fragmented landscape of armed groups. This situation not only perpetuates violence but also complicates diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts, as the presence of numerous state-backed militias creates competing agendas that hinder progress towards stability. Consequently, understanding the intricate relationships between state actors and paramilitary groups is essential for crafting effective responses to global terrorism and fostering international peace.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Iran – Iran has been repeatedly accused of supporting militant groups, particularly in the Middle East, to advance its geopolitical influence. Although the Iranian government denies these allegations, it has been linked to providing financial and military aid to organizations in Yemen, Lebanon, and Palestine. Iran's alleged involvement in destabilizing regions through proxies such as Hezbollah has attracted significant international scrutiny.

Pakistan - Pakistan has a complex history of involvement with extremist groups, particularly those operating in Afghanistan and Kashmir. While the government officially denies links to terrorist organizations, various reports suggest that elements within the state apparatus have supported groups like the Taliban and other anti-India organizations. Pakistan's strategic interests in Afghanistan and Kashmir have often led to accusations of enabling terrorism in the region.

UNSC - United Nation Security Council is the international body that primary concern is international stability in terms of absence of violence or destabilisation within member states. They are only one of two Committees (With UNCAC) that member states must be obliged to. They can sanction any form of military action to economic Embargoes.

Jordan - Jordan offers a case study of a state that once supported militant groups but later turned against them. Following the Six-Day War in 1967, Jordan hosted Palestinian guerrillas, but the growing radicalism of these groups led to the infamous Black September in 1970, when the Jordanian government clamped down on militants, leading to widespread violence and political instability.

United States of America – The U.S. has a long history of both combatting and indirectly enabling terrorism. While the U.S. leads global counterterrorism initiatives and has sanctioned numerous states for their alleged support of terrorist organizations, it has also been criticized for its support of groups that align with its geopolitical interests. The U.S. continues to maintain stringent sanctions on states like Iran and North Korea for their alleged backing of terrorist groups.

Afghanistan - Since the 1980s, Afghanistan has been a hotbed for terrorist organizations, most notably during the rise of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Following the U.S. invasion in 2001, Afghanistan became a focal point for international counterterrorism efforts. The 2021 withdrawal of U.S. forces under the Doha Agreement has left Afghanistan in a precarious position, with concerns about the Taliban's commitment to preventing the resurgence of terrorist activities.

Cuba – Historically, Cuba has been a supporter of Marxist insurgencies, particularly in Latin America and Africa. Cuban involvement in the Angolan Civil War, where it sent troops to back the MPLA, as well as its support for guerrilla movements in Latin America, has earned it a reputation as a sponsor of political violence.

China – China has been accused of indirectly supporting insurgent movements like the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency in India, although it maintains a firm public stance against terrorism. Allegations of Chinese financial aid to insurgent groups remain unproven, but the country's support for states like Pakistan, which has ties to various terrorist organizations, has raised concerns.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description
1955	– The Warsaw Pact forms, with Eastern Bloc states supporting terrorist activities to undermine the West through insurgent groups.
1967	– The Six-Day War creates fertile ground for radical militias, who receive support from states aligned with the Warsaw Pact.
1980	– U.S. support for the Mujahideen in Afghanistan fosters extremist groups with advanced military capabilities, leading to prolonged civil unrest post-Soviet withdrawal.
1982	– Cuba is designated by the U.S. as a state sponsor of terrorism for aiding socialist movements in Latin America and Africa.
1986	– State of Libya under Gaddafi directly organised a bombing in a West Berlin Night Club leading to 3 deaths and 229 injured, the attack targeted US troops stationed in West Berlin, in response the United States attempt to hold Libya accountable without mandates by security councils which caused international controversy on the question of rogue states taking accountability into their pre-emptive agenda.
1989	– The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is established to prevent money laundering and terrorism financing.
1991	– USSR collapse along with the Warsaw pact states which left agency archives recordings of state sponsor terrorism through means of hosting scholarship programs to intelligence info sharing for various group left leaning extremist groups around the globe.
1998	– Pakistan's lack confidence in its military presence in Kashmir since the 1990 conflict had resorted to the intelligence agency's use of terror proxies that were targeting India in order to destabilise as much as possible to weaken the state.
2001	– The September 11 attacks spark a global war on terror, leading to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.

2014 – The rise of international terror networks such as ISISL throughout the MENA regions where cases of Terrorists receive assistance through passive means of the flow of weapons trade and petroleum that nation states are reluctant to take preventive measures against.

2021 – The U.S. withdraws from Afghanistan, leaving the Taliban with the responsibility of preventing terrorism under the terms of the Doha Agreement.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

UN charter

Serves as the foundational legal framework for international relations and the maintenance of global peace and security. Chapter VII specifically empowers the Security Council to take action against threats to peace, including the imposition of sanctions and military interventions, reinforcing the obligation of all member states to uphold international law and prevent the sponsorship of terrorism.

Lockerbie Bombing

The Lockerbie Bombing on December 21, 1988, marked a pivotal moment in the recognition of state-sponsored terrorism. Pan Am Flight 103 was brought down over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 259 people. The investigation revealed that the bombing was orchestrated by Libyan nationals with support from the Libyan government. This incident led to widespread international condemnation and resulted in the Security Council imposing sanctions on Libya, highlighting the need for accountability for states that sponsor terrorist acts. In 2003, the Libyan government formally accepted responsibility for the bombing, offering compensation to victims' families. This acknowledgment was part of a broader strategy to lift international sanctions, reflecting the complex interplay between state accountability and geopolitical manoeuvring.

International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism

Adopted in New York on December 9, 1999, addresses the issue of financial support for terrorism. While it does not explicitly label state sponsorship as terrorism, it obligates states to

criminalize the financing of terrorist activities. The Convention aims to establish a framework for international cooperation in preventing and prosecuting financial crimes related to terrorism. States of concern often exploit loopholes within this framework, using clandestine financing channels and third-party entities to support terrorist organizations, thereby complicating enforcement efforts and hindering international counterterrorism initiatives.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

General Assembly Resolution 49/60 (1994) Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism

General Assembly Resolution 49/60 in 1994 underscored the UN's commitment to combating international terrorism by urging member states to adopt measures that would eliminate the threat posed by transnational terrorist organizations. This resolution marked a significant shift in UN policy, reflecting a growing consensus on the need for coordinated action against terrorism. It called for enhanced international cooperation, intelligence sharing, and the establishment of legal frameworks to combat the financing and proliferation of terrorism, laying the groundwork for subsequent Security Council resolutions.

Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001)

Adopted shortly after the September 11 attacks in 2001, further solidified the UN's stance against terrorism. This resolution mandates member states to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorism and to take measures against entities and individuals involved in terrorist activities. It also emphasizes the need for states to cooperate with one another and with the UN in implementing counterterrorism measures. This resolution is crucial in delineating the responsibilities of states regarding their relationship with terrorist organizations, compelling them to ensure that their territories are not used as bases for terrorist activities.

Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts (2001)

The Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts (2001) report offers a legal framework to assess state accountability in cases of terrorist sponsorship. This document defines the conditions under which a state can be held responsible for actions that contribute to international wrongful acts, including terrorism. Notably, it asserts that states can be held liable for the actions of non-state actors if those actors operate under their direction or control. This principle is critical in establishing the legal basis for

holding states accountable for their complicity in terrorism, thereby reinforcing the necessity for robust international legal mechanisms to address state-sponsored terrorism.

Security Council resolution 2370 (2017) Preventing Weapons sourcing of terrorist groups

Focuses on preventing the sourcing of weapons for terrorist groups. This resolution acknowledges that the supply of arms is a significant enabler of terrorist activities and mandates member states to take concrete steps to prevent the transfer of weapons to non-state actors. It encourages collaboration among member states to identify and disrupt the supply chains that facilitate terrorism, underscoring the need for comprehensive measures to combat the financing and arming of terrorist organizations. By addressing the logistical and financial dimensions of terrorism, this resolution reinforces the UN's multifaceted approach to combating terrorism on a global scale.

Terrorism Suppression Conventions (TSCs)

The Terrorism Suppression Conventions (TSCs), which encompass a series of treaties established between 1970 and 2005, aim to address various forms of terrorism. These treaties cover issues such as the unlawful seizure of aircraft, hostage-taking, and the safety of international civil aviation and maritime navigation. Although these conventions do not directly reference state-sponsored terrorism, they create a legal basis for holding states accountable for actions that support or enable terrorist activities. By promoting international cooperation and establishing norms against terrorism, the TSCs contribute to the broader framework of accountability and prevention within the UN system.

Possible Solutions

Measures to take hold of accountability

Strengthen international frameworks to hold states accountable for supporting terrorism. This may include stricter sanctions and empowering international bodies like the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to prosecute states involved in terrorism.

Seek to extinguish proxy wars

Proxy wars often incentivize state sponsorship of terrorism. International efforts should aim to reduce these conflicts by increasing diplomatic pressure and providing peaceful resolutions to longstanding rivalries.

Bringing a Legal Jurisdiction to the ICJ rather than Security Council

Expand the role of the ICJ in addressing state-sponsored terrorism, allowing it to bypass the often politically motivated gridlock of the UN Security Council. This could lead to more impartial enforcement of international law.

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