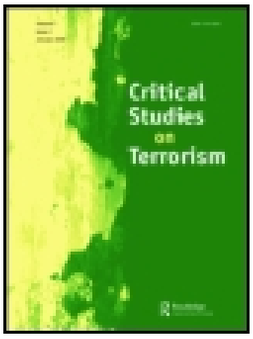

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Gender at the crossroads: the role of gender in the UN's global counterterrorism reform at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus

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ABSTRACT

Since the early 2000s, the United Nations (UN) global counterterrorism architecture has seen significant changes towards increased multilateralism, a focus on prevention, and inter-institutional coordination across the UN's three pillars of work. Throughout this reform process, gender aspects have increasingly become presented as a "cross-cutting" theme. In this article, I investigate the role of gender in the UN's counterterrorism reform process at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, or "triple nexus", from a feminist institutionalist perspective. I conduct a feminist discourse analysis of the counterterrorism discourses of three UN entities, which represent the different UN pillars of peace and security (DPO), development (UNDP), and humanitarianism and human rights (OHCHR). The article examines the role of gender in the inter-institutional reform process by focusing on the changes, overlaps and differences in the discursive production of gender in the entities' counterterrorism agendas over time and in two recent UN counterterrorism conferences. I find that gendered dynamics of *nested newness* and *institutional layering* have played an essential role both as a justification for the involvement of individual entities in counterterrorism and as a vehicle for inter-institutional cooperation and struggle for discursive power.

KEYWORDS
Gender; institutions; feminism; United Nations; counterterrorism; triple nexus; discourse

Introduction

In 2020, the Office for Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) organised the first virtual counter-terrorism conference under the theme of "Strategic and Practical Challenges of Countering Terrorism in a Global Pandemic Environment" (UNOCT 2020a). In June 2021, the Secretary-General convened the Second High-Level Conference on Counter-Terrorism on "Countering and Preventing Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies. Addressing the Challenges of the New Decade" (UNOCT 2021a). In both conferences, participants repeatedly mentioned gender aspects as crucial to a successful global counterterrorism approach, which needed to be anchored "in human rights, gender equality and the rule of law" (UNOCT 2021c; see also:, 2020b). Given that feminist scholars and activists have long criticised the field of (counter-)terrorism for its gender-blindness (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007), the explicit linking of gender and (counter-)terrorism represents a remarkable shift.

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Over the course of the last two decades, this shift towards increasing gender awareness has emerged alongside a range of other significant changes to the global counterterrorism architecture. Most notably, these include a move towards multilateralism in the 2000s, a focus on prevention since the early to mid-2010s, and a recent effort for enhanced inter-institutional coordination across the UN's pillars of work at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. At the beginning of the century, the 9/11 terrorist attacks propelled terrorism from a traditionally "sovereign" security issue to a global problem in search of multilateral and crosscutting solutions. This paradigm shift moved the UN from the side-lines to the heart of counterterrorism policy making and led to the introduction of the Global Counterterrorism Strategy in 2006, which outlined four focus points for multilateral engagement (UNGA 2006b).[1]

In the mid-2010s, following the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States under the Obama administration initiated a strong push away from military-driven, "kinetic" counterterrorist interventions towards so-called "Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism" (C/PVE) strategies. These strategies introduced a strong focus on "softer" tactics and prevention, and were quickly embraced by the UN (UNGA 2015).[2] The widening of activities towards prevention brought more actors into the realm of counterterrorism, including a more diverse range of UN entities, whose mandates included aspects which were newly identified as relevant to counterterrorism. In the absence of a universal definition of either terrorism or violent extremism, the proliferation of actors and activities led to a rising need for coordination across UN member states, entities and pillars (Cockayne et al. 2012; UNGA 2015).

In response, in 2017, under the auspices of the new United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the newly founded UNOCT was tasked with overseeing and supporting the coordination and implementation of the Global Counterterrorism Strategy (UNGA 2017, 16). In 2018, Guterres signed into force the United Nations Global Counterterrorism Coordination Compact (GCCC). The GCCC explicitly positions counterterrorism at the intersection of the UN's separation of labour into the three pillars of (1) peace and security, (2) sustainable development, and (3) human rights and humanitarian affairs. With 37 UN entities as members and six observer entities it represents the "largest coordination framework across the three pillars of work of the United Nations" (UNOCT 2021b).[3] This latest shift towards increased inclusion and better coordination across UN entities and pillars connects the counterterrorism architecture to a broader UN reform framework with the goal of a more holistic inter-institutional response to global problems, which has become referred to as the humanitarian-development-peace, or simply "triple", nexus (Caparini and Reagan 2019; Howe 2019).

With each of the three subsequent shifts towards multilateralism, prevention and, most recently, coordination, gender aspects have become increasingly foregrounded in relation to counterterrorism by both member states and UN representatives (UNOCT 2020b). Many observers see this as a positive development for both counterterrorism and gender equality. For example, as part of their work as Chair of the *Working Group on Adopting a Gender-Sensitive Approach to Preventing and Countering Terrorism* (Gender Working Group), UN Women conducted a digital consultation with women-led civil society organisations. The final report states that violent extremism and terrorism "should be addressed as part of broader peace, sustainable, development and democratization efforts" (UN Women 2021, 4) including by guaranteeing gender equality. At the same

time, civil society representatives warn of "contradictory polices, securitizing the gender equality agenda and instrumentalizing women's rights" (UN Women 2021, 7). These concerns are shared by scholars who have argued that current counterterrorism discourses and policies remain based on stereotypical and often contradictory gender representations (Rothermel 2020), and that their extension into other areas has "become a vehicle [. . .] to alter the priorities of many UN funds, agencies and programmes" (Altiok and Street 2020, i), and led to the securitisation of existing gender agendas (GAPS 2018; Shepherd 2017; Heathcote 2018; Aroussi 2020).

In this article, I contribute to discussions on the relationship between gender and counterterrorism reforms by asking what role gender has played in the context of the UN's counterterrorism reform over time. This research interest is based on feminist institutionalism as a perspective to investigate the function of gender within institutions over time (Chappell 2011). Feminist institutionalism considers institutions as inherently gendered, which means that "changing gender relations are an important source of both internally and externally generated [institutional] change" (Lovendusky, 2011, x). From this perspective, understanding expressed ideas about gender helps understand institutional reform processes by taking into account how gender discourses affect institutional dynamics and vice versa (Kenny 2014).

In the context of counterterrorism agenda-setting at the UN, I focus on identifying gender meanings in institutional(ised) discourses of the three pillars of the UN system and analyse how these meanings have shifted in the process of a widened counterterrorism agenda. The parallel observation of how gendered discourses of counterterrorism have changed in security and peace, development and human rights discourses provides insights into the role of gender both *within* and *across* the different pillars of the UN. Concretely, the analysis exposes whether and in what way gender meanings in the UN's peace and security, development and human rights discourses have become more similar, and which meanings have converged, become marginalised or been replaced. In this way, the article untangles the role of *gender at the crossroads* of counterterrorism reform at the triple nexus by exploring the gendered dynamics of change between harmonisation and co-optation, or securitisation, as discussed by activists and scholars.

The article is structured as follows: I first introduce feminist institutionalism as a useful analytical lens for the reform process of the UN counterterrorism architecture at the intersection of the UN's three pillars. In the next part of the article, I present a discourse analysis of the counterterrorism agendas of three member entities of the GCCC: the Department of Peace Operations (DPO); the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). As members of the GCCC, all three entities are actively engaged in shaping the counterterrorism agenda and policy making practices of the UN. Moreover, the entities are emblematic for the triple nexus, as they represent the three pillars of the UN: peace and security; sustainable development; and humanitarianism and human rights. The analysis is based on a dataset of 33 documents released between 2006 and 2019, which represent the entities' engagement with (counter)terrorism over time. In addition, I included transcripts and video footage from the 2020 and 2021 UN counterterrorism conferences to see how different gendered meanings are reproduced in current discussions on counterterrorism.

I find that the gendered understandings of counterterrorism that UN entities bring to nexus politics can be traced back to legacies of gender discourses in security, development, and human rights agendas. Observing discursive institutional shifts in these gendered discourses over the course of the UN's counterterrorism reform process exposes how gender functions both as a justification for, and struggle between, existing practices and as a discursive "glue", bringing a complex web of actors and practices in line with one another. The article thereby combines novel insights on gender representations in global counterterrorism with a focus on inter-institutional continuity and change in nexus politics as a growing area of interest.

Inter-institutional counterterrorism reform as gendered meaning-making

The expansion of counterterrorism beyond the security realm and the inclusion of ever more actors and issues has shifted the counterterrorism architecture towards the humanitarian-development-peace, or "triple" nexus. This nexus has variously been described as space of intersection between "domains", "actors", "realms", "initiatives" or "policy fields" (Howe 2019; Medinilla, Shiferaw, and Veron 2019). In the following, I suggest a focus on intersecting gendered *institutions*, which struggle over meaning and power in the development of the UN's new counterterrorism architecture. This focus has the advantage that it builds on well-established perspectives in (feminist) IR and allows us to analyse gendered dynamics of change both *within* and *across* institutions.

Feminist institutionalists have highlighted the mutual interplay between actors and structures through the concept of gendered institutions, which emphasises how "gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life" (Acker 1992, 567). They have provided insights into how institutional policy making and agenda-setting is influenced by and perpetuates gender biases. For example, scholars have shown how gendered practices in institutions affect and often hamper the representation of women in politics and the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies (Evans and Kenny 2020; Bjarnegard and Kenny 2016). At the same time, seeing gender as a key structuring aspect of institutions also opens spaces for feminist actors to "re-gender" institutions and promote gender equality. Gender can thus be understood as a discursive process, "shaping and being shaped by institutions and actors" (Chappell 2006, 224).

Gender biases are often naturalised and work subconsciously to structure institutional processes. Feminist institutionalist studies therefore tend to go beyond the analysis of formal institutions and include a focus on the informal "daily culture or 'logic'" of a political institution (Lovendusky 2011, 6). To uncover such a logic and its underlying assumptions of masculinity and femininity, feminist institutionalists have used a variety of methodological and epistemological perspectives. In a discursive institutionalist tradition, Kulawik (2009) suggests to understand institutions as "sedimented discourses". Discourse-analytical strategies provide means to assess how particular meanings of gender are set in relation to institutional goals, norms and principles through articulations or practices of institutional actors (see e.g. Kenny 2013). These meaning-structures then become institutionalised ("sedimented") through their repeated performance and, in turn, provide a guidance for actors

performing "appropriately" to the institutional logic. Analyses of how these discursive meaning structures operate in and through different institutions can expose how multiple assumptions about gender can exist side by side in different institutional contexts.

Feminist institutionalists have also highlighted the importance of analysing how institutionalised gendered meanings might change over time. In her study on candidate selection in the Scottish Labour Party, Kenny explicates a reform process "shaped by past decisions and gendered institutional legacies" (Kenny 2013, 172). These legacies do not only shape gendered meaning-making *within* institutions but extend *across* institutions. For example, Chappell's study of the International Criminal Court (ICC) conceptualises the ICC as a site of gendered meaning-making where different institutionalised gender legacies intersect and struggle over "form and function" of the institutional reform process (Chappell 2011, 165).

Institutional change therefore must be understood as driven by changing meanings *within* institutions as well as *across* different gendered institutions. Two helpful concepts for such an analysis are *institutional layering* and *nested newness* (Chappell 2011; Mackay and Waylen 2009; Waylen 2013). While *institutional layering* explains change over time through renegotiation and addition of particular elements to institutional meaning structures, *nested newness* allows us to analyse institutional reform by embedding it in "time, sequence and its institutional environment" (Mackay 2014, 552). For example, a previous core assumption about how gender impacts on (counter)terrorism might shift because of new discursive signifiers and goals. New elements are inserted between other elements of the meaning-structure, thereby subtly changing existing assumptions about how gender relates to other aspects of (counter)terrorism, without necessarily challenging the status quo of the overall institutionalised meaning structure (*institutional layering*). This dynamic cannot be analysed in isolation but depends on the institution's position between different other institutionalised sets of meaning (*nested newness*). Change through "nested newness" thus considers institutional discourses as interacting with other institutional discourses, "which interlock and overlap, complement or contradict, trump or are trumped by them" (Mackay 2014, 553). This highlights how the creation or reform of institutionalised structures is always a gendered process, whereby institutionalised gendered meanings are part of wider shifting and intersecting gender regimes.

To sum up, a feminist institutionalist analysis provides a useful perspective to expose complex, informal, and often contradictory and unintended processes of "institutional stability, change, and erosion and reconstruction", which are otherwise easily overlooked (Curtin 2019, 127). I argue that compared to simply seeing the move towards the triple nexus as overlap of "policy fields", or as arena of discussion between different actors, an analysis that uses a (gendered) institutionalist framework has several advantages for a better understanding about how gender in the counterterrorism reform process functions as an enabler of coherence or fracture.

First, the feminist lens on gendered meaning-making maintains that gender is inherent in all the entities that are involved in UN counterterrorism as an underlying institutional logic, which has an impact on counterterrorism agenda-setting and policy making. Gender representations in nexus politics are not monolithic and homogeneous across institutions. Instead, they are likely to differ across institutions and policy fields as their institutionalised meanings are influenced by legacies of gendered security, development and human rights regimes.

A feminist discursive institutionalist perspective can help to uncover different (even contradictory) coexisting gender representations and the corresponding institutional gendered logics structuring the inter-institutional counterterrorism reform process.

Second, the gendered context of counterterrorism changes over time. In this process, gender representations shape and are being shaped through institutional discourses and practices. In the context of reform towards the triple nexus, where institutions from different policy areas intersect, gendered counterterrorism practices increasingly interact and struggle over meaning, power and structure of UN counterterrorism agendas and activities. Through concepts, such as *institutional layering* and *nested newness*, a feminist analysis can provide insights into how these encounters have changed institutional gendered counterterrorism discourses over time.

A methodology of gendered meaning-structures and institutional change

Applying the insights from feminist institutionalist analyses on gendered (inter-) institutional continuity and change to the context of the UN's counterterrorism reforms, I focused on the discursive constructions of gender in three member entities of the GCCC: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the Department of Peace Operations (DPO); and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR). Out of a total of 43 GCCC-affiliated entities active in the space of global counterterrorism, these three were selected because they arguably represent the three institutional discourses at the centre of the triple nexus: development (UNDP); security and peace (DPO); and human rights and humanitarianism (OHCHR). Of course, the UN system is much more complex than this tri-partite structure implies, and the entities' mandates, actor constellations and histories vary widely. The study should therefore not be read as a systematic comparison between the different organisations and their goals and structures. Instead, the goal of the analysis is to better understand the different ways in which institutional discourses embedded in the three pillars of the UN system position gender in the context of counterterrorism and how these positions change in the context of nexus politics.

To examine the dynamics within and between these gendered discourses and practices on counterterrorism, I examined a data set of their publications related to (counter) terrorism released between 2006 and September 2019. Starting with the launch of the Global Counterterrorism Strategy in 2006, this time frame was chosen to observe changes in the gendered representations over the course of the UN's reform processes. It includes the move towards "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism" (P/CVE) strategies in the early to mid-2010s, as well as the most recent attempt at coordination through the GCCC and triple nexus policy making since 2017/18.

All documents were accessed from the main website of the respective entities.[4] While interviews may give better insight into the informal practices behind a certain policy-decision, published documents can be assumed to represent the consensual outcome of internal discussions and feedback loops, thereby providing a snapshot of a broadly shared and agreed-upon meaning-structure on a particular topic within an entity at a particular point in time. To make sure the chosen documents could be treated as indicative of such institutionalised discourses, the documents had to fulfil three criteria: First, they had to be relevant to the context of counterterrorism. Since not all entities have a specific web space

dedicated to the topic, I conducted a keyword-in-context search of the words "terrorism*", extremis*' to determine the relevant documents. Documents were included if their main text body (not including appendices and footnotes) included at least two occurrences of one of these words in a relevant context.[5]

Second, to ensure "ownership" of the entities in regards to the texts included, and thereby make sure they can be considered as part of the institutional discourse rather than, for example, an external evaluation, I excluded documents that contained a disclaimer that the study did not represent "the views of" the particular entity.[6] Third, I further excluded country-specific reports, instead making sure that the documents referred to the UN level, regional or global policy processes. To ensure the documents represented an institutional discourse rather than simply the discursive style used for one particular type of audience, I also included information on: a) the publication year; b) the document type and audience it addresses; c) whether they mentioned the GCCC or its predecessor, the CTITF, explicitly; d) whether they mention gender or women; and e) whether counterterrorism is their main focus or was mentioned only in passing.[7]

Figure 1 provides an overview of the resulting selection of documents by entity and year. It exposes a pattern in line with the above-mentioned shift in the UN's counterterrorism engagement whereby, starting from 2006, DPO and OHCHR repeatedly engage with counterterrorism topics. UNDP only joins the conversation in 2016 after a shift towards P/CVE approaches.

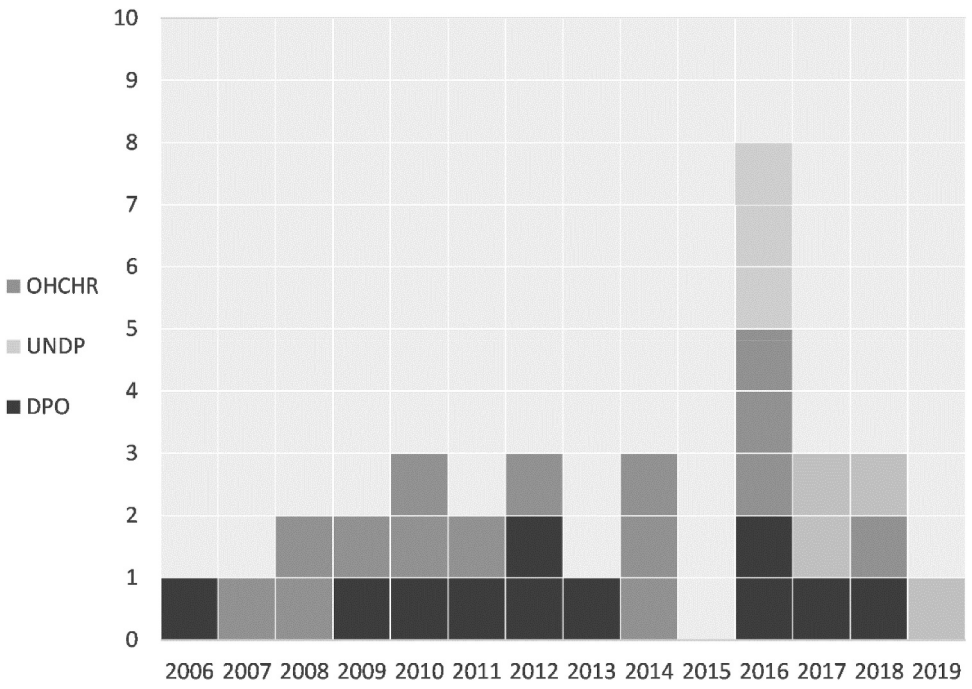

Figure 1. Overview of selected documents by entity and year.

Following the selection of the textual data, I conducted an in-depth analysis of the 33 documents. For each document, I coded all relevant paragraphs. The relevance of the sections was initially identified through an automatic lexical search of keywords on terrorism/extremism and women/gender, and then re-coded in-depth. The treatment of women/gender as interchangeable indicator for text selection at this stage does not indicate that I consider them interchangeable. Throughout the coding process, I analysed how exactly gender and women were positioned in relation with one another and with (counter)terrorism. It is important to note though, that in most documents, the concept of "gender" is mentioned in the context of articulations about women, thus indicating a discursive association that equates gender with women and moreover assumes men/masculinity as the invisible standard.

Due to their exclusive focus on terrorism/extremism, 18 documents were coded completely, while the remaining 15 received a partial coding focused on the most relevant sections. The coding proceeded abductively: I coded as close to the original text as possible to identify discursive themes and meaning clusters while simultaneously developing the code system through constant comparison across the coded segments and documents. In line with the theoretical framework, to develop the codes, I paid particular attention to how the topics of counterterrorism and gender were connected and set in relation to one another and to other important signifiers, such as norms, principles, and goals.

Following the discursive-analytical strategy of Laclau and Mouffe, I assessed the connection between signifiers through discursive articulations of difference and equivalence (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). According to Laclau and Mouffe, any discursive construction is based upon a process of linking and differentiating signifiers into a complex web of meaning. For example, the category "women" will be constructed as different from "men" not simply by stating this difference but also by linking both "men" and "women" to a range of other discursive elements, concepts and norms (Kenny 2013, 53). In practice, to analyse the web of meanings surrounding gender in counterterrorism, this meant that one sentence would be coded with a variety of codes:

> While we will work to combat discrimination on all grounds, over the next four years we will spotlight the human rights concerns of women, young people and persons with disabilities across all identities. These populations are constructive agents of change. Yet their potential is often unrecognised (*HRMP 2018*).

For example, in an excerpt such as this one from the UN Human Rights Management Plan by OHCHR, women are embedded in a broad array of concepts: they are mentioned as owners of "human rights/women's rights", in co-occurrence with "young people", and "persons with disabilities". It is mentioned that they are "agents of change", that they "have a lot of potential", but also that they (and their potential) "are often disregarded". The first sentence also implies that they "are discriminated against", which is elaborated upon further along in the text. This coding process resulted in 566 codes, which I subsequently grouped into seven different thematic areas (actors, gender, violent extremism/terrorism, international norms and principles, actions in progress, goals (what needs to be done), challenges).[8]

The coding process was followed by a three-step analytical process. First, I identified webs of meanings through commonly co-occurring codes for each document to bring to light the common assumptions inherent in particular institutionalised meaning-

making contexts. In a second step, comparing the webs of meanings across documents, I was able to reconstruct the discursive changes that occurred over time within one entity's discourse and uncover dynamics of institutional layering (whereby meaning elements in the discursive web are replaced by other signifiers or change positions). In the final step, I widened the analytical focus beyond one individual entity. I hereby focused on deriving similarities (and differences) in shifts across entities in light of the broader political reform process towards multilateralism, prevention and nexus politics (over time). This focus provides insight into dynamics of convergence, harmonisation or struggle between institutionalised gendered meanings in the context of increasing counterterrorism coordination. As the latest instance of inter-institutional coordination, in this step, I included transcripts from counterterrorism conferences in 2020 and 2021 to identify the location and significance of the three gendered webs of meanings in the UN's current discussions on gender and counterterrorism. The following sections present the results of the analysis.

Institutionalised gendered discourses in UN counterterrorism

Following the perspective of feminist institutionalism, all UN entities have to be considered as gendered institutions. This means their daily cultures and practices are based on particular conceptions of gender which are connected in a dynamically changing, complex web of meanings, and which in turn, influence counterterrorism policy making within and across institutions. In the following sections, I map out these webs of meanings, as well as their related dynamics of change in three institutionalised discourses on gender in counterterrorism, which serve as proxies to the three pillars of the UN. Each section follows a similar structure, which reflects the analytical process outlined above: I first provide some background information on the documents I analysed and the general framing of (counter)terrorism by the entity. Then, I focus on deriving the gender representations which form the gendered institutionalised discourse. Focusing on institutional change in the context of counterterrorism reforms, I trace the position of gender meanings within the institutional discourse over time, assessing if and how the central meaning-structures have changed throughout the UN's reform process towards the triple nexus. After empirically tracing the institutionalised discourses within the institutions, the following section analyses the gendered dynamics across the institutional discourses over time up to their salience in the UN's current discussions at the example of the 2020 and 2021 counterterrorism conferences.

DPO – protection and empowerment for peace and security

As the leading agenda-setting office of UN peace operations, the eleven documents included from the Department of Peace Operations (DPO, formerly DPKO) can mostly be categorised as reports on both concrete operations and activities undertaken (*Year in Review (YiR) 2006–2012*) and guidance on trends in UN peacebuilding (*Judicial Affairs (JudAff 2013), Security Sector Reform (SSR 2012), DDR (2018), Justice Support (2016), Strengthening Justice and Correction Systems (OROLSI 2016)*). In addition, one report is particularly concerned with evaluating the shortcomings and providing recommendations for the internal DPO and broader UN architecture *(Report of the Special Committee on*

Peacekeeping Operations (SCPO)).[9] Through these types of reports, the office fulfils its mandate which is defined on its website as the provision of guidance, support and "political and executive direction to UN peacekeeping operations around the world".

While none of the eleven documents in the database is entirely dedicated to the issue, DPO has continuously highlighted (counter)terrorism as part of their work environment. Gender, on the other hand, becomes notably more prominent over time. Both issues are connected to the complex environment peacekeeping missions operate in and converge in their discursive connections to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (S/GBV) and prevention of violence.

Terrorism and violent extremism are often mentioned in line with other challenges in the peacebuilding environment, such as corruption, ethnic division, lack of government accountability (*Justice Support 2016; JudAff 2013; YiR 2009; YiR 2011; SCPO 2017*) or together with "non-state armed groups, criminal gangs, drug-traffickers" (*YiR 2011*) and organised crime (*DDR 2018; SCPO 2017*). This framing highlights the security character of the issue and embeds it in a larger context in which peacebuilding activities take place. Relatedly, the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism is established either as a by-product of peacebuilding activities aimed at violence prevention in general (*YiR 2011*) or explicitly separated from the responsibility of peacekeeping actors: "Our peacekeepers will not be conducting counter-terrorism activities; these types of actions will be carried out by others" (*YiR 2012*; also: *SCPO 2017*).

Like the focus on terrorism as a cross-cutting challenge for peacekeeping actors, gender equality also appears as a cross-cutting element in the DPO discourse. While not present in all the documents, it regularly appears in relation to three different aspects of DPO's activities: 1) protection from S/GBV; 2) representation of women in peacekeeping missions; and 3) civil society inclusion. In all three instances, the documents focus almost exclusively on women, exposing an understanding whereby gender is used as synonymous with women's issues.

Out of the three topics, S/GBV is the most prominent, with all but two of the documents dedicating significant space to this issue. In the institutional discursive web, S/GBV is closely connected to conflict in general and terrorist attacks in particular. It is established as crime committed primarily by militia and other non-state armed (terrorist) groups in conflicts where peacekeeping forces are active, such as in Timor-Leste, Sudan, South Sudan, DRC, or Afghanistan (*YiR 2006, 2009, 2012*):

> Conflict continued to target women: in 2010, reports of terrible mass rapes emanated from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo where UN peacekeepers continue to try and suppress a brutal but enduring conflict (*YiR 2010*).

Descriptions of S/GBV as particularly violent incidents and abominable atrocities are discursively presented as the opposite of peacekeeping missions, whose responses to S/GBV involve investigations to monitor and verify cases, establishment of courts, and legal representation and assistance for victims (*YiR 2006, 2009; JudAff 2013; Justice Support 2016; SCPO 2017*). The protection of "women and children from sexual violence during conflict" (*YiR 2009*) is not only for the sake of the victims, but becomes a part of peacekeeping mandates, and as such, is considered to directly contribute to restoring justice and peace (*SCPO 2017; SSR 2012*). In the resulting gendered discursive web, local women are represented as passive and powerless victims in need of protection and empowerment,

which is provided through active and empowering peacekeeping forces as saviours. While this discourse constructs peacebuilding activities as positive (armed) forces and differentiates them from the perpetrators of S/GBV, this is challenged by two documents, which address S/GBV committed by peacekeeping actors themselves (*SCPO 2017; YiR 2010*). Curiously, in these contexts, S/GBV is no longer defined as a crime but as "misconduct" connected to "undisciplined" behaviour of individual peacekeepers. The reason this needs to be addressed then, is the "damaging effect on the credibility, effectiveness and reputation of the United Nations" (*SCPO 2017*). In this framing, it is thus no longer the protection of the victims which takes centre-stage but the protection of the peacekeeping mission itself.

Regardless of who is identified as the perpetrators of S/GBV, fighting S/GBV is discursively connected to the second gendered aspect of women's involvement in peacebuilding missions. Female representation is consistently portrayed as needing improvement across the UN. Particularly up until 2012, the documents notably work to establish the absence of women from peacekeeping as a problem (male peacekeeping forces are "no longer enough" (*YiR 2012*)) and emphasise that women can "perform the same roles, to the same standards and under the same difficult conditions as their male counterparts" (YiR 2009). Many of the documents also refer to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and its respective resolutions to illustrate the need for better inclusion, participation, and leadership of women in peace processes *(YiR 2010; SSR 2012; SCPO 2017)*.

The increased interest in women's presence in peacekeeping forces is connected to a development towards "beyond military focused" peacebuilding aspects, such as HIV/Aids and disarmament (*YiR 2006, 2012*). Female peacekeepers are hereby presented as beneficial because missions are facing a more complex peacebuilding environment, which includes "softer" issues of good governance, health and development aspects (*YiR 2006, 2012*), as well as preventive aspects (*YiR 2010, YiR 2012*). Women are also portrayed as particularly well suited to address gendered aspects of conflict, specifically S/GBV conducted by non-state armed groups. They are assumed to be able to connect better to local populations and provide an "important conduit in the reporting process of allegations of misconduct" (*SCPO 2017*).

Female peacekeepers are portrayed as role models for local women (*SSR 2012*), which in turn is assumed to address the victim status of women by turning them into "law enforcers and guardians of public security" (*YiR 2010*). While this discursive connection tends to be stable throughout the documents, over time, the articulations change from women as "peacemakers" (*YiR 2006, 2009, 2010*) towards a more general reference to a "gender perspective" in peace operations "contributing to the effectiveness of relevant mandate implementation" (*SCPO 2017*). The underlying reasoning connecting women to prevention and local resilience to violence and radicalisation, however, persists. Gender is articulated almost exclusively in the context of "local outreach programs" (*SCPO 2017*), or "preventive action" (*YiR 2010; JudAff 2013*). Similarly, women are set in relation to local activist groups and communities (*SSR 2012; YiR 2012; JudAff 2013; Justice Support 2016*), where they are said to create "resilience" (*SCPO 2017*). Thus, increasing the representation of women in peacebuilding and including a "gender perspective" is discursively connected to an understanding of women as more peaceful and more locally active and therefore able to address the preventive, and non-military needs of peacekeeping missions.

A third gendered aspect in the discursive web of peacekeeping operations is the need to include women's groups into peace operations. There is often an acknowledgement that women have been traditionally excluded from security contexts (*SSR 2012; JudAff 2013*). To remedy this situation and "address specific biases and systemic discriminatory practices manifested in the security sector" (*SSR 2012*), documents advocate for an increased collaboration with women civil society actors in the context of local peacebuilding activities such as transitional justice (*JudAff 2013*) and security sector reform (*SSR 2012*). Women's participation is here established as a way to ensure a rights-based approach to peacebuilding, mirrored in the repeated embedding connection between gender equality and human rights. In addition, it is connected to the "local peacemaker" discourse by connecting women's groups to local dynamics rather than global policy making, arguing that: "Women and women's organizations often possess particular perspectives on security dynamics at local and national levels" (*SSR 2012*).

To sum up, in the DPO documents, both gender and terrorism are produced as (new) challenges of an increasingly complex environment in which peacebuilding activities take place, and to which they must adjust. Terrorism and gender are especially connected in the context of S/GBV, whereby terrorist (conflict-related) sexual violence produces a backdrop necessary to establish a discursive link between women as victims and peacekeepers as protectors. In addition to this representation of women as victims, in line with the broader reform process towards P/CVE, starting from 2012 there are increasing calls for the empowerment of women, and the inclusion of a "gender perspective" as useful for prevention, and the connection to local communities as "softer" aspects of peacebuilding and, in turn, counterterrorism.

OHCHR – Human rights in the crossfire

The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) is the leading UN entity on human rights, mandated by the General Assembly to "promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all rights established in the Charter of the United Nations and in international human rights laws and treaties" (OHCHR 2021). Its mandate explicitly highlights the UN's pillars as interconnected, and human rights as an underlying principle of the UN's work. Seven out of the 15 documents included for OHCHR are reports developed following General Assembly Resolutions, which required the High Commissioner to analyse, make recommendations, support member states and provide reports regarding "the question of the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism" (UNGA 2006a) (*OHCHR 2007, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2014*). Four more reports are focused on specific human rights dimensions of preventing and countering violent extremism (*PVE 2016a, 2016b*), the negative effects of terrorism (*Terrorism 2016*), and the right to privacy (*Privacy 2014*). All of these are targeted at the General Assembly and specifically address member state practices on counterterrorism. The remaining three comprise specific guidelines for human rights advocates on the development of national action plans against racial discrimination (*NAPs 2014*) and Human Rights in the context of Terrorism (*FactSheet 2008*), as well as the entity's strategy for the years 2018–2021 (*Human Rights Management Plan (HRMP) 2018*).

In all the documents, terrorism and violent extremism are considered a threat to fundamental human rights, "including the right to life, liberty and security of persons, as stipulated in article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (*PVE 2016a*). Moreover, in addition to human rights, terrorism is seen to threaten "the territorial integrity and security of states" and to "destabilize governments, undermine civil society, jeopardize peace and security, and threaten social and economic development" (*FactSheet 2008*).

As opposed to the DPO discourse, in OHCHR documents, terrorism is considered an "old issue" and a large portion of the documents is dedicated to reiterating and analysing the UN's extensive legal counterterrorism regime, as well as reviewing existing counterterrorism policies and practices by member states (*OHCHR 2007, 2008, 2010a, 2012*). The consensus OHCHR discourse expressed in the documents is that while there is an urgent need for states to address terrorism as a human rights violation, due to the lack of a clear definition of terrorism and violent extremism, some of the practices employed by member states do themselves not conform with human rights law. Through this, the reports expose that OHCHR views not only terrorism but also counterterrorism as a threat to the enjoyment of human rights.

As a result, the documents call for adherence to human rights and changed counterterrorism state practices. While this call is consistently articulated, the ways in which it is set in relation to other signifiers such as security, peace and development as well as gender change over time. In the report from 2007, the need to follow human rights practices in the context of counterterrorism is simply stated as part of states' obligations to existing human rights treaties (*OHCHR 2007;* see also: *Fact Sheet 2008*). Other documents highlight the "counterproductive" effect of human rights violations on counterterrorist efforts; most often by referring to human rights violations as root causes of terrorism (*OHCHR 2008, 2009, 2010*):

> Counterterrorism measures and policies that neglect these rights risk creating a fertile climate for poverty, unemployment and greater insecurities in societies. Discrimination and structural inequities may spark or exacerbate social and political tensions resulting in terrorist acts and counterterrorist activities. (*OHCHR 2009*).

A rights-based approach to counterterrorism here becomes not only a matter of adhering to international law but also a prerequisite to achieving "true security" (*OHCHR 2010*) by avoiding "the vicious circle whereby measures taken would risk feeding the very phenomenon they are aimed at preventing" (*Terrorism 2016*). This connection foregrounds the *effect* of human rights based counterterrorist practices, which are established as "both effective and sustainable" (*OHCHR 2010, 2011, 2012; PVE 2016a, 2016b; Terrorism 2016; HRMP 2018*). While both of these reasonings of compliance with international law and efficiency to the achievement of security are commonly used together, in the 2010s, in line with the broader reform focus on root causes and P/CVE, there is a slight tilt from compliance *and also* efficiency to gradually foregrounding efficiency.

In the 2000s, while presumably discussions of human rights at least implicitly include women's rights, there are only very few explicit references of gender and women in OHCHR discourse. The only mention of women and girls is as one among several groups of victims ("such as women, human rights defenders, indigenous peoples and minorities") (*OHCHR 2008, 2010b*) of human rights violations in the context of both terrorism and counterterrorism. In one document, women are mentioned as being "deprived of the

source of their livelihoods, as a result of measures taken against husband and fathers" (*OHCHR 2009*). In this representation, women are portrayed as passive victims of counterterrorism measures; they are affected because of their presumed extreme dependency on men for their livelihoods. They are represented as disempowered both by terrorist violence and in their own societies, rendering them doubly passive and powerless.

Starting from 2014, the way OHCHR documents engage with gender changes. The effects of terrorism and counterterrorism on women's rights are addressed in more detail and gender equality is explicitly mentioned as "indispensable in helping to create understanding and mutual respect between communities" (*PVE 2016a*). Consequently, gender is included in the considerations to "addressing conditions conducive to violent extremism and the human rights and gender dimensions of that issue" (*Terrorism 2016*). In fact, starting from 2016, all documents refer to what they call a "human rights and gender perspective". This gender perspective most often refers to women's roles and women's rights, but occasionally extends to more nuanced gender aspects, such as in the context of racial and gender-based discrimination as "cumulative discrimination" (*NAPs 2014*), and gender-non-conforming behaviour as something explicitly targeted by both violent extremist and counterterrorist activities (*PVE 2016b, Terrorism 2016*). Gender thus becomes integrated as an important issue in (counter-)terrorism alongside and similarly to human rights. Gender equality, as well as women and human rights, are represented as important aspects of terrorism prevention and as under attack from terrorist and counterterrorist activities.

While gender and human rights become more and more connected, two other discursive shifts occur in the mid-2010s. First, there is a turn away from the connection of human rights protection to effective security. While there is still a strong emphasis on human rights promotion as necessary condition for effective counterterrorism, OHCHR starts to question the discursive focus on effective (national) security: "The duty to protect, promote and fulfil human rights ought to continue to be an objective in its own right, rather than become a tool subordinated to the agenda related to preventing and countering violent extremism" (*PVE 2016b*). Secondly, the previously absent aspect of "the economy" is increasingly highlighted. Terrorism is portrayed not only as a threat for security, but also for the economy, and in turn, for economic, cultural, and social rights (*Terrorism 2016, PVE 2016a*). Several documents now reference the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (*Terrorism 2016, PVE 2016a, HRMP 2018*).

To sum up, OHCHR discourse on counterterrorism and gender goes through several shifts: first integrating human rights and security through a focus on root causes in an early instance of the UN's turn to P/CVE; then integrating gender and human rights as intricately connected through their relation to both terrorism and counterterrorism; and finally, shifting towards a broader focus beyond security, increasingly including socio-economic aspects and sustainable development.

UNDP – Women as untapped agents of change

Unlike the other two entities, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is not part of the UN Secretariat structure but is a specialised UN agency focused on the goal of sustainable development. UNDP is at the forefront of both the agenda-setting and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are ripe with cross-

cutting aspects ranging from peace and conflict to climate change, urbanisation, and the promotion of gender equality. While UNDP did not have any terrorism-related publications before 2016, six out of the seven documents included for the years between 2016 and 2019 focus exclusively on aspects of terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism (*50 years UNDP (50UNDP) 2016; PVE 2016 c, 2017; Journey to Extremism in Africa (Journey 2017); Future of Development (FoD) 2018; Global Counterterrorism Coordination Compact (GCCC) 2019*). The remaining document (*Building inclusive societies (InclSoc) 2016*) presents UNDP's strategy to achieve SDG 16 on "Building peaceful, just and inclusive societies for sustainable development" and mentions P/CVE as one of a variety of cross-cutting issues in this pursuit.

The UNDP documents dedicate a considerable amount of space to definitions. In addition to portraying terrorism as a threat to peace and security, development, and the economy (*Journey 2017*), the UNDP depiction differentiates between terrorism and violent extremism, as well as between preventing and countering approaches (*InclSoc 2016; 50UNDP 2016*). Violent extremism is considered a global challenge, requiring global and transnational multifaceted responses (*50UNDP 2016*). In many cases, there is also a detailed picture of mechanisms of radicalisation and root causes to violent extremism (*50UNDP 2016; Journey 2017; PVE 2016 c*). The UNDP documents put significant emphasis on establishing violent extremism and terrorism as development issues; this is achieved by emphasising root causes of, and conditions conducive to, radicalisation as issues UNDP is well versed in and has a history of addressing. Both the root causes, and the effects of terrorist violence, are then depicted as intricately connected to development: "Just as violent extremism profoundly impacts the attainment of development goals, so the search for solutions must also place development approaches at its centre" (Journey 2017).

This discursive connection serves to justify the involvement of UNDP by advancing a multitude of different factors as part of counterterrorism, including social cohesion, education, resilience, diversity, and tolerance. This widening of elements necessary to counter and prevent terrorism, in turn, connects the issue to the SDGs' "holistic", "all-of-society" approach; and to "the work UNDP already undertakes in the domains of development, good governance and rule of law" (*50UNDP 2016*, also: *PVE 2016 c, Journey 2017; FoD 2018*). At the same time the documents question the efficiency of security-only approaches ("Military solutions alone will not deliver" (Journey 2017)) and call for a better integration between "security and development pillars using the framework of the SDGs" as well as a "human rights approach" (*FoD 2018; GCCC 2019*):

> Violent extremism is indeed a security problem. But the hard-line approach, inspired only by security measures, risks further inflaming violent extremism. In the rare cases where societies have managed to limit the problem, a multi-dimensional approach has been key (*PVE 2016c*).

Gender features prominently in UNDP's approach, with most documents mentioning it in multiple places and contexts. Most often, documents simply state the importance of a "gender analysis" (*50UNDP 2016; InclSoc 2016; PVE 2016 c*), "gender dynamics" (*FoD 2018; Journey 2016*) or "gender-responsive" or "gender-sensitive" (*FoD 2018; GCCC 2019*) programming, without giving much detail about what this entails. In those sections that provide more detail, there is an emphasis on the multiplicity of women's roles as victims of violent extremism, as well as involved in both terrorist activities and counterterrorist

programming and action (*FoD 2018; PVE 2016 c; Journey 2016; 50UNDP 2016*). While one UNDP document suggests it is important to look "at the roles of men and women together and understand the importance of masculinities" *(FoD 2018)*, gender is mostly mentioned in relation to women.

In the context of violent extremism or terrorism, gender equality is assigned a double role as simultaneously threatened by violent extremism and as a root cause of violent extremism. On the one hand, an attack on gender equality is particularly highlighted as one aspect of violent extremist ideologies: "A common thread shared by extremist groups is that their evolution has been coupled with attacks on gender equality and the rights of women and girls – rights to education, to public life and to decision-making over their own bodies" (*FoD 2018*). Similarly, women are portrayed as particularly suffering from the spread of violent extremist ideologies. Extremist ideologies and attacks "undermine human security, which tends to have a particular impact on women's security" (*InclSoc 2016*), often making them the "firsts to detect the spread of extremism" (*50UNDP 2016*): "Extremist groups like ISIL and Boko Haram view female bodies as vessels for producing a new generation that can be raised in their own image, according to their radical ideology" (PVE 2016 c).

On the other hand, "the promotion of international human rights and gender equality that interfered with traditional local customs has also incited violent reactions" (*PVE 2016 c*), thus making gender equality a root cause of growing radicalisation dynamics. In this context, gender equality is set in line with growing diversity in societies more broadly, which has made marginalised groups a particular target of backlash *(PVE 2016 c; InclSoc 2016*).

In addition to this connection between gender and violent extremism, the construction of women's particular role to *counter* violent extremism is common across the documents. If there is a reason given for this role allocation, the document usually refers to women's position within "informal structures" (*50UNDP 2016*), such as local "homes, school and communities" (*PVE 2016 c*), and the fact that they have often been ignored as agents in counterterrorist operations. There is a strong emphasis on previous P/CVE programming as "gender-blind" (*FoD 2018*), "owing to the focus on formal structures and authorities as entry points for programming and dialogue" (*50 UNDP 2016*). Even more so, one report maintains that previous gender programmes had resulted in "the tokenisation of women in security processes rather than a genuine effort to work towards systemic change and remove societal barriers to women's empowerment" (*FoD 2018*).

According to UNDP discourse, this gender-blindness of previous security-focused counterterrorism has led to the ignorance of an untapped informal labour force, which, due to the suffering women experience from violent extremist ideologies, is likely to have an interest in the prevention and countering of violent extremist ideologies. This discursive construction uniquely positions women as supporters of UN counterterrorist efforts by reinforcing "local, endogenous resilience mechanisms towards violent extremism" (*50UNDP 2016*). In addition to this connection, there are other discursive links that feature in individual documents as relevant reasons to incorporate gender aspects into P/CVE, such as the link between women's security and national security (*InclSoc 2016*), and the link between domestic violence and conflict-related gender-based violence (*FoD 2018*). Having established the importance of the inclusion of women as "change agents" for counterterrorism, the UNDP discourse therefore advocates for the inclusion of women in PCVE programme design and implementation, for conducting and for collaborating

with existing local women's groups who "are at the forefront of preventing extremism and have the necessary trust from their community, skills and knowledge of the context to implement effective and sustainable initiatives" (*FoD 2018*).

To sum up, in 2016 UNDP enters the counterterrorism discourse and establishes itself as an important player in the realm of prevention. This is done by discursively differentiating between security approaches with limited effect and prevention of violent extremism as intricately connected to development goals. In UNDP discourse, gender is considered an essential aspect of counterterrorism. Women are represented as victims explicitly targeted by violent extremist ideologies, progress in women's rights as depicted as drivers of violent extremist backlash dynamics, and women as activists, who have previously been neglected, have a huge potential as "change makers".

The analysis has shown how different UN entities have engaged in meaning-making around gender and (counter)terrorism over the course of several reforms of the UN's global counterterrorism architecture. The goal of the latest shift in this reform process is to streamline and harmonise different approaches across the UN and its pillars and a holistic counterterrorism vision at the "triple nexus". However, analysis of the counterterrorism discourses of three leading member entities of the GCCC has exposed how the institutions highlight different gendered meaning-structures, including different representations of women as victims and agents, and different interpretations of how gender equality contributes to and is impacted by (counter)terrorism.

I have uncovered three different gendered counterterrorism discourses (see Table 1): 1) a security and peace discourse with a strong focus on protection and a less pronounced attempt at increased female representation and participation in peacebuilding activities. In this discourse, both terrorism and gender are presented as novel challenges for peacekeeping missions; 2) a human rights discourse, which positions human rights as threatened from both terrorist and counterterrorist activities. In this discursive web, gender, and in particular women's rights, become increasingly connected to human rights over time, while also shifting in their articulated relationship with major concepts such as security, development and the economy; and 3) a development discourse, closely connected to the SDGs, which actively emphasises the relevance of development aspects to counterterrorism activities, specifically to prevention of radicalisation into violent extremism. Gender in this context has multiple discursive functions and is connected to both the danger terrorism poses (as manifestation and as cause), and its effective prevention.

Gender at the crossroads – gendered institutional change across the UN pillars

Above, I have demonstrated that the UN's counterterrorism architecture is based on different institutionalised discourses and shown how they have progressed and changed over the course of the UN's counterterrorism reform process. In this section, I provide a perspective across institutions. This provides a better understanding of how institutional gender considerations in human rights, development and peace institutions have both affected and been affected by counterterrorism agenda-setting. The following subsections apply a feminist institutionalist perspective on inter-institutional change through nested newness and institutional layering to the three discourses of the DPO, OHCHR and UNDP identified in the previous section. To identify where and how the three institutionalised gendered discourses are used

Table 1. Summary of meaning of the main concepts in the discursive web by entity.

Entity	Terrorism	Counterterrorism	Gender	Women
DPO	*A new challenge in complex peacebuilding environment, perpetrators of extreme violence (e.g., S/GBV)*	*Side effect of peacebuilding activities, main responsibility lies with other actors but important to the space of peacebuilding*	*Conflicts are gendered (affects women and men differently), particular focus on S/GBV*	*Victims of S/GBV, women's groups, female peacekeepers, asset for peacebuilding through local knowledge and preventive action*
OHCHR	*A threat to (national) security, territorial integrity, and the economy. A threat to human rights and gender equality*	*Necessary duty of states to protect their citizens. If counterterrorism does not follow a human rights-based approach, it ends up being counterproductive*	*Gender and human rights are threatened by both terrorism and counterterrorism*	*Women and women's human rights are threatened by both terrorism and counterterrorism*
UNDP	*A complex, global issue requiring the collaboration of military-based security aspects and development-based prevention*	*Military counterterrorism is not enough and has led to previous failures, development approach is needed to address root causes*	*Violent extremism is gendered (ideology, effect, and cause), gender equality is essential for prevention*	*Women have been neglected but do play an important role for PVE due to combination of their suffering from VE and their grassroots position*

and set in relation to one another in inter-institutional interaction, I also look at transcripts and video footage from two recent counterterrorism conferences. In the following, I expand on the dynamics of nested newness and institutional layering in the entities' discourses and explore how they "interlock and overlap, complement or contradict, trump or are trumped" (Mackay 2014, 553) by one another in dynamics of co-optation, competition and harmonisation across the UN's pillars.

Nested Newness and institutional layering: unpacking gendered legacies

From a feminist discursive institutionalist perspective, institutional change can be understood by focusing on dynamics of institutional layering and nested newness both within and across institutions to analyse how institutional reform is embedded in "time, sequence and its institutional environment" (Mackay 2014, 552) and is "shaped by past decisions and gendered institutional legacies" (Kenny 2013, 172).

As highlighted in the previous section, all entities actively link their counterterrorism agendas to existing agendas, in particular, the SDGs and the WPS Agenda, when justifying the complexity and interconnectedness of conflict, development, human rights and gender equality, and integrating terrorism and counterterrorism within this larger picture. In addition to such explicit references, there are also more subtle markers connecting the respective gender representations to different gendered security, development, and human rights regimes. For example, the DPO's three main gender representations – protecting women from terrorism, positioning women as particularly suited for preventive action, and highlighting the importance of their inclusion in peacekeeping missions – are reminiscent of the UN Security Council's WPS Agenda's major focus points of protection, prevention and participation (Kirby and Shepherd 2016). Similarly, the tension between women as victims and agents, present in both the UNDP and DPO discourses,

has been previously analysed as part of gendered peacebuilding and development discourses respectively (Shepherd 2011, 2016; Runyan and Spike Peterson 2013), and is now reproduced in the context of counterterrorism.

The different roots of the entities' institutionalised discourses in development , peacebuilding and human rights discourses are also tangible in the priorities the entities set in interaction with other actors and discourses. For example, in the 2021 Counterterrorism conference, the speech by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, in a panel on gender and transformative technologies, continuously highlighted the effect of human rights violations as "heavy toll on women activists and human rights defenders", whereas UNDP's Assistant Secretary General Asako Okai focused on the importance of considering the voices of (local) women at "all levels of policy, programming and partnership of prevention" of violent extremism and terrorism (UN Web TV 2021). Both entities' mentions of women thereby advance their core discursive understanding of counterterrorism (human rights in the crossfire and local untapped agency for prevention).

While feminist discursive institutionalism can raise awareness of the roots of particular gender representations at the triple nexus in gendered legacies of security, an analytical lens on dynamics of institutional layering across entities also shows how the importance of including women and gender equality in counterterrorism has tended to be variously attached discursively to "effectiveness" in the context of security, and to norms of "territorial integrity", "national security", "sustainable peace and development", and "human rights". The way in which these discursive constructions have shifted over time across all entities broadly aligns with the three shifts in the global counterterrorism paradigm. In both the DPO and OHCHR context at the beginning of the 2010s, there is an increasing consideration of women (most often as victims of S/GBV and human rights violations) in the context of terrorism and national security. The inclusion of gender then picks up speed in the mid-2010s with the UN's turn towards a prevention focus. Importantly, in addition to a need to consider the effect of violence on women, they are now increasingly perceived as potential agents (both as perpetrators and supporters) of *counter*terrorism and discursively connected to a broader set of associated goals such as justice, peace, and economic development and resilience.

The "new" counterterrorism discourses at the triple nexus, are thus heavily nested in existing institutional legacies, which are brought together in inter-institutional counterterrorism coordination by the different entities to legitimise and reinforce the particular gendered representations of counterterrorism that are part of their discursive web. This is visible for example in the Draft GA Resolution of the 7th Review of the Global Counterterrorism Strategy, which is the major outcome document of the 2021 Global Counterterrorism Week. The focus on the violations of women's rights through both terrorism and counterterrorism, which is the main aspect highlighted by OHCHR discourses, stands alongside the prioritised gender representations in the other institutional gendered discourses: the effect of terrorism-related S/GBV on women (DPO) and the inclusion of women in P/CVE, the multiplicity of women's roles, a gender analysis of radicalisation, and the danger of their instrumentalization (UNDP) (UNGA 2021, 4, 9, 16). At the same time, it is important to note, that some aspects remain absent from the GA Resolution; in particular, gender representations with a less binary view of gender aspects, including the aspect raised by OHCHR of promoting gender equality

as a way to increase resilience against radicalisation, as well as the role of masculinity for violent extremism, which is mentioned by UNDP (*FoD 2018*) and increasingly discussed by UN Women (UN Women 2021, 12, 14) .

Convergence, co-optation, competition

Looking at how the position of gendered legacies within the broader institutionalised discourses of security, development and human have persisted and changed across the three entities over time exposes three interesting, gendered dynamics of harmonisation, co-optation and competition between the entities. First, gender plays a cross-cutting and "harmonising" role due to the discursive connection between women and gender equality, and prevention and resilience. As shown in the analysis, at around the same time as the representation of women as "peacemakers" becomes naturalised in the DPO discourse (shift from active justification of inclusion of women to a general reference to "gender perspective" with the same discursive function), it also becomes part and parcel of human rights discourses as it is easily attached to the preventive power of human rights themselves. This same connection between prevention, human rights and gender equality also provides the discursive justification for bringing development discourses into the arena of counterterrorism. These discursive overlaps are possible, because the gender-prevention connection allows to integrate different perceptions of women's roles as victims of human rights abuse, peacemakers, and grassroots activists. This is also visible in the 7th Review, which

> [c]alls upon all Member States, given the complex global security context today, to highlight the important role of women in countering terrorism and violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, while avoiding their instrumentalization, and urges Member States and United Nations entities to integrate a gender analysis on the drivers of radicalization of women and men to terrorism into their relevant programmes, to consider, when appropriate, the specific impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on women and women's organizations and to seek greater consultations with them when developing strategies to prevent and counter terrorism. (UNGA 2021, 9).

In this way, the triple nexus creates a space for the gendered institutionalised legacies of the three UN pillars to come together and "harmonise" and expand the space of gendered meaning-making through the addition and institutional layering of diverse gender representations in counterterrorism.

At the same time, however, the analysis has shown that, throughout this process of institutional layering, gender representations have become subsumed by the goals of peace and security, development and human rights. Most notably, the analysis has shown how over time, gender equality and women's rights become explicitly attached to OHCHR's core institutional discourse (human rights in the crossfire). By connecting gender to the core of its discursive web, OHCHR increases its discursive power (vis-à-vis member states) in the context of counterterrorism. A similar dynamic can be seen in the DPO discourse whereby the protection of women is a central piece to justify peacekeeping interventions by attaching gender equality to effective and sustainable peace and security processes. In a similar way, gender expertise is central to legitimate UNDP's involvement in counterterrorism, as UNDP constructs the promotion of gender equality as a central development aspect. Thus, rather

than providing a radical shift of the discourses towards gender equality as a systemic priority alongside human rights, security and development, gender tends to be mostly "added and stirred" onto a variety of institutionalised discursive sets of meanings.

Finally, the entities' use of gender to legitimise and stabilise their role in counterterrorism also exposes a dynamic of competition, or struggle, over discursive power in the counterterrorism realm. This is particularly visible in UNDP's rejection of security approaches as ignorant of gender issues thereby legitimising a desired "developmentalization" of the counterterrorism regime. This move disconnects gender equality promotion from "security-only" approaches. In combination with the attachment of gender equality to preventive socio-economic aspects, as visible in the increasing references to economic considerations and the SDGs, this enabled a shift in discursive power away from an overarching security discourse to a softer development and human rights focus. Most recently, there seems to have been a slight shift in favour of human rights discourses, as gender features alongside human rights as thematic session in the 2021 conference (UNOCT 2021c) and in the UN Counterterrorism Expo at the Virtual Conference in 2020 (UNOCT 2020b). Nevertheless, as the Special Representative on Human Rights While Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, Fionnuala Ni Aolain notes in her appearance in the 2021 Counterterrorism Week (UN Web TV 2021), despite this gendered shift towards "the soft side" in the UN counterterrorism architecture, there is still a danger of securitisation as long as member state practices continue to focus on national security considerations while human rights are included as an afterthought.

Conclusion

Previous feminist assessments of gender in counterterrorism have highlighted both the need for more gendered policy making in counterterrorism, as well as the danger for gender to become co-opted and side-lined at the expense of the UN's core pillars of peace and security, development, and human rights. In this article, I contribute to this research by analysing the UN's counterterrorism policy making and agenda-setting from a feminist institutionalist perspective. I was particularly interested in the role gender plays in recent shifts towards more preventive counterterrorism and inter-institutional coordination under the broader reform process towards the triple nexus.

Through a focus on discursive practices of institutional layering and nested newness, the analysis has shown that gender representations in institutional counterterrorism discourses of the three core entities for the UN's peace and security, development and human rights agenda-setting are clearly nested in previous institutionalised gendered legacies. In the context of inter-institutional cooperation at the triple nexus, these agendas intersect, leading to a multiplicity of co-existing gender representations. Over time, in all three discourses, gender representations have gained traction and, through institutional layering, have been connected to existing discourses, positioning constructions of gender as "effective" carriers to achieve other supposedly superior goals of security, development, human rights – and counterterrorism. Analysing the ways in which these connections have changed over time both within and between the three discourses has shown how gendered meanings in counterterrorism have both affected and been affected by broader shifts in counterterrorism agenda-setting.

Taken together, these insights show that the UN's counterterrorism reform at the triple nexus is indeed a gendered space of meaning-making, where existing discursive webs from the pillars of security, development and human rights become contested, renegotiated, and integrated. The analysis has shown that gender plays an important role for the inter-institutional space of counterterrorism at the triple nexus as it allows for both the connection of the three pillars across different institutionalised legacies, as well as the renegotiation and adjustment of discursive meaning-making power between security, development and human rights priorities in the global counterterrorism architecture.

The observed gendered dynamics of harmonisation, co-optation and competition show that both feminist critics and enthusiasts of the UN's reform process are correct in their assessments. Due to their variability and cross-cutting role representations of women as agents for prevention and resilience have enabled a certain coherence between discourses of security, development, human rights and counterterrorism, thereby providing a discursive basis for inter-institutional cooperation in the context of the triple nexus. This inclusion of different institutional gender representations has led to a more nuanced understanding of women's roles as victims, perpetrators *and* activists as well as some reflections on the importance of gender equality.

However, observing the discursive dynamics that have guided this process shows how this convergence and expansion is driven by dynamics of co-optation of gender under other "superior" goals of security, development and human rights. This co-optation of gender in different institutional counterterrorism discourses serves to justify the involvement of the entities in the context of previously state-based counterterrorism. In fact, through the creation of the gender-P/CVE discourse as a "glue" between the three pillars, including women and promoting gender equality adds a gloss of legitimacy to the expanded counterterrorism logics and activities of various UN entities without tackling the gendered challenges that inhere in P/CVE more broadly. While the discursive shift towards development and, more recently, human rights might be welcomed as a discursive counterweight to the continuous securitisation of the space by state actors, unless accompanied by a forceful and conscious "re-gendering" of the space, there is still a risk of overriding gender agendas at the crossroads of security, development, and human rights.

Notes

1. The Strategy is based on four pillars of: 1) Addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; 2) measures to prevent and combat terrorism; 3) measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations in that regard; and 4) measures to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law in the fight against terrorism (UNGA 2006b).
2. While some consider P/CVE approaches as distinct from counterterrorism, in the remainder of the article, I consider the introduction of P/CVE as one aspect of the broader counterterrorism space and reform process. This is in line with the UN's understanding of prevention (and P/CVE) as one part of the Global Counterterrorism Strategy. In the UN's usage, violent extremism is framed as a precursor ("conducive to") terrorism and its countering therefore as preventive of terrorist attacks. P/CVE and counterterrorism are therefore often used in combination ("countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism").
3. The GCCC had a predecessor (the CTITF – Counterterrorism Implementation Task Force), which already had borne some collaboration efforts between individual UN entities, albeit to a much less ambitious extent.

4. These included the following websites and their subsections: DPO: https://peacekeeping.un.org/en, UNDP: https://www.undp.org, OHCHR: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx. Some links on these websites referred to documents listed in the UN Document database (undocs.org), which were also included.
5. Despite the differences between extremism and terrorism, both were treated in this process as indicative of an entity's engagement with global counterterrorism since both are a part of the Global Counterterrorism Strategy. Relevant context meant that for example occurrences, such as "in extremis", which did not indicate that the text was dealing with (counter)terrorism topics, were excluded. Similarly, literature references or footnotes were excluded.
6. In three reports of panel discussions (*OHCHR 2011, PVE 2016a, 50UNDP 2016*), I included only the statements made by official representatives of the entity and excluded the statements of other panellists and comments made during the Q&A session.
7. Summaries of the documents metadata and content can be made available upon request.
8. A full list of codes can be made available upon request.
9. For a list of the documents and metadata, see Appendix A–C.

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Appendix A. Full list of documents analysed for Department of Peace Operations (DPO).

Link	Document name	Name (short)	Year	N# words	Document Type	gender	"GCCC"	VE focus
DPO	Year in Review 2006	YiR 2006	2006	28,560	UN Report	yes	no	no
DPO	Year in Review 2009	YiR 2009	2009	34,881	UN Report	yes	no	no
DPO	Year in Review 2010	YiR 2010	2010	36,298	UN Report	yes	yes	no
DPO	Year in Review 2011	YiR 2011	2011	30,611	UN Report	yes	yes	no
DPO	Year in Review 2012	YiR 2012	2012	30,668	UN Report	yes	no	no
DPO	Security Sector Reform – Integrated Technical Guidance Notes	SSR 2012	2012	59,475	Handbook/			
	Guidance	yes	no	no				
DPO	Handbook for Judicial Affairs Officers	JudAffairs 2013	2013	74,730	Handbook/			
	Guidance	yes	no	no				
DPO	United Nations DPKO OROLSI Support for Strengthening Justice	OROLSI 2016	2016	12,154	UN Report	yes	no	no
DPO	Justice Support in United Nations Peace Operations	Justice 2016	2016	5545	Policy/ Strategy	yes	no	no
DPO	Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations	SCPO 2017	2017	44,806	UN Report	yes	no	no
DPO	The Changing Landscape of Armed Groups Doing DDR in new Context	DDR 2018	2018	5834	Event Report	no	no	no
Summary	**11 documents**							

Appendix B. Full list of documents analysed for Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR).

Link	Document name	Name (short)	Year	N# words	Document Type	gender	"GCCC"	VE focus
OHCHR	Implementation of GA Resolution 60,251	OHCHR 2007	2007	6785	UN Report	no	no	yes
OHCHR	Annual Report of the OHCHR	OHCHR 2008	2008	8345	UN Report	no	yes	yes
OHCHR	Fact Sheet No32 – Human Rights, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Guidance	FactSheet 2008	2008	27,382	Handbook/			
		no	yes	yes				
OHCHR	Promotion and protection of all human rights	OHCHR 2009	2009	7658	UN Report	yes	yes	yes
OHCHR	Report of the OHCHR	OHCHR 2010a	2010	8691	UN Report	yes	yes	yes
OHCHR	Report of the OHCHR	OHCHR 2010b	2010	8488	UN Report	no	yes	yes
OHCHR	Summary of the Human Rights Council panel discussion	OHCHR 2011	2011	5891	Event Report	yes	yes	yes
OHCHR	Report of the OHCHR	OHCHR 2012	2012	8608	UN Report	no	yes	yes
OHCHR	Developing national Action Plans against racial discrimination Guidance	NAPs 2014	2014	24,738	Handbook/			
		yes	no	no				
OHCHR	Report of the OHCHR	OHCHR 2014a	2014	8896	UN Report	yes	yes	yes
OHCHR	The right to privacy in the digital age	Privacy 2014	2014	8313	UN Report	no	no	no
OHCHR	Negative effects of terrorism on the enjoyment of all human rights	Terrorism 2016	2016	8372	UN Report	yes	no	yes
OHCHR	Annual Report of the OHCHR	PVE 2016a	2016	6242	Event Report	yes	no	yes
OHCHR	Report on best practices and lessons learned	PVE 2016b	2016	9199	UN Report	yes	no	yes
OHCHR	UN HR Management Plan 2018–2021	HRMP 2018	2018	13,640	Policy/ Strategy	yes	no	no
Summary	**15 documents**							

Appendix C. Full list of documents analysed for United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Link	Document name	Name (short)	Year	N# words	Document Type	gender	"GCCC"	VE focus
UNDP	Preventing Violent Extremism through promoting inclusive development	PVE 2016 c	2016	14,184	Policy/ Strategy	yes	no	yes
UNDP	Building Inclusive Societies and Sustaining Peace	InclSoc 2016	2016	15,193	Policy/ Strategy	yes	no	no
UNDP	50 years UNDP	50UNDP 2016	2016	10,531	Event Report	yes	yes	yes
UNDP	Statement on PVE Programmes	PVE 2017	2017	209	Press Release	yes	no	yes
UNDP	Journey to Extremism in Africa	Journey 2017	2017	37,992	Research Study	yes	no	yes
UNDP	Assessing Progress Made, and the Future of Development Approach	FoD 2018	2018	11,796	Event Report	yes	yes	yes
UNDP	Global Counter-Terrorism Compact Coordination Committee Meeting	GCCC 2019	2019	1089	Event Report	yes	yes	yes
Summary	**7 documents**							