Government of the Republic of Macedonia
National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism

NATIONAL STRATEGY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM
(2018-2022)

Skopje

February 2018

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Preface

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia, in accordance with its commitments to reform the intelligence and security services in the security sector, is pleased to present its first state strategy for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). The present document is aligned with the strategies of the United Nations and the European Union on Countering Violent Extremism and has been drafted in cooperation with regional and international partners, who have supported the activities of the National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism (NCCVECT).

With the present document the Republic of Macedonia seeks to coordinate the efforts of the ministries, governmental and nongovernmental institutions.

The NCCVECT wishes to thank all of those, international, regional, and domestic partners, government and non-governmental organization, which initiated the CVE strategy and worked diligently to help guide it to fruition.

The Government of Macedonia looks forward to continuing its cooperation with all those who are committed to countering violent extremism (CVE), and together with the national strategy and action plan for countering terrorism (CT), committed to ending this international phenomenon while maintaining the stability and sovereignty of the state.

NCCVECT applauds the commitment and the endeavors of its members and contributors in the development of the CVE and CT strategic documents. It has been a privilege to work with them on setting the foundations for *strong families, strong communities, and a strong state.*

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The Republic of Macedonia remains committed to democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, and equality of all nations in the international community.

The Western Balkans' exposure to the threats and risks arising from terrorism, exacerbated by the phenomenon of "Foreign Terrorist Fighters," makes these compound transnational and transregional threats the top priority of the country.

Our multi-ethnic, secular state is enhancing its response to this threat, with the support of our regional and international partners.

The "3-6-9 Plan" of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, in addition to other commitments for reforms in the society, also seeks to increase institutional capacities to address security challenges. The national strategic documents, although separate, make up a joint and comprehensive instrument of action, which combines the sociological and legal methods of the so-called "soft" and "hard" measures. By virtue of these measures, the Republic of Macedonia is provided with a set of "SMART power" tools to deal with the rise of different forms of radicalism that often lead to violent extremism and terrorism. The Republic of Macedonia emphasizes the need for early intervention and elimination of radical ideas through the use of soft prevention measures, as well as hard prosecution measures, due to its complex societal context.

The Republic of Macedonia has social and collective responsibility to provide a wider front against violent extremism by engaging religious, local, media, and education actors.

Furthermore, there is a need for a contemporary approach to tackle the threat of terrorism by strengthening national security and stability through enhanced regional cooperation with counterparts in the countries in the Balkans and beyond.

In view of the long-term safety, security, stability and prosperity of the citizens of our country, the decision to establish NCCVECT and draft the new strategic documents (2018-2022) set the foundation for the commitment of the Republic of Macedonia to collective security and defense, which is done in concert with the one of our regional and international partners – this is a testament of our selfless commitment to:

Strong Families, ... Strong Communities, ... Strong State!

H.E. Zoran Zaev
Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia

JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE NCCVECT NATIONAL COORDINATOR AND DEPUTY COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

We must commit to being both prepared and resilient at the local, national, and international levels, in our collective roles and responsibilities in preventing and countering violent extremism (CVE). This will only be achieved through early warning with education and counter messaging, crucial to preventing the escalation to violent extremism.

The Republic of Macedonia recognizes and fully accepts the need for a different set of approaches to understand the concept of violent extremism that might lead to terrorism. Without clearly established indicators it is an almost impossible task to draft an approach against radicalization and political violence. Some of the more popular and widely-accepted theoretical explanations for the motivations of extremists include developmental theory, the theory of ethnic competence, and ethno-cultural theories to explore the drivers and factors of social injustice and inequality.

We must also recognize and accept the importance of constant dialogue between all members of religious, ethnic, and cultural groups, given our understanding of the direct correlation between the absence of such dialogue with a rise in anger among youth. The need for greater training of religious leaders must also become a state and national priority, given their role in society and the promotion of healthy religious practices.

Macedonia can no longer rely on law enforcement authorities alone. Therefore, the present strategy calls for a holistic approach with greater engagement among civil society representatives in preventative measures to confront the issue of violent extremism, not merely react to its consequences. Prevention is not a quick fix, but a journey over decades. CVE and CT efforts should not be seen as conflicting, but rather complementary to each other.

The particular dangers of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FtFs) remain a particular top concern for our country and its citizens. FTFs are not a new phenomenon in the region; over several decades, small numbers of citizens of the Republic of Macedonia have fought on battlefields in several countries. We must also face the hard truths that the effectiveness of our efforts, actions and activities to counter terrorism and terrorists' threats has somewhat been hindered by at-risk community's hesitancy toward participating in CVE initiatives as a result of historical tendencies to politicize such efforts, and the general misperception of CVE measures as an attack against religion or ethnicity. This must change. And this new CVE strategy and action plan represents an appeal, as well as a call for action, for changes.

This new Strategy and Action Plan for countering forms of radicalization that can lead to violent extremism and terrorism reflects and confirms our commitment to new comprehensive and holistic, preventive-based approaches through ways that are seen and accepted by the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia as legitimate. It is in this way we will rise to these challenges and confront and overcome them with:

Strong Families, ... Strong Communities, ... Strong State!

Borche Petrevski
National Coordinator for NCCVECT

Xheladin Ajvazi
Deputy National Coordinator for CVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Moving forward together with faith and confidence."
- Borche Petrevski,
NCCVECT Coordinator

The experience shows that different strategies often diverge in particular segments, fail to communicate clearly and coherently their intents across institutions and to the citizens, and do not provide for effective implementation of the planned strategic goals.

Although the imperatives of countering terrorism (CT) are distinct from countering violent extremism (CVE) in numerous and significant ways, both have to be designed and implemented in a coherent, correlated and strategic manner, since the threats and hazards of violent extremism and terrorism are intertwined and inextricably related. Thus, the National CT and CVE Strategies of the Republic of Macedonia are substantively aligned, while the relevant action plans (despite being two separate documents) are characterized by harmonized principles and respond to a common set of drivers and factors.

1. National Common Guiding Principles for CVE and CT
- Principle of constitutionality and legality;
- Principles of rule of law, respect for human rights and freedoms, non-discrimination and focus on personal data protection;
- Principle of ensuring a safe, secure and sovereign Republic of Macedonia;
- Principle of a comprehensive national approach ○ Whole of Government (the Government and all of its institutions) approach (WGA) ○ Whole of Society approach (WSA)
    - ○ Functional Teams / Working Groups / Task Forces
    - ○ Interinstitutional cooperation ○ Transparency

- Principle of good governance and fostering democratic values;
- Principle of respect of multiethnic and multicultural aspects of Republic of Macedonia;
- Principle of regional and transnational cooperation;

2. Core Guiding Principles for CVE and CT
- Secure and safe citizens of the Republic of Macedonia;
- Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions that will support and develop public trust therein;
- Ensuring an environment that is conducive to enhanced economic development;
- Ensuring national unity and communities resilient to radicalization and violent extremism;
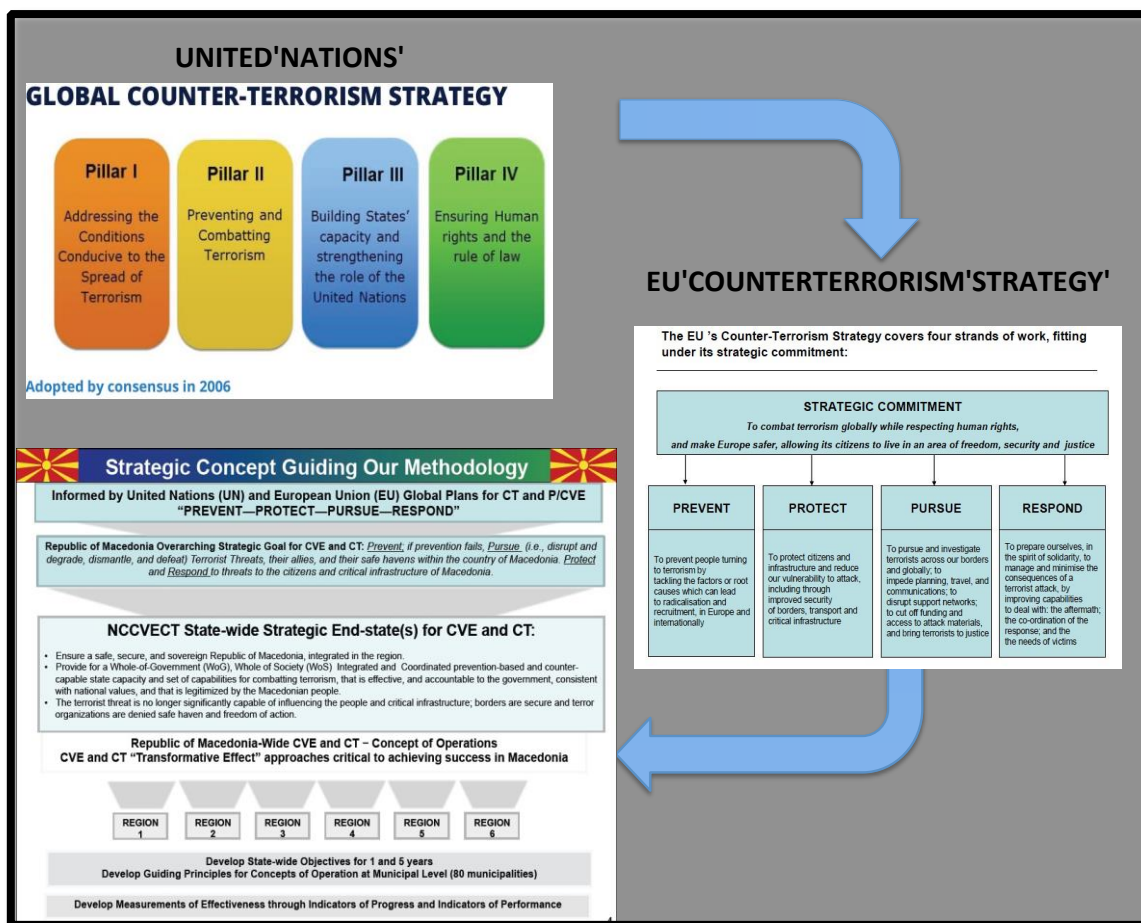
3. Common drivers and factors of CVE and CT
- Foreign Terrorist fighters;
- Ethno-Religious Extremism;
- Disenfranchisement and Radicalization;
- The "Nexus" of Corruption, Criminality, and Terrorism;

These common factors serve as the contextual and substantive "links" between the National Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism in the Republic of Macedonia. The strategies are linked further, institutionally and organizationally, under the *"four pillars"* of the Global CVE and CT Strategies of the United Nations (UN) and the CVE and CT strategies of the European Union (EU).[1]

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[1] "The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy," Council of the European Union, Brussels, 30 November 2005; "Plan of

FIGURE 1. Comprehensive integration with the international community

The two national strategies are a result of the collective efforts of the National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism (hereinafter NCCVECT) of the Republic of Macedonia to arrive at a common understanding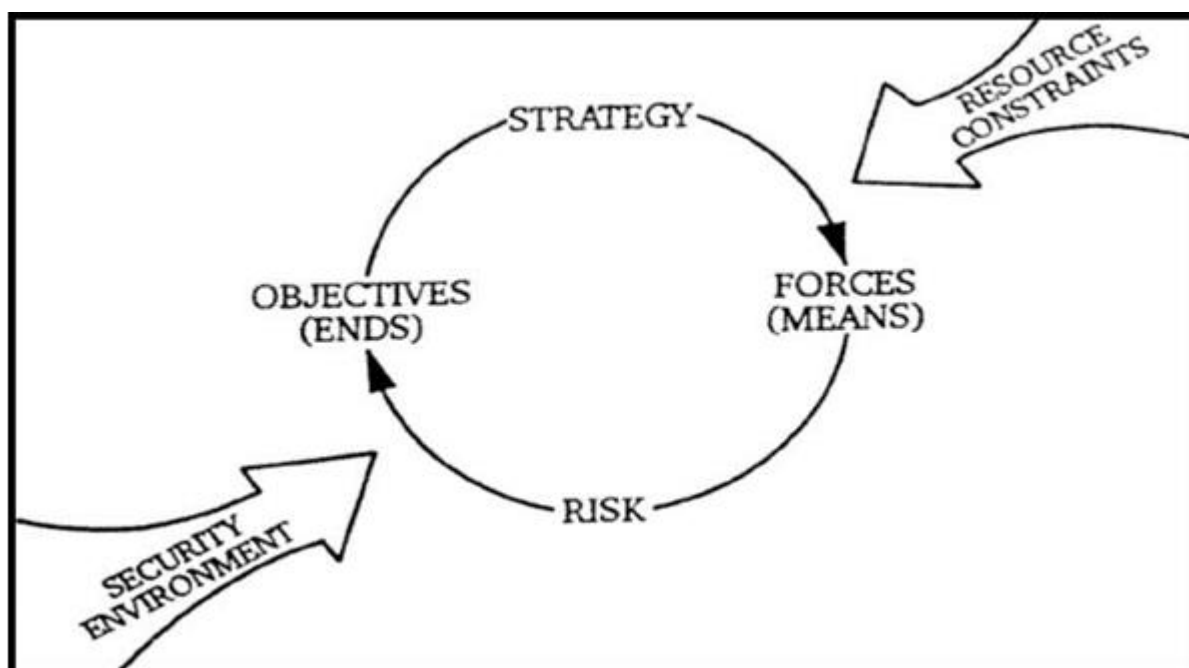 of the **national goals, vision** and **mission** of the Republic of Macedonia. The NCCVECT members need to identify the competencies, capacities and needs of the ministries and institutions in view of ensuring the safety and protection of the citizens and the sovereignty of the Republic of Macedonia.

The NCCVECT seeks to codify the common understanding of the strategic environment, which provides a wider context to the CVE and CT missions, identify priorities, challenges, and opportunities to strengthen the contribution of the Republic of Macedonia in the prevention of all future manifestations of all forms of extremism and the supporting factors that lead to terrorism.

Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, Report of the Secretary-General," United Nations General Assembly, 24 December 2015; "Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy," Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, The United Nations General Assembly, 2006.

FIGURE 2. The Strategy Cycle

The NCCVECT has developed a comprehensive overarching strategic goal for guiding and inspiring the country's efforts related to CVE and CT:

Republic of Macedonia's General Strategic Goal for CVE and CT

PREVENT; however, if and where prevention fails, PURSUE (in a regulated, progressive manner, i.e., disrupt, degrade, dismantle, and defeat) terrorist threats, their allies, and their safe havens within the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, ... while always maintaining alertness to PROTECT and RESPOND to threats to the citizens and the critical infrastructure of the Republic of Macedonia.

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND COMBATING TERRORISM

The challenges relating to the prevention of violent extremism and countering terrorism (and causes thereof) require clear and distinctive and fully integrated Strategies and Action Plans. The Republic of Macedonia has arrived upon and adopted a substantive and fundamental harmony between the two national strategies and the relevant action plans in the following four (4) common **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**:

FIGURE 3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR CVE AND CT

The role and responsibility of the NCCVECT[2] is to ensure the coordination, cooperative multipronged planning and activities to support countering violent extremism and countering terrorism.

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[2] For a detailed description of the current standing official roles and responsibilities of the NCCVECT, see "Decision for the establishment of a National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Counter-Terrorism," 25 July, 2017, Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Macedonia holds a strategically important geopolitical position that, combined with its complex social structure, presents diverse challenges and opportunities for the nation. The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia should demonstrate unity in dealing with organized crime activities and radical ideologies calling for violence and threatening the societal and constitutional values of the state.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia has a social and collective responsibility to deal with violent extremism and terrorism threats through religious, local, media and educational approaches, emphasizing strengths and advantages in view of preserving the cohesion of the society.

Violent extremism and terrorism represent a growing international threat which significantly motivates the need for an improved and strengthened collective security and institutional cooperation in the strategic planning and implementation of the activities in the Republic of Macedonia. The Republic of Macedonia should address emerging and growing challenges by remaining vigilant against everadapting criminal and terrorist networks and their affiliates, as well as other threats that create instability.

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM: UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATING THE DIFFERENCES, SIMILARITIES, AND LINKAGES

It is essential to understand and acknowledge the major differences, similarities and ties between violent extremism and terrorism in order to develop comprehensive national strategies and action plans, which would build capacities and capabilities to counter these negative societal phenomena in an effective and affordable (i.e., "cost-effective") manner.

The consideration of the threats of violent extremism and terrorism, as well as their prerequisites, root causes, drivers and the unique local-municipal, national and regional contexts that are specific to the Republic of Macedonia is an important foundation for the development of the two national strategies and action plans on CVE and CT.

Violent extremism and terrorism are two separate and distinct problems posing a threat to the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the countries in the Balkans and the wider international community. Nevertheless, they are simultaneously two parts of a larger, wider and more dangerous "cycle" of threats.

Both threats of Violent Extremism and Terrorism worsen as single threats if not dealt with early, frequently, and continuously. It is even more important to understand that both threats worsen when counter-measures are inadequately applied. The application of wrong tools and solutions to the problem shall aggravate, rather than minimize and mitigate threats.

CVE should be seen and approached as a complementary strand of a wider CT approach.

FIGURE 4. VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

Countering Violent Extremism & Terrorism
WIDELY ACCEPTED DESCRIPTIONS

The broad description of VIOLENT EXTREMISM – refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideologically motivated violence to realize radical ideological, religious or political views.
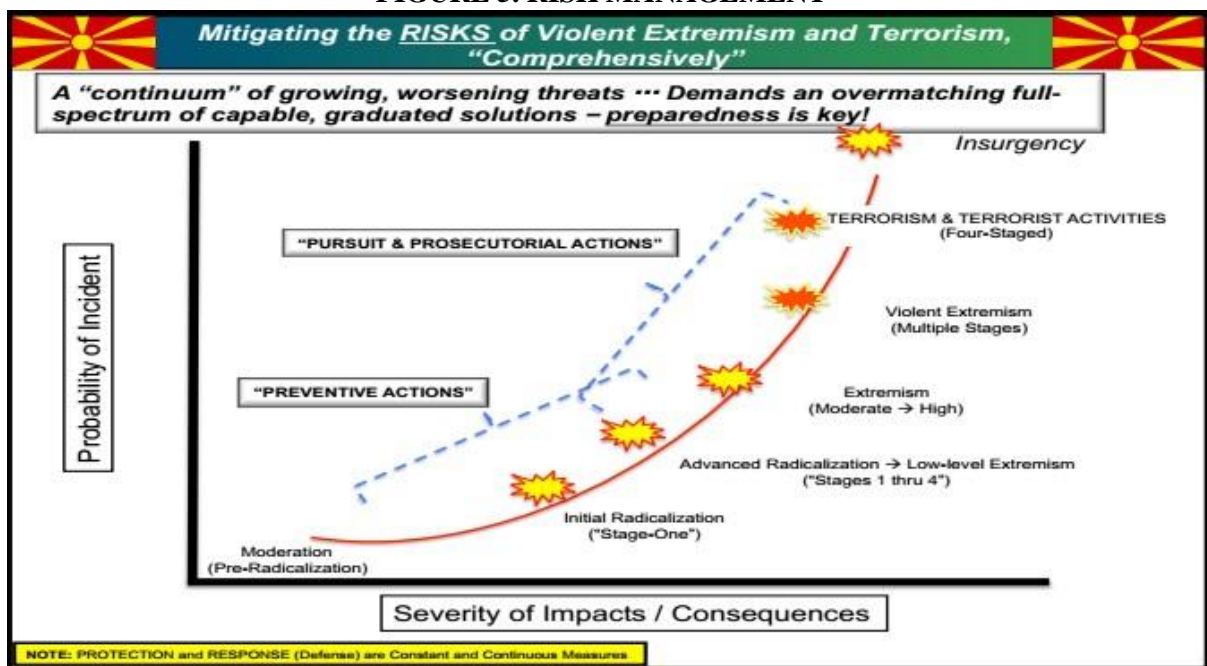- ✓ Central to the concept of CVE is the importance of addressing the "conditions conducive" to the spread of terrorism
- ✓ Acts of terrorism cannot be prevented through repressive measures alone
- ✓ It is essential to develop constructive solutions for grievances that may be exploited by different ideological groups and their supporters

The broad description of TERRORISM – the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.
- ✓ Terrorism is a serious crime
- ✓ Terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any nationality, religion or ethnicity ✓ Some of its common traits include: hazards to life or limb and property; intentional attempts to undermine the democratic government, in particular by trying to influence policy and legislators; indiscriminate approach to target selection, aimed at inspiring fear and terror throughout a population

*Every functioning society requires rule of law: investigation, prosecution, trial and detention. CVE does not seek to replace these approaches but rather to complement them. Any government that relies solely upon traditional counter-terrorism approaches and fails at complementing the rule of law with measures addressing the root causes of violent extremism shall ultimately endanger its own national security. CVE is not a soft option, but rather a **strategic imperative.**[3]*

FIGURE 5. RISK MANAGEMENT

The threats of violent extremism and terrorism today are combining and compounding, and convene at specific geopolitical locations within and outside national-state boundaries (i.e., at key "nexus" and under-regulated spaces) presenting transnational and transregional problems that are straddling boundaries.

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[3] *"National Action Plans Task Force Supporting Strategic Efforts to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism,"* *Hedayah Global Center on Cooperative Security*, 23 January 2018.

As any other sovereign state, the Republic of Macedonia must always maintain comprehensive and robust National Strategies and Action Plans – capabilities and capacities – for CVE and CT, as separate and distinct challenges and threats. Comprehensive preparedness is KEY.

However, at the same time, one must also consider best practices which demonstrate that the more one develops, improves and maintains the capabilities and capacities for prevention of violent extremism, the less one has to use such capabilities and capacities to counter terrorism.

The preventive approach to radicalization and violent extremism is the most cost-effective way to deal with this problem, which must not be left unaddressed or ignored altogether, taking into account the fact that force should always be used as a last resort, rather than as the first and only response option.

Radicalization on its own is not a threat to society unless it is related to violence or other unlawful acts, such as incitement to hatred, as legally defined in accordance with international human rights law.[4]

Terrorist radicalization, on the other hand, is a dynamic process whereby an individual comes to accept terrorist violence as a possible, perhaps even legitimate, course of action.

There is no single profile that encompasses all terrorists, nor is there a clear-cut pathway that leads individuals to terrorism. Possible drivers of terrorist radicalization are varied and complex and combine in a unique way in each specific case.

Profiles built on stereotypical assumptions based on religion, race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, etc. are not only discriminatory, but are also ineffective, and run the risk of worsening and fueling the spread of both phenomena. For these instrumental reasons we must reject the identification of terrorism with any nationality, religion or ethnicity.

Building on these foundational tenets, and moreover on the specific and unique context of the challenges and opportunities that lie at the heart of countering violent extremism and terrorism in the Republic of Macedonia, the national strategies also present a contextually-relevant operational description of the Republic of Macedonia's set of comprehensive tools for CVE and CT.

TABLE 1. *Considering Varying Descriptions of Countering Violent Extremism from the persective of the Republic of Macedonia*

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM
"Planning, introducing, and applying procedures methods and measures for prevention, detection, and countering intolerance, hate, and discrimination against other social groups."
"Creating and implementing measures and activities for identification and prevention of/against the factors that produce violent extremism and creators/agents of radicalization that can lead towards terrorism."
"Violent extremism is a pathological phenomenon which implies preparation, mobilization, and recruiting of individuals and groups for violent propaganda actions towards attaining extremist and terrorist goals."

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[4] For example, some forms of radicalization can actually be a force for beneficial change. For instance, people who advocated the abolition of slavery, or who championed universal suffrage were at one time considered to be radical as they stood in opposition to the prevailing views in their societies. Source: "Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach," Published by OSCE, Vienna, February 2014

> *"A condition or activity performed by persons or groups of people with radical viewpoints, i.e., extreme actions related to engaging target groups or individuals towards intolerance on ethnic, racial or religious groups and stimulating or encouraging violence and extremism."*

From this survey of RoM-tailored, full-spectrum tools for countering violent extremism and terrorism, we arrive on an overarching strategic goal for CVE and CT.

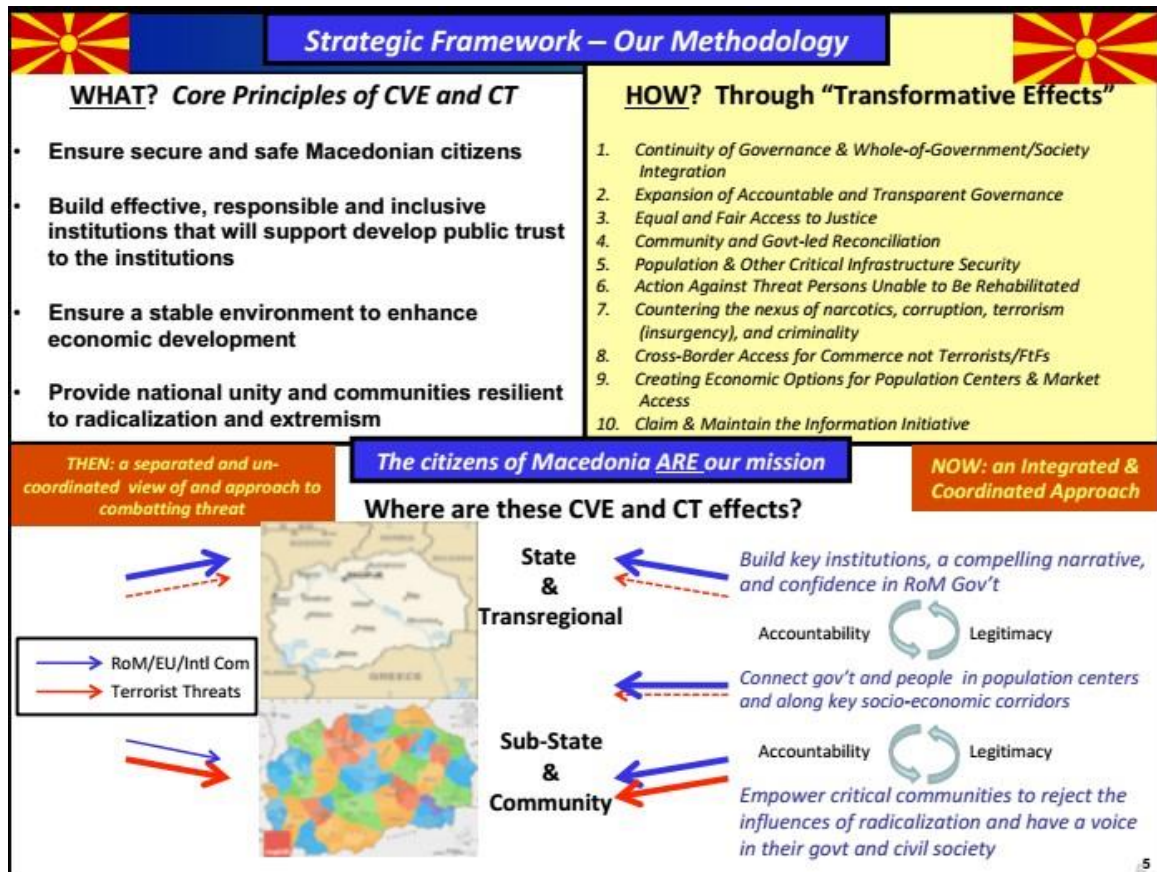**Republic of Macedonia's Overarching Strategic Goal for CVE and CT:**

> *PREVENT; but if, when, and where prevention fails, PURSUE (in a regulated, conditions-based escalatory manner, i.e., disrupt and degrade, dismantle, and defeat) Terrorist Threats, their allies, and their safe havens within the country of Macedonia,... while always maintaining a preparedness to PROTECT and RESPOND to threats to the citizens and critical infrastructure of the Republic of Macedonia.*

METHODOLOGY BEHIND NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CVE AND CT

The Methodology of the National CVE and CT Strategies follows a simple, but powerful approach which:
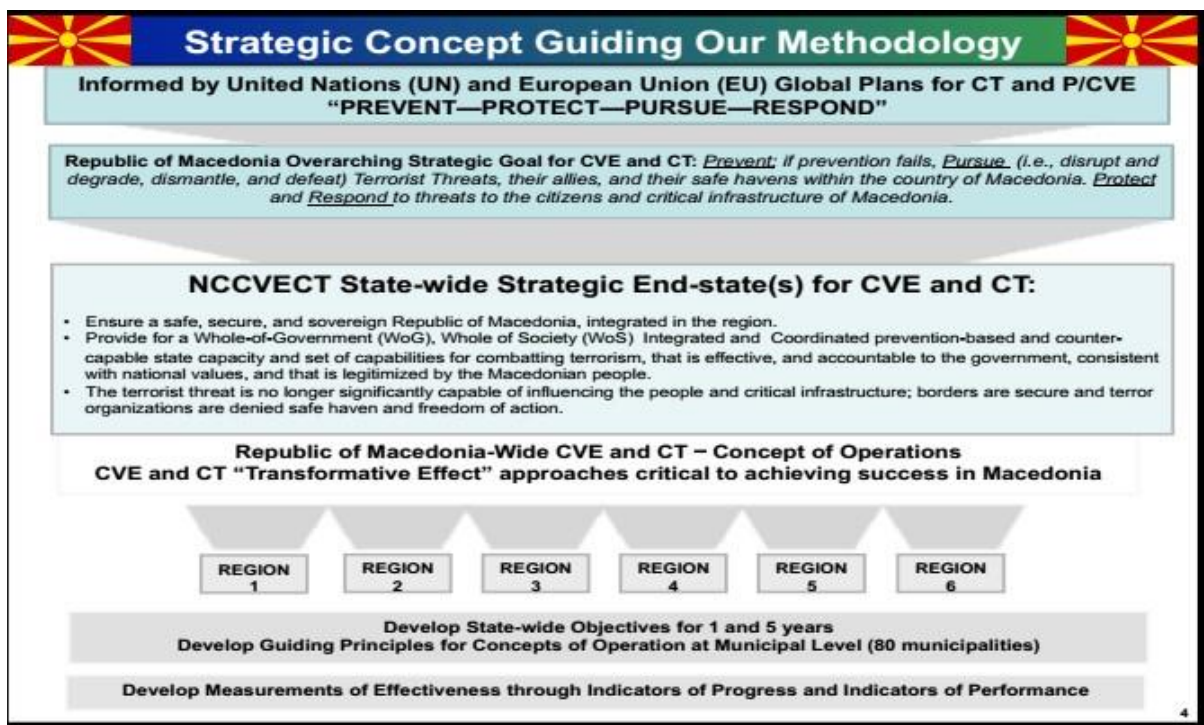
- Focuses on the *citizens of the Republic of Macedonia*, as our collective and overarching mission;
- Leads to the development of comprehensive national implementation strategies (i.e., EndsWays-Means) based on a common set of guiding principles for CVE and CT
- Identifies so-called "transformative effects" ... that represent ways in which the NCCVECT can help the making of recommendations for reorganization of institutional and community efforts for dealing with those challenges and opportunities.

FIGURE 6. *Methodology of the strategic approach of the Republic of Macedonia to the organization of CVE and CT*

Our methodology for prevention of violent extremism and countering terrorism begins and ends with the focus on the Republic of Macedonia and its people, while recognizing the efforts and interests of the neighboring countries and our partners from the international community.

FIGURE 7. *Strategic approach to countering violent extremism and terrorism*

The core role and responsibility of the NCCVECT is to provide coordination, cooperative planning and activities required to prevent, prosecute and respond to threats of radicalization that can lead to violent extremism and terrorism.

TERMINOLOGY (GLOSSARY OF DESCRIPTIVE TERMS)

DESCRIPTION OF KEY TERMS*[5]

Action plan	A sequence of steps that must be taken, or activities that must be performed, for a strategy to succeed. An action plan has three major elements: 1) Specific tasks: what will be done and by whom. (2) Time frame: when will it be done. (3) Resource allocation: what specific funds are available for specific activities.
At-risk people	People who are particularly vulnerable to becoming radicalized to violent extremism. A number of factors can make people vulnerable to radicalization, including the exclusion from the family, friends or the broader community, and exposure to criminality or violence.
Community	A space of belonging, consisting of shared meanings, comprised of one or more of a combination of geographical, imaginative, emotional, political, and other ties.
Community-based organization	An organization driven by community residents in all aspects of its existence, meaning the majority of the governing bodies and staff consist of local residents; priority issue areas are identified and defined by residents; solutions to address priority issues are developed with residents; and program design, implementation, and evaluation components have residents directly involved in leadership positions
Community Policing	Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.
Community resilience	Measure of the sustained ability of a community to use available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations.
Counter-narrative	Actions to directly deconstruct, discredit, and demystify violent extremist messages.

VISION & MISSION FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

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[5] This list of "descriptive" terms of reference will continue to evolve as these documents are living documents. Equally importantly, this evolving list of terms will maintain a balance of being 'sociological' descriptions, with the aim of being easily and clearly accessible to and understandable by the general readership, while also being terms that are 'legally' consistent and validated in accordance with Republic of Macedonia and International Community law and legal statutes and common practices.

The detailed SWOT analysis produced a deep, broad, and comprehensive understanding and acknowledgment of the challenges, root causes, and potential opportunities that define the NCCVECT mandate relating to countering violent extremism and terrorism.

The Republic of Macedonia and the Western Balkans countries are collectively exposed to the threats and risks emanating from radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism, exacerbated by the emergence of foreign terrorist fighters.

Considering the environment of threats in a wider context and taking into account the threats that the Republic of Macedonia is facing at national, local (municipal), regional and international levels, our vision and mission are:

VISION

To ensure a safe, secure and sovereign Republic of Macedonia that is inclusive and responsive of its citizens and integrated in the region.

The terrorist threat can no longer affect the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the critical infrastructures and borders are stable and secure. Terrorist organizations are denied safe haven, freedom of movement and operation.

Overarching MISSION for CVE and CT of the Republic of Macedonia

To develop effective, accountable and comprehensive governmental and societal capacities and activities for the prevention, protection, pursuit and response to radicalization and violent extremism that can lead to terrorism in accordance with state values, with a purpose to secure and promote a safe and prosperous state.

Through this overarching mission, the Republic of Macedonia commits itself to improving its preparedness to counter violent extremism and terrorism by providing the state and citizens with comprehensive governmental and social capacities and capabilities for prevention thereof. These capacities and capabilities will be effective and accountable to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and in line with constitutional, legal and procedural rules and values.

From this overarching mission statement we derive the specific mission relating to countering violent extremism.

Specific MISSION of the Republic of Macedonia for Countering Violent Extremism

To provide for and promote a safe, secure an prosperous state, through coordinated activities, that prevent, protect, pursue and respond to early identification and detection of the factors that contribute to radicalism, extremism and violent action in the form of terrorism and/or terrorist activities.

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The Republic of Macedonia, as any other countries in the international community, is not immune to the threats of violent extremism and terrorism. More recently the global threat has required that the

Republic of Macedonia look specifically at its relationship with its neighbors, the international community, and national stakeholders in terms of prevention of violent extremism and terrorism.

The rise of the international tensions, which coincided with the regional separation of states in the Balkans, fostered by the inflow of foreign financial support, has encouraged the communities to become more radical and extreme. The emergence of foreign terrorist fighters is of particular concern. According to information gathered in 2016, 110 fighters from the Republic of Macedonia went to Syria, of whom 25 were killed there, and 86 returned to the country.[6]

The NCCVECT is tasked with the assessment of the risk factors and the environmental conditions that may contribute to violent extremism and terrorism as universal phenomena.

National level

The limited capacities of state institutions present barriers to the efficient countering of terrorism and violent extremism. The NCCVECT acknowledges the need for state institutions to build their capacities and work cooperatively so as to understand the meaning of CT and CVE, as well as the specific activities that the institutions must undertake in order to ensure the stability and sovereignty of the state.

The NCCVECT also addresses the importance of the real and perceived grievances of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, such as the marginalization of the communities, intolerance for differences in culture, religion and language and unfair or unjust practices of law enforcement authorities. Negative behaviors associated with these injustices can be influenced in a more positive manner once all governing bodies are clearly responsible for representing all citizens. In this way the state shall adopt proactive views on protection by virtue of prevention of the violations of the rights of its citizens. Good governance promotes a strong civil society.

It is imperative for the Republic of Macedonia to continue to improve the standardization of its institutional response to CT and CVE. Institutional efforts to create comprehensive training and support for interagency information, data, and intelligence sharing platforms, and improve the mutual trust and collaboration among government security services and community leaders will provide consistency of efforts.

Municipal/local level

The NCCVECT focuses on various issues at the local government level, emphasizing several areas where national and local authorities should cooperate to prevent violent extremism and terrorism. These include:

- Improving trust and collaboration among government security services and religious leaders;
- Refining the comprehensive training and support for religious communities to counter online radicalization;
- Advancing the training of communities, families, prison staff and religious leaders in order to identify early signs of violent radicalization;
- Developing means and measures to counter the volume of misinformation that exposes polarizing narratives among vulnerable audiences; and,
- Development of processes and procedures to encourage community programs to support societal cohesion that prevents violent extremism and terrorism.

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[6] Analytica and the US Embassy, "Assessment of Macedonia's Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism, View from Civil Society," June 2016.

Underemployment and unresponsive policing authorities add to the frustration of communities who perceive their needs as not being taking seriously. The failure, or the late response to community demands for assistance from state institutions to safeguard the rights of citizens, reinforces the emergence of violent and radical activities.

In the Republic of Macedonia, the propensity to encourage citizens to maintain ethnic and religious closed societies, rather than make efforts to encourage inclusive, inter- and intra-cultural integration and religious tolerance, are important causes of unrest. Furthermore, such differences in society contribute to individual or collective desire to embrace extremism. Ultimately, divisiveness and exclusion contribute significantly to the transnational spillover effects, which compound consequences at local, national, and regional levels.

Regional level

The Republic of Macedonia is at the crossroads of a transnational movement that connects criminal, ideological and extremist groups – the spread, influence, and activities which the state can stop, or at least thwart, with international support and cooperation.

The Republic of Macedonia has many key drivers or factors that are not specific to the state. An overview of the potential overlapping of these levels is presented in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8. *Some of the key violent extremism and terrorism drivers and factors*
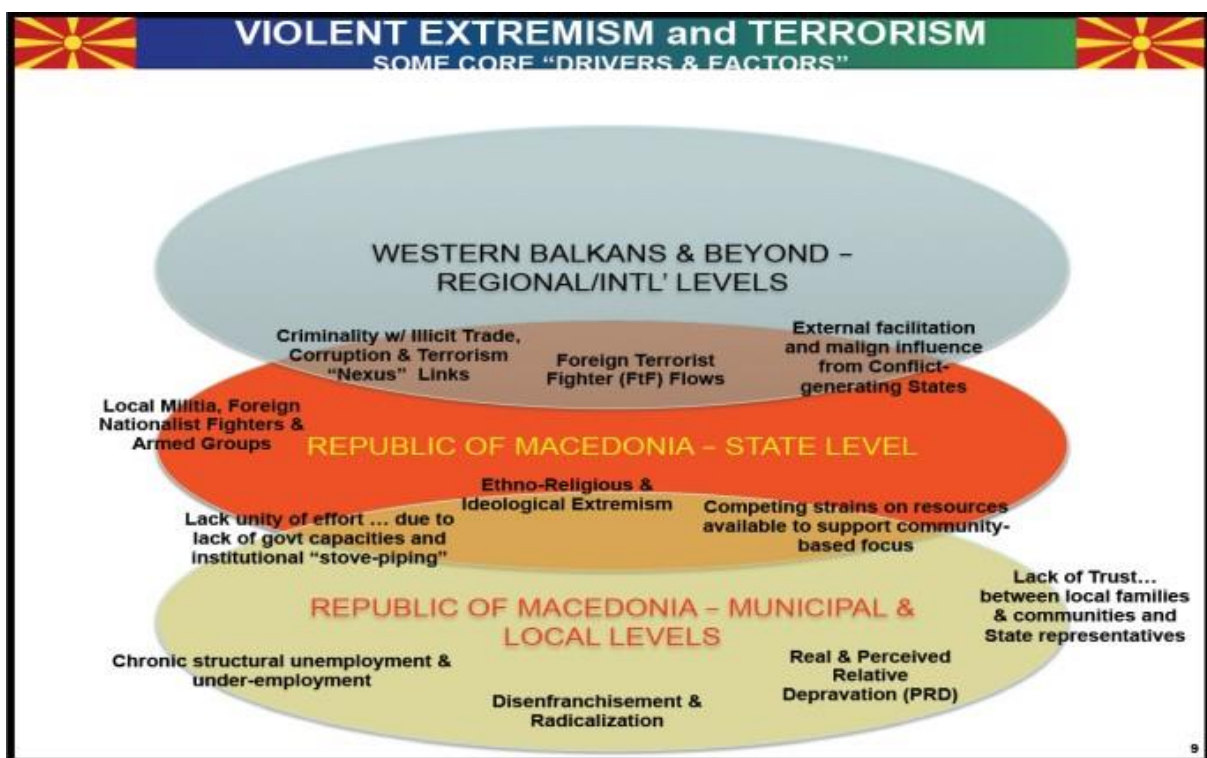
TABLE 2a: 2018 SWOT ANALYSIS

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
REGIONAL LEVEL	• Key Geostrategic Position - RoM is a "Strategic Pivot State"	• RoM is in a turbulent and moderately unstable region of relatively weak democratic states
	• RoM is not a "conflict state"	• RoM is surrounded by states with post conflict and economic instability, inherited policies that impact the quality of building socially sustainable systems
	• RoM is not an exporter of violent extremism and terrorism. Dramatic reductions in foreign terrorist fighters since 2015.	• RoM lies at the East-West geostrategic crossroad surrounded by countries with porous borders that encourage "grey economies."
		• Insufficient level of sharing of regional financial and counter terrorism-related intelligence
STATE LEVEL	• RoM is a strong state, with well-established governmental institutions and rule of law systems and procedures	• RoM still suffers from a relatively high degree of dissatisfaction and lack of trust between communities and state and local government authorities
	• RoM is in compliance with many key pillars of UN, EU, OSCE, and NATO	• Lack of state and municipal institutional capacities and capabilities and persistent challenges with corruption
	• RoM enjoys strong positive ties to International Organizations and is committed to the global mission of preventing radicalization of all kinds and combating terrorism and countering violent extremism	• Insufficient means and measures to counter the volume of misinformation that exposes polarizing narratives among vulnerable audiences
MUNICIPAL AND LOCAL LEVEL		
	• RoM is a society characterized by strong families and familial bonds and strong communities	• Chronic unemployment and under-employment, particularly within minority communities
	• In the RoM there is a strong healthy tolerance for ethnic and religious differences and diversity	• Weak trust-bonds between local police/law enforcement authorities and local persons
	• RoM has traditionally adopted and fostered a moderate form of religious Islam and Orthodox Christianity, not identified with radical branches	• Lack of and weakness of "legitimate" authority creates leadership vacuums easily filled by radical extremist leaders with violent anti-state and anti-nation vision and intentions

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TABLE 2b: 2018 SWOT ANALYSIS

	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
REGIONAL LEVEL	• Establishment of State Working Groups (SWGs) for focused multi-agency, cross-institutional actions on the following: MKD-led establishment of a Western Balkans Regional CVE and CT strategy, led by Macedonia	• Due to its uniquely important geostrategic position as a state republic, MKD is always at risk of being a target of terrorist attacks
	• Effective and efficient use of EU, OSCE, and other International Organizations capacity-building expertise and donor funds	• The transnational and transregional "Nexus" compound threat of criminality with illicit trade, corruption, and terrorism
	• Improved standardization across regional data sharing platforms, including data processing	• Foreign terrorist fighter (FtF) flows and external influences from conflict-generating states
STATE LEVEL	• Establishment and further strengthening of the institutional capacities of the NCCVECT	• How the state chooses to address the threats of radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism needs to be careful and cautious, so as to not produce adverse "blowback" effects
	• Establishment of Integrated Task Forces (ITFs) for conducting coordinated, cross-institutional, state-community activities	• Ethno-religious and ideological extremism and radicalization
	• Establishment of permanent standing State Working Groups (SWGs) for coordinating and assessing activities for CVE and CT per each strategic priority	• Competing strains on limited resources available to support community- based focus; lack of unity of efforts, due to lack of government capacities
	• Establishment of key Integrated Task Forces (ITFs), including a MKD Joint Terrorism Task Force (MKD-JTTF) for improved border area control and crisis action prevention and response	
MUNICIPAL AND LOCAL LEVEL	• Establishment of Community Action Teams (CAT s) for improvement of the cooperation between the state and local authorities	• Measures taken with the aim of preventing extremism and radicalism can infringe on personal freedoms and rights
	• RoM is characterized by strong, healthy and talented youth population for creating and fostering and promoting healthier inter-faith and inter-communal tolerance	• Chronic structural unemployment and under-employment

	• Improved and comprehensive training for religious communities to counter online radicalization	• Disenfranchisement and sense of disaffection of local communities from and lack of trust between local people, families and communities with state and municipal representatives
	• Improved training in identifying early signs of violent radicalization, including among prison and other professional staff	
	• Create means to encourage community programs to support societal cohesion that prevents violent extremism.	

THE EFFORTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA IN COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM[7]

In the realm of international security, societies are seeing what seems to be an explosion of terrorism due to extremist expansion of non-state actors. There are many theories about why this is occurring. Marginalization, exclusion, repression, and other social and economic deficits are being looked at to identify how to best counter its spread.[8]

In 2011, the US Administration released its counterterrorism strategy defining Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), which at its core spurred a greater effort by the international community to look at how they could include CVE in their collective efforts and internal policy. Further, the US Administration's actions gave rise to the Hedayah, the first think tank to focus exclusively on preventing or countering violent extremism. Hedayah's first conference included 25 nations agreeing that CVE must be a priority in any future national security policy. Countries like Australia dedicated some $47 million to support groups of former principals, psychologists and student support workers to help schools develop strategies to identify students at risk of radicalization and support the its policy of CVE.

Violent extremism, which was identified with terrorism, has a longer history. Today, however, globalization and interconnections between nations have put CVE in the spotlight forcing governments to attend to this phenomenon and determine how it can directly impact all levels of international, national and local security. Violent extremism crosses boarders, continents and, as we saw on September 2001, showing that violence has become the norm in these groups and often for no apparent reason other than backlash against the West. Violent extremists have brought their fight to a higher level by including social media outreach, black market venues, and with the ease of travel, as well as exchange goods and services. It is now essential that the underlying philosophy of violent extremists be understood and the need to address the underlaying issues more vigilantly.

Violent extremism in Iraq and Syria alone is engulfing large communities and destroying social and political structures. Its impact is creating the largest humanitarian disaster in recent history – the refugee crisis. The "Islamic State" alone has displaced millions of people and engaged in mass brutal atrocities based on a horrific notion of ideology. In the Balkans, the current environment including mass refugee influx and returning foreign fighters makes addressing CVE essential if there is to be peace and stability in the region. Although Macedonia is not currently a conflict state, actionable intervention through planning and careful assertion of violent extremism is a must.[8]

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION AND EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since August 2017, the Republic of Macedonia has established a National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism (NCCVECT), which oversees (non)state (institutional) capacities in their efforts to counter violent extremism and terrorism. The NCCVECT immediately started with promotion of interinstitutional cooperation to counter or prevent violent extremism in line with the recommendations of the European Union, the United States, and UN Secretary-General's Preventing Violent Extremism Plans of Action.

The government of the Republic of Macedonia initiated the beginning of official studies on the drivers of violent extremism in Macedonia. With the support of international partners, the NCCVECT is in the process of collecting data and introducing action plans to remedy the lack of in depth research. The NGO, Analytica, a local think tank, published a report in October 2016 funded by the United States

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[7] Source: U.S. Department of State, "Bureau of Counterterrorism and countering Violent Extremism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, accessible (online) at https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272231.htm#Macedonia [8] DeGennaro, Patricia, US Government White Paper on CVE, 2016.

[8] Source: U.S. Department of State, "Bureau of Counterterrorism and countering Violent Extremism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, accessible (online) at https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272231.htm#Macedonia

titled, "Assessment of Macedonia's Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism". Based on initial studies, the drivers of extremism in Macedonia encompass similar factors as those driving global extremism, although somewhat compounded by the real and perceived marginalization of the ethnic Albanian population and the views of rising tensions within religions. The Islamic Community of Macedonia launched countering violent extremism (CVE) training for imams to encourage the community to find alternative to embracing violence.

The international community held one meeting in November 2017 in Skopje to discuss CVE assessments and programs. That meeting was followed by a weeklong strategic planning effort in Ohrid, February 2018, with a majority of the members of the NCCVECT team facilitated by a Macedonia team and subject matter experts for CVE and CT from several institutions from the Republic of Macedonia and the region. The strategic planning workshop for CVE and CT in Ohrid was followed by an additional workshop that outlined the strategic documents for CVE and CT and action plans.

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

The Republic of Macedonia is a willing/successful partner in the fight against terrorism, both regionally and internationally. Macedonia increasingly takes advantage of the established framework of cooperation on counter violent extremism and terrorism with its partners from the region, especially Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Republic of Macedonia is also a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and hosted an OSCE implemented workshop in September 2017 that brought together judges, prosecutors, and investigators from across the region to strengthen national capabilities and sustain inter-regional counterterrorism responses.

Also in November 2017, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia was the co-organizer of an international counterterrorism tabletop exercise designed to illustrate whole-of-government coordination, collaboration, information sharing, and integrated counterterrorism and CVE planning.

In February 2018, the NCCVECT and OSCE, supported by the UK Embassy, held public consultations with a variety of stakeholders from the civil society in order to collect their recommendations that would inform the strategic documents.

UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT & ITS SURROUNDINGS[9]

Understanding of threats helps us understand our strengths, our roles and responsibilities, and our immediate-near-long term priorities - in at least three interrelated contexts: State level, local (and municipal) level, and the regional/international level.

GLOBALLY, international relations are undergoing a major power transition and geopolitical competition between states and nations creates preconditions for occurrence of violent extremist organizations and terrorist groups that threaten the already established world order.

This period of time of change marks significant changes in, and rising challenges and challengers to, the governing *norms and principles, rules and decision-making procedures*[11] that have defined the conditions for assured stable footings of the Western-Liberal ("Westphalian") International Order – namely:

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[9] Wilson III, Isaiah. "Power in Transition: Challenges of Providing for an uncommon defense and the search for strategic stability," presentation for RAND Corporation, February 2017. [11] See Stephen Krasner, *International Regimes* (1986).
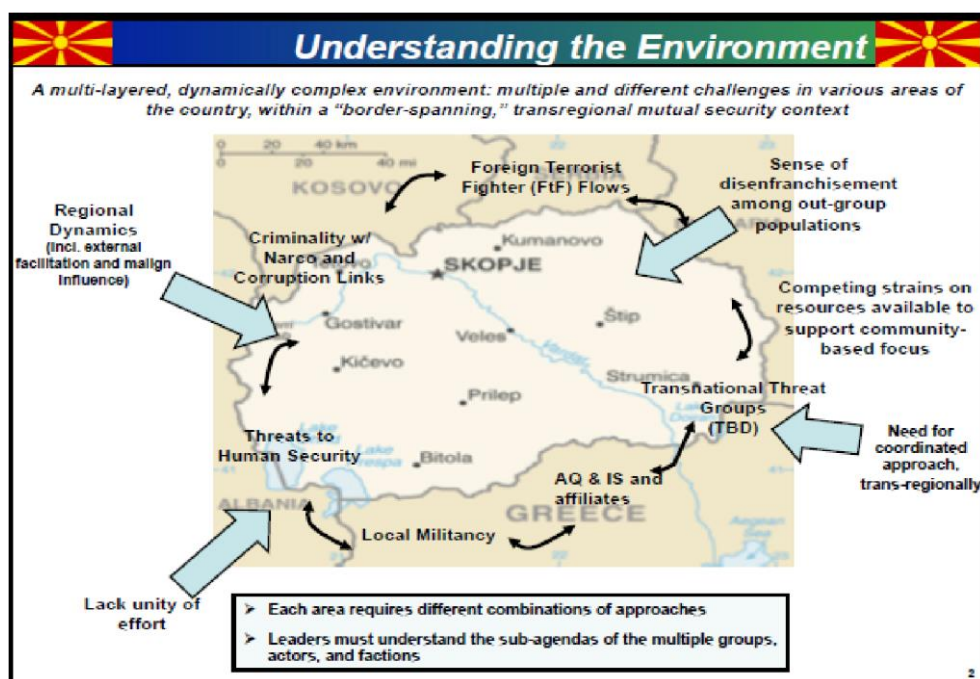
1. the primacy of territorial sovereignty of the state,
2. the general rule of inviolability of state territorial sovereignty,
3. and the definition of "aggression" as an act of a state or collective of states breaching and violating the territorial space and authority of a nation-state,
4. declared as the ultimate 'sin' of international affairs, warranting and even demanding collective security interventions to reestablishing the status quo ante.

System stability, based on these four governing principles has since the late 1980s been, first, "stirred" by reemerging claims of self-determination and rise of ethno-sectarian conflicts during the 1990s. The 9/11 terror attacks heralded the rise of other, non-state actors, namely Al Qaeda and its offshoots, including the so-called 'Islamic State'.

REGIONALLY, we see the rising presence of boundary-spanning, transregional compound security threats and challenges that because of their trans-state, spread and contagion potential, are placing more and more pressures on countries and their states' and societies' capabilities and capacities to maintain their sovereignty, protected private rights, and core value systems. Within these geostrategic characteristics, we find the Republic of Macedonia facing great threats of violent extremism and terrorism.

The Republic of Macedonia and the Western Balkans more broadly, are key and critical "strategic pivot" states[10], upon which the future stability, security, and prosperity of the European Union, the coherence of NATO's southern flank security" depends.

FIGURE 9: *Understanding the 'Compound' Trans-Regional Threat Environment*

The fact that the Republic of Macedonia remains not an exporter of violent extremism and terrorism is one of our country's greatest strengths; it is also one of our country's strongest justifications for

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[10] "WHY ARE PIVOT STATES SO PIVOTAL? THE ROLE OF PIVOT STATES IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY, *The Hague* Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014.

approaching the international community as a willing and capable partner, and uniquely well geopolitically positioned, with a possibility to enhance the stability and security of the EU.

The Republic of Macedonia is an important strategic country for countering the major causes and preconditions that feed and spread the virulent threats of radicalization that can then give rise to violent extremism, and ultimately, to terrorism.

The most worrisome challenge of these compound threats is their negative effects on the capacity of the institutional structures, organizational cultures and functional practices. Those threats may include:

- Underemployment and unemployment;

- Perceived and real deprivation;

- Discrimination and marginalization;

- Lack of institutional capacity, urban and rural, that feeds misperception of deliberateness on the part of the state to support specific groups (majority);

- Institutional problems: weak coordination among state bodies; lack of mechanism to determine holders of functions and where they are across the country, lack of trust, need for policy reforms, no common picture in terms of potential threats; and

- Lack of processes that provide building trust on a local level, on a regular basis; increased presence of police forces in the local community, which will enable the municipal and state management get the same impression about the real problems.

On the ***STATE and MUNICIPAL-LOCAL LEVELS,*** interethnic relations in Republic of Macedonia between the communities continue to remain tense especially in parts of the country, where the extremist groups are still present and active, which are disposed to use the violence for achieving their political goals. So far, there have been several cases of the violence against citizens and institutions of the Republic of Macedonia, which may intensify violent reactions.

Furthermore, it is a continuous priority to protect the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia against the influence of extremist ideologies based on intolerance, hatred and violence for the purpose of realizing political and ideological goals, including misinterpretation of religions.

We see this negatively affecting "neighborhood and neighborly" cooperative and trust-based relationships and behavior not only at and in the "local" context, but at and in the "regional" context as well.

Under these relatively new and emergent types of challenges and conditions, *preparedness and prevention* become critical and essential prerequisites for maintaining and preserving legitimate, counter-terrorism capacity, posture and profile.

As such, the challenge for the Republic of Macedonia, and even more specifically for the National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism (NCCVECT) will be in identifying as early as possible those threats at "unregulated spaces" at and between the level of municipalities and State Government level, as well as at and between the levels of regional and transregional partnerships with the EU, UN and NATO, and other International Organizations.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND ITS ROOT CAUSES

What makes VE so uniquely dangerous for Macedonia is the current nature of the geopolitical global environment compounded largely because we have allowed the root causes and underlying conditions to go for so long, unaddressed or under-addressed. Although ethnically stable under the umbrella of the

former Yugoslavia, the breakup of the republic unearthed latent ethic and religious grievances that were buried and inadequately dealt with. The declaration of the independent nation has now made reconciling past differences a necessity.

These interethnic and previously ignored religious contentions have compounded the current nature of managing the incredibly complex and multi-dimensional nature of the issue today. Additionally, external influences from other neighboring/regional groups influence separatist and populist centric movements which are particularly focusing on the ethnic Albanian citizens of Macedonia. Simultaneously, the non-Albanian population is experiencing a more populist centric stimulus from other neighboring/regional networks.

This return to an older-styled form and character of interethnic conditions breeds, while at the same time being fueled by, more and more virulent forms of hyper-nationalism, populism, and chauvinism within domestic states, making the internal politics of domestic states more and more brittle, paranoid, and culturally/racially/religiously biased.[11]

The current international environment also makes coalitions building for collective security and defense more difficult while also making the formation of such coalitions all the more essential. Macedonia and its strategic geopolitical location and multiethnicity make it difficult due to its internal political consolidation, yet, this condition makes it possible to form alliances of different character with the neighboring countries. On-going political transition, ethnic clashes, ethnic separatism and global terrorist threats which are expanding and ever-evolving, make the region susceptible to negative influences. However, this initiative to enact a robust CVE strategy allows Macedonia the potential to mitigate the reasons its citizens would turn to violent extremism causing internal instability.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM

In accordance with the United Nations Security Council, the Republic of Macedonia is increasingly emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to countering the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. The NCCVECT members organized workshops with relevant representatives from the ministries to determine how to best address CVE in context of the Macedonian CT efforts. The UN Security Council underscores that CVE is an essential element in addressing the threat to international peace and security posed by VE and its influencers including internal recruiters and leaders and those that come from foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) who have left the state to fight abroad, settled outside the State or returned to Macedonia and my influence other members of society.

Aligned with the UN Security Council and the European Union plans for CVE, Macedonia is committed to engaging relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative that can undermine state governance and incite terrorist acts. Having in consideration the conditions favorable to spreading violent extremism, officials from the Macedonian institutions plan and prepare strategies, by including youths, families, women, religious, cultural and education leaders in their implementation, as well as all other stakeholders, in the joint efforts to reduce the effects of such conditions.[12]

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[11] Wilson, Isaiah, "Power in Transition: Challenges of providing for an uncommon defense и the search for strategic stability," Presentation for RAND Corporation, February 2017.

[12] See Countering Violent Extremism 20 February 2018, https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/focus-areas/countering-violentextremism/ For the purposes of this strategy on CVE, NCCVECT coordinators и members recognize youth, families, women, religious, cultural и education leaders, и all other concerned groups to be inclusive within the 'civil society'.

CONTEXT AND DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM[13]

There is no authoritative statistical data on the pathways towards individual radicalization (globally and that is also true for Macedonia). While there are some recognizable trends and patterns, qualitative research, (based mainly on interviews), suggests that there are "push factors", or the conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which it emerges; and "pull factors", or the individual motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action.

Table 3: Push Factors and Pull Factors of Violent Extremism

	Push factors	Pull factors
REGIONAL LEVEL	• External influences, including money from other parties who reside mainly in the Arabian Gulf	• Education in countries that promote extremism
	• Incapacity to handle criminal groups that cross borders easily, inadequate police action in vulnerable communities or regional areas in the Republic of Macedonia	• MKD is surrounded by weak states with post conflict instability, inherited policies that impact the quality of building socially sustainable systems, especially the relations to the neighboring countries to strengthen ethno-religious harmony & national unity
STATE LEVEL	• Tendency to unfoundedly blame ethnic communities or religious groups	• MKD continues to struggle in building and fostering a strong unified national identity
	• Government rhetoric which puts the blame for certain situations in society, instead of focusing on the real factors and indicators	• MKD still suffers from a relatively high degree of disaffection and lack of trust between communities and state and local government authorities
	• There is no comprehensive mission for countering all types of radicalization, violent extremism and countering terrorism	• Lack of state and municipal government institutional capacities and capabilities and persistent challenges with corruption
MUNICIPAL AND LOCAL LEVEL	• Pressure from religious leaders (internal or foreign influence)	• Chronic unemployment and underemployment, particularly within ethnocultural and religious minority communities
	• Marginalization of ethnic/religious groups	• Weak trust-bonds between local police and local authorities, as regards the rule of law
	• Lack of possibilities, denied citizenship for certain categories, impossibility to integrate and receive governmental protection and services, including police protection, health protection, etc.	• Lack of and weakness of "legitimate" authority creates leadership vacuums easily filled by radical extremist leaders with violent anti-state and anti-nation vision and intentions

The NCCVECT has identified several factors, which may contribute to continuation or increase of violent extremism and radicalism in the Republic of Macedonia. These research-based factors were

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[13] Поглавјето е моделирано на Акциониот План за Превенирање на Насилен Екстремизам на ОН од 24 декемви 2015

analyzed during workshops held under the auspices of the US Embassy, UK Embassy, the Embassy of the Netherlands, the EU Mission, the OSCE, and other international NGOs to inform the strategic process to combat violent extremism and the potential for violent action.

RADICALIZATION IN PRISONS

The Republic of Macedonia faces radicalization in domestic prisons. This is particularly true with the population of young men between 18-24 years of age. These men, when incarcerated, may be radicalized by many groups and influencers including nationalism, religious idealism, and others. Administration for the Execution of Sanctions is active in understanding the implications of radicalization in prisons and joined the NCCVECT to continue to work with legal prosecutors and other ministries to design and implement measures to address identified signs of radicalism. Activities include training of prison staff to prevent and protect convicts against effects of radicalism, and to directly address prisoners who may be radicalized and who may pose danger to themselves and other inmates.

THE NEED FOR COOPERATION

The NCCVECT understands that the implementation for action against radicalization and violent extremism is central to its success. Under implementation, the members are identifying those ministries at state and local level, community police members and other relevant actors including NGOs, religious leaders and school authorities to join in the effort to create an inclusive purpose setting the framework to alleviate citizens from taking an extremist path. The cohesiveness and dedication of this group give Macedonia a strong lead in the region to ensure they are prepared and can continue to prevent and protect its citizens from violent extremism.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS

The existence of these types of initiatives at a local civil society level provides an avenue for positive contribution by all forms of leadership. Civil society engagement provides an avenue away from the driver of isolation fostering resilience against extremist voices and influences. Providing an effort that is non-politicized and credible has the potential to become a space for finding common ground, allowing inclusive community interaction:

- Local religious leaders provide an important complement to the voices of FTF returnees and family members, offering both a platform to amplify their narratives and anti-extremist messages, and additional credibility from their intellectual and social authority.

- Foster positive engagement on regional and global issues to counteract several factors found to contribute to VE-vulnerable environments.

- Foster civil organizations' activities that are youth oriented to include them in youth programs, which channel the sense of optimism, reduce the feeling of political marginalization, economic pessimism and social isolation.

OTHER INITIATIVES IN PROGRESS

Macedonia's *Mothers School Model*, a research initiative, opened up opportunities for advancement of the trust among community members which are fundamental tenants in overcoming the stigma and

taboo of violent extremism and terrorism. At the beginning many mothers were quite reluctant to join due to the tenuous subject and the implications of being associated with the environment where they live. Those who completed the program acquired the sense of pride for their achievement and built a strong sense of friendship, self-confidence and openness in interpersonal communication.
Other initiatives include:

- Training for journalists when reporting on topics related to radicalism and terrorism.
- Close cooperation with the local authorities and the civil society.
- Close cooperation with state and local authorities to identify linkages with organized crime and terrorism including: the risk of selling false passports to FTFs; aiding or smuggling transiting FTFs through Macedonia; smuggling of firearms, currency, people, and other illicit movement to and from the Western Balkans into the EU or elsewhere used for terrorist activities.
- Initiate and build on field research projects and media influence on potential recruits and others prone to violent extremism.
- Develop measure for deradicalization for FTFs and others that may have fallen prey to extremist ideologies[14].

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Republic of Macedonia has harmonized both National Strategies and associated action plans for prevention of violent extremism and fight against terrorism under the following four (4) common **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

1. **PREVENT** flows of FTF and militants and root causes of radicalization and extremism;

2. **PROTECT** our people, their property, key and critical infrastructure from all threats, that are clear and present as well as potential and growing;

3. **PURSUE** threats of Violent Extremism and Terrorism at their root in safe havens and where ever they pose clear danger to people and infrastructure; prosecute these threats actively, but fairly and transparently, and consistent with the rule of law;

4. **RESPOND** actively, aggressively, but always in ways that are transparent and consistent to the rule of law, in the spirit of solidarity and in ways that manage and minimize the consequences of a terrorist attack, by improving capabilities to deal with the aftermath, the coordination of the response and the needs of victims.

STAKEHOLDERS

The activities set herein shall be implemented by the institutions involved in countering violent extremism, including, but not necessarily limited to: Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Local Self-Government, ZELS, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Agency for Youth and Sports, Commission for Relations among the Religious communities and groups, as well as other involved institutions in the work of the National Committee. Civil society lead by NGOs, religious leaders, local communities, youth, women, media, etc. have an additional role for CVE.

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[14] Although there is a decline in the flow of FTFs since 2015, young people in Macedonia face lack of social space to get away from the polarization to conservative and non-conservative Muslims. The lack of cohesion and understanding may lead to greater social isolation, which is one of the factors on the way of FTFs, especially young people, who may be vulnerable to extreme classes and influences.

COORDINATION AND OPERATIONS

"Coordination" encompasses joint engagement of all relevant institutions in the Republic of Macedonia - State down through local, municipal levels - for timely exchange of information, as well as cooperation in order detection, defining, evaluation and interception of possible terrorist's and/or terrorist organization threats.

This coordination will provide timely exchange of information, rightful and appropriate allocation of resources, strategic counter terrorism planning and synchronization of the cooperation with the relevant state, national (local-municipal levels), regional and international institutions in the fight against terrorism.

The cooperation between the services on operational level will be intensified through forming joint teams.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

Implementation of these activities herein shall enable:

- Understanding the dangers of marginalization, economic difficulties and threats of division of the community;
- Improved confidence in the communities and among communities and the police and other government bodies;
- Less fear from taboos in the community, focused exclusively on specific ethnic or religious groups;
- Achievement of high level of cooperation among state and local institutions in the fight against violent extremism;
- Converging towards international standards and harmonization of the national legislation and regulations with the European Union, UN, OSCE and other international partners.

IMPLEMENTATION: ACTION PLANNING FOR CVE and CT

Adoption of the National Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism and Counter Terrorism (2018 – 2022) is the competence of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. These strategies are drafted and revised by the NCCVECT based on preliminary analysis of potential risks, in order to address the phenomenon of extremism and radicalization and other factors and drivers that can lead to terrorism.

These strategic documents are living policy documents; therefore, their drafting, revision, adoption, implementation, and monitoring are a continuous process.

The objectives of action planning in preventing radicalism and radicalization, extremism and violent extremism which lead to terrorism and terrorist activities are accommodated to:

- Accurately depict the issue and determine the right balance between a preventive approach, a disrupting approach and a repressive approach; and,
- Reduce the impact of terrorism.

Two additional keys to realizing these four goals are (1) improving capabilities and capacities for identifying and mapping out the individuals and groups, and other factors, with a radicalizing effect on their environment, and (2) improving capabilities and institutional capacities for reducing the impact of the drivers of radicalization that often lead to violent extremism and, ultimate, to terrorist activities.

By implementation of administrative, judicial and socially preventive measures against individuals who spread radical and violent ideas will be enabled through national comprehensive approach against violent extremism and terrorist threat in our society.

STRATEGIC AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Our Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) Analysis enabled the definition and elaboration of many strategic priorities common to both the missions of CVE and CT.

For CVE, the NCCVECT has identified four specific objectives for Prevent, two objectives for Protect, one new CVE-specific objective for Pursue, and three objectives for Respond.
NCCVECT has established the following specific State/National objectives (goals) to counter violent extremism:

TABLE 4. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

1. PREVENT
Strategic goal 1.1: Strengthened institutional capacities
Strategic goal 1.2: Raising public awareness
Strategic goal 1.3: Strong and resistant community
Strategic goal 1.4: Preventing radicalization via Internet

2. PROTECT
Strategic goal 2.1: Proactive institutions in context of protection of the basic values, human rights and freedoms
Strategic goal 2.2: Increasing the confidence among relevant institutions and citizens for protection against radicalization and violent extremism

3. PURSUE
Strategic goal 3.1: Established set of measures for early detection of radicalization

4. RESPOND
Strategic goal 4.1: Deradicalization
Strategic goal 4.2: Reintegration thru resocialization and rehabilitation
Strategic goal 4.3: Coordination and cooperation

For CT, the Republic of Macedonia now has eight specific objectives for Prevent, five objectives for Protect, four specific objectives for Pursue, and three objectives for Respond. NCCVECT also developed and adopted/incorporated a relatively new implementation protocol – an emergent, NATOstandard compliant operational framework for implementing our PURSUE lines of activities in an improved controlled escalatory manner: Disrupt-Degrade-Dismantle-Pursue.[15]

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[15] These are emerging doctrinal terms. DISRUPT - upsetting a terrorist group's organization and operational timetable without fundamentally challenging its ability to conduct future operations; DEGRADE - the suppression of a terrorist group's ability to conduct large-scale external operations as well as the loss of the groups' freedom of movement; DISMANTLE - fracturing a terrorist group to a point at which it can no longer function as a cohesive organization; DEFEAT - the elimination of a terrorist group from within its safe havens and preventing terror groups from re-establishing a safe haven and regenerating over time.

CONCRETE IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

Implementation

To effectively implement the National Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism, the Government of Macedonia will develop corresponding procedures and regulations.

The NCCVECT is responsible for the initiative for the implementation of the Action Plans (with the contribution from the relevant institutions and ministries of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia) and is responsible for coordination and communication of efforts to CT and CVE.

FRAMEWORK AND GENERAL APPROACH

The objectives of the Action Plans for Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism imply an integrated and common approach that is supported by the National Committee for Counter Violent Extremism and Counterterrorism (NCCVECT), and through the coordination and management of the NCCVECT, by way of National Working Groups (NWGs) and Task Forces (a mix of permanent, theme-based or ad hoc). Each established working group is coordinated by a Lead Ministry (carrier of activities).

Additionally, NCCVECT recommends the establishment of Terrorism Task Forces in order to ensure an efficient interaction with the field work

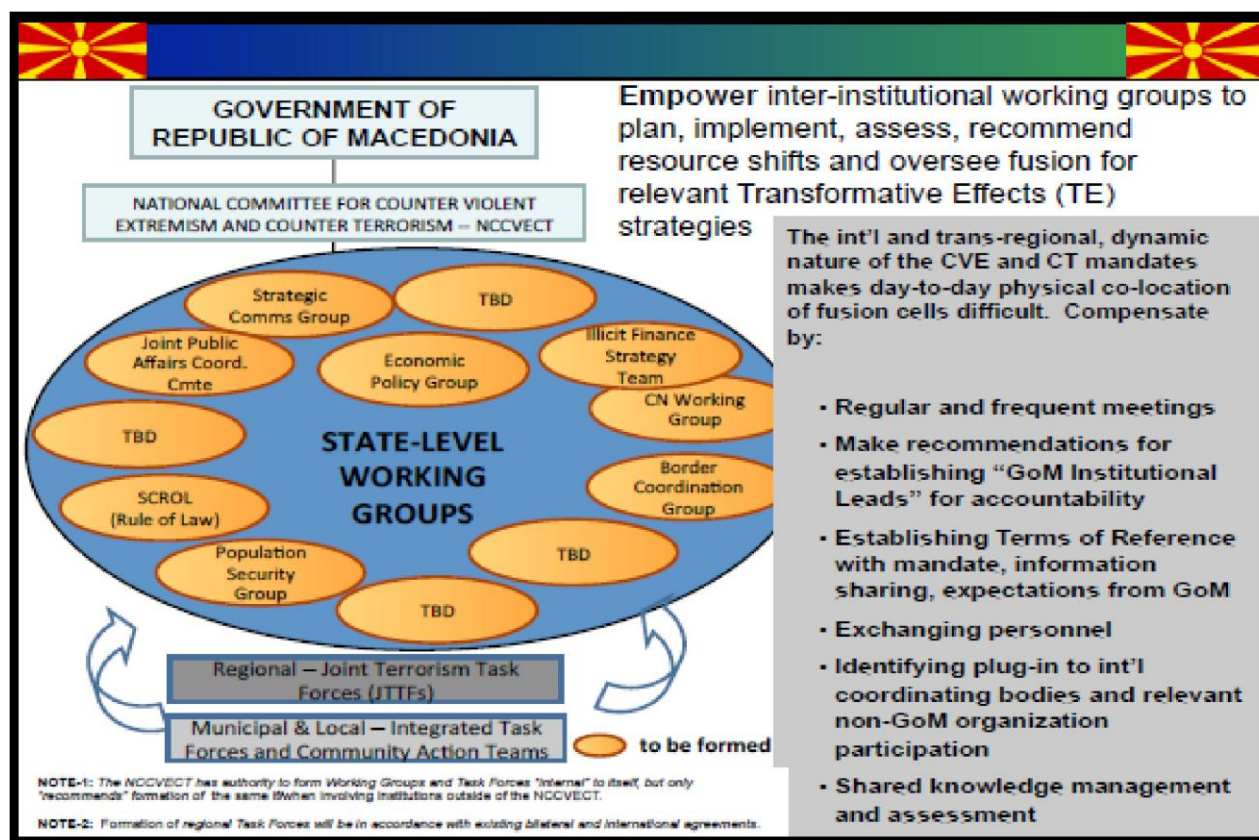*FIGURE 10. COORDINATED EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT/OVERALL SOCIETY*

Figure 10 briefly describes some of the basic principles and opinions of our proposed organizational approach as NCCVECT for improved and strengthened "harmonized" efforts in countering violent extremism and terrorism as a collective body.

We propose strengthening interinstitutional task forces (state and municipal level, when suitable) in order to plan, implement, evaluate and recommend redistribution of resources to State bodies…as well as to oversee the "fusion" of information and improved integration for certain topics of "transformative effects".

PRIORITIZATION

The NCCVECT, working in concert with representatives from all institutions and ministries from the Government of the Republic of Macedonia with relevant stakes in the actions and activities of countering violent extremism and terrorism, has identified five (5) critical "building partner capacities" priorities most appropriate for an immediate investment of International donor funding and subjectmatter expertise and technical assistance support:

CVE and CT funding priorities for the first year:

1. Further strengthening of the institutional capacities of the NCCVECT
2. Improve standardization across regional data sharing platforms, including data processing; Create a dynamic network-analysis based Escalating Threat Mapping Program and Database
3. Establishment of Community Action Teams (CATs) for improvement of cooperation between state and local authorities and local communities; improved community policing training and presence
4. Establishment of key Integrated Task Forces (ITFs), including a MKD Joint Terrorism Task Force (MKD-JTTF) for improved border area control and crisis action prevention and response
5. Establishment of State Working Groups (SWGs) for focused multi-agency, cross-institutional actions on the following: MKD-led establishment of a Western Balkans Regional CVE and CT strategy; Completion of a Full- Border Surveillance & Control System

Projecting forward on needs-based capacity-building requirements, the NCCVECT has identified the following mix of CVE and CT specific objectives (and corresponding progress-measurable activities) as top priority Year 2 to Year 5 goals:

CVE and CT funding priorities for Years 2 to 5:

- Preventing radicalization and terrorist recruitment by enhancing bilateral, regional and international cooperation {CT STRATEGIC GOAL: 1.5; CVE STRATEGIC GOAL 2.2}
- Strengthening capacities of the institutions for dealing with "foreign terrorist fighters" {CT STRATEGIC GOAL: 1.4} in connection to an established set of measures for early detection of radicalization {CVE STRATEGIC GOAL: 3.1}
- Preventing radicalization via internet {CT STRATEGIC GOAL: 1.3; CVE STRATEGIC GOAL 1.4}
- Preventing the financing of terrorism {CT STRATEGIC GOAL: 1.2}
- Improving capacities by conducting assessments, analyses and research related to radicalization and terrorism {CT STRATEGIC GOAL: 1.6; CVE STRATEGIC GOAL 1.1}
- Strengthening systems for state border control {CT STRATEGIC GOAL: 2.1}

- Improving inter-governmental coordination {CT STRATEGIC GOAL: 4.3; CVE STRATEGIC GOAL 4.3}
- Strengthening capacities of relevant institutions to respond to terrorist attack {CT STRATEGIC GOAL 4.1; CVE STRATEGIC GOAL 4.3)

MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR CVE

Identified responsible institutions are obliged to implement the activities foreseen within the action plan. The responsible institutions shall report on achievements generated by action plan activities to the NCCVECT.

NCCVECT shall annually report to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia about the status of implementation of activities detailed in the by the National Strategies and action plans.

This report shall contain proposed conclusions in case of other relevant institution have not attained the activities in the timelines set in the Action plan.

Oversight bodies for implementation of CVE measures and activities shall be defined within the strategic plans of the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Local Self-Government, ZELS, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Agency for Youth and Sports, Commission for Relations between Religious Communities and Groups, as well as other institutions involved in the work of the National Committee.

MEASURING PROGRESS: The purpose of the assessment process is two-fold: 1) to provide decisionmakers in Macedonia with necessary information to prioritize and direct allocation of resources and efforts, and 2) to inform National-level decision-making through integrated reporting.

RECALIBRATION

The Strategy foresees implementation of the planned activities and measures in the period of five (5) years, i.e. 2018-2022.

The funds required for implementation of this strategy will be covered with projects and the budget of the Republic of Macedonia for which financial assessment will be additionally developed, as well as International donor support.

Resource Alignment – two overarching principles:
- Pushing accountable resource decision-making down to the lowest possible operational level; and,
- Maximizing the comparative advantage of each type of resource tool.

A HOLISTIC AGENDA FOR ACTION:

Action Planning for 'comprehensive' countering of violent extremism and counterterrorism

As this strategy document begins, so it concludes: with a discussion on the imperatives of differentiating between the ends, the ways and methods, and the means of countering violent extremism and countering terrorism while simultaneously building and resourcing implementation plans of action that are mutually reinforcing and mutually affecting; towards a comprehensive and holistic philosophy and set of approaches for preventing, countering, and if where and when necessary, combating violent extremism and terrorism.

The Republic of Macedonia's approach to these strategies, and more pointedly, to the corresponding action plans call for and represent the intent and efforts towards a balanced implementation of the National Strategies for the Republic of Macedonia for Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism... consistent with United Nations and European Union strategies and action planning principles.

As we 'action' our strategies, the Republic of Macedonia will continue concerted efforts to counter violent extremism, at its roots and points of genesis, with weighted attention and efforts turned to preparedness, prevention, and response. The Republic of Macedonia is committed to broadening responses, to engaging earlier to risks and threats, and to addressing the drivers of violent extremism; drivers and factors that all too often lead to terrorism and terrorist activities.

The Republic of Macedonia will complement the countering of violent extremism with preventive measures. By making prevention an integral part of our comprehensive approach, this will help us tackle many of the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups; in and of itself, an "early-signs" oriented preventive approach to "countering" terrorism. As with the practice of prevention more generally, results may not be visible immediately and will require our long-term and patient engagement.[16]

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[16] Derived from "The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism," *Report of the Secretary-General*, 24 December 2015, p. 10.