



Initiatives to Prevent/Counter Violent Extremism in South East Europe

A Survey of Regional Issues,
Initiatives and Opportunities



Regional Cooperation Council



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Initiatives and Opportunities

Sarajevo, July 2016



Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

Introduction

The topic of violent extremism has increasingly become a part of policy discussions among domestic officials, international actors, academic researchers and civic activists in South East Europe (SEE) over the past several years. The prominence of this issue has been driven to a large extent by the concerns of ISIL/Daesh-inspired terror,¹ the threat of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) gaining battlefield experience in Syria and Iraq and then returning to their home countries, and the substantial media attention which surrounds acts of high-profile terrorist activities. The role of social media and global outreach in overcoming borders has illustrated the negative side of increased global communication, mobility and connectivity, and demonstrated new security threats. There is a growing recognition that traditional counter-terrorism (CT) measures may not be enough to successfully suppress violent manifestations of extremism and terror. Measures to prevent violent extremism (PVE) and counter violent extremism (CVE) are required to truly reduce risk factors.

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) commissioned this study to better understand the situation regarding violent extremism, and related planned and on-going governmental and non-governmental activities in preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism in SEE (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo², Montenegro, Serbia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and

Turkey). The aim of the research was to identify gaps and unnecessary overlap, and contains conclusions and recommendations. The survey was conducted through interviews with over hundred experts and stakeholders to understand their diagnosis of the challenge, to understand ongoing activities in PVE/CVE and to seek their recommendations for more effective domestic and regional initiatives. This report summarizes this research exercise and is aimed at being a tool for the governments, international organizations and independent actors to better understand trends, initiatives and challenges across the region.

Key Findings

The following key findings are, among others, explored in the report:

- ▶ There has been substantial progress in the region in developing specific CT and CVE strategies that include attention to prevention. These documents provide governments with a guiding framework for future work.
- ▶ The level of consultation in developing these strategies has been generally low. There are different views on what constitutes consultation. However, if there is a perception that a strategy or action has not involved sufficient meaningful consultation, there is less likelihood of public trust and engagement in implementation.
- ▶ Violent extremism is primarily viewed through the prism the threat of the ISIL/Daesh. Other forms of extremism, such as domestic right-wing extremism, are noted as a secondary concern, if acknowledged at all. An exception is Turkey, which is facing a unique combination of indigenous and external threats.
- ▶ There is a tendency among interlocutors (particularly among officials) to state that what is most needed to prevent/counter violent extremism is economic development and infrastructure

¹ Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Islamic State (IS) and Daesh were all used by various individuals consulted to refer to this phenomenon. The term ISIL/Daesh will be used in this report as per nomenclature agreed in the Southeast European Cooperation Process Ministerial Meeting, Joint Statement on Terrorism, unless certain respondents specifically used another term. (The statement is available at http://www.punetejashtme.gov.al/files/news_files/SEECPP_Joint_Statement_on_Terrorism.pdf). The use of this term is not intended to confirm or reify any links between Islam as a faith and either violence or extremism, but is used in this instance for simplicity.

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo* declaration of independence.

investment. However, when discussing further, there is recognition that there is an ideological/worldview factor and deeper inclusion/alienation issues that must be addressed as well.

- ▶ Independent experts noted that social exclusion, marginalization and a search for meaning/belonging are contributing factors to radicalization. There are few political trends in support of greater inclusion of citizens in social and public life, or to cultivate multi-layered and inclusive identities - in spite of the need for such policies.
- ▶ The threat of extremism and latent or operational violent extremism is viewed as a threat, though the numbers of adherents of violent extremism, including but not limited to foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs)/returning FTFs, are not in themselves inordinately high when compared with Western Europe.
 - ✦ All stakeholders consulted noted a drop in the number of individuals from Western Balkans going to fight in Syria/Iraq since 2015, a decrease explained by a combination of fear of legal consequences and greater awareness of the risks through exposure to ISIL/Daesh propaganda and increased domestic media coverage. However, nearly all respondents were clear in confirming that this drop does *not* mean that radicalization has stopped.
 - ✦ Relative absence of significant acts of terrorism and violent extremism in the areas studied (Turkey as a notable exception) has made it possible for many societies to ignore the problem. However, extremism, with the potential to turn violent domestically or abroad, is viewed as a risk.
- ▶ The refugee crisis was not noted by interlocutors as a driver of extremism in itself, but viewed as a tool that might be used by some officials with other agendas, and as a wedge issue that could promote growing populism and xenophobia. With the exception of Turkey, few saw refugee flows as a primary route for extremists to enter the region; there are easier ways. However, several individuals noted the overlap between refugee transit routes and the broader Balkan route that facilitates illicit trafficking in drugs, arms and people.
- ▶ There is a broad worry among non-official respondents that the threat and fear of VE might be used by opportunistic actors as an excuse to further divide communities by stoking fear of difference and “the other.” Such populism is possible anywhere, but divided societies with weak traditions of democratic governance and

accountability are viewed as the least resilient to these threats.

- ▶ CVE is broadly viewed as consisting of a combination of repressive and preventive measures
 - ✦ There is consistently greater confidence in the ability to implement repressive measures including policing, intelligence, surveillance, arrest and incarceration. Community policing as a concept is minimally understood, and in practice remains weak throughout the region - particularly in communities populated by non-majority or marginalized groups.
 - ✦ There is less confidence in the ability to commit to the preventive strategies needed, including more robust psycho-social support systems, stronger education and the cultivation of more resilient communities. Respondents note that such long-term projects are not always attractive to donors seeking short-term deliverables and “successes,” and are approached hesitantly by domestic officials wary of the political perils of long-term policy commitments.
 - ✦ Non-official interlocutors were most likely to note that the lack of truly independent institutions in each location contributes to ineffective response to the challenge of radicalization, and, in particular, to prevention.
- ▶ The past two years have seen an increase in the amount of research available on this topic. However, much remains unknown and the need for evidence to diagnose the problems and demonstrate effective prevention techniques is sorely needed.

Key Recommendations

The following are key recommendations with regional relevance; specific recommendations are included for each of the seven cases studied:

- ▶ Officials and independent actors alike note that they need more information on what is happening in each location and in the region, in terms of diagnostic analysis and current or planned PVE/CVE activities. This report should be shared broadly to begin to fill this gap.
- ▶ Personal contacts and networks among appointed expert focal points can help to fill this gap. The RCC Focal Points for CVE should have updated Terms of Reference to facilitate a stronger



role in sharing information. Those RCC participants that do not have a dedicated CVE focal point should appoint one.

- ▶ Depending on the actors and initiatives in each location, formal and regular consultation mechanisms - including independent experts and non-governmental representatives - should be established, with meetings at least twice yearly. This can then serve as the basis for more effective regional-level consultations.
- ▶ To effectively share information on PVE/CVE activities, information should be actively collected on a regular basis, perhaps twice yearly, and shared publicly to ensure access by all stakeholders; options are discussed in the full set of recommendations below.
- ▶ Regional-level monitoring and analysis of individual CT/CVE strategies and action plans can both facilitate domestic implementation while enabling regular exchange of practice and lessons learned. Strategies and in particular action plans should be flexible enough to respond both to changing circumstances and project feedback.
- ▶ Each of the RCC Participants applying the referral mechanism approach to early warning, prevention and intervention at the community level should share information about the mechanism implementation process domestically and with others regionally, to facilitate frank discussion among officials, experts and community leaders on what does and does not work, and why.
- ▶ Each RCC Participant should more regularly and broadly consult with civil society organizations (including religious communities) and policy groups to ensure broader based buy-in and support.
- ▶ National Coordination Mechanisms should be established in order to effectively implement policies aimed at countering the financing of terrorism. These mechanisms should bring together officials, private banking managers and others on a regular basis to ensure policy and practical coherence. The United Kingdom and Austria are good performers on this issue.
- ▶ More expert research is needed to ensure evidence-based assumptions and response/program design. Specific topics are included in the case study summaries. A broad range of expertise and expert organizations should be supported and cultivated to ensure a wide range of perspectives and voices, and subsequent rigorous debate.
- ▶ While informal projects, camps and activities can target at risk youth and provide opportunities for preventive engagement, the best mechanism to prevent and counter the development of extremist views is through the school system. Respondents in every location noted the need for targeted and general educational reform and improvement. Examples of other successful education initiatives (e.g., to prevent school violence) can offer a road map on how to mainstream PVE/CVE themes into the curricula.
- ▶ Some respondents noted that there is a risk of “CVE fatigue” if *too* much emphasis is put on this issue to the exclusion of other pressing social issues. This could also lead to certain communities being unfairly targeted, potentially increasing their sense of isolation. Further, preventive activities such as social welfare reform, education support and strengthening of psycho-social services may in fact contribute to communities becoming resilient to radicalization, but should not necessarily be promoted or branded as such.
- ▶ Some respondents noted that they feel there is sometimes little follow-up in terms of either action or communication following conferences and events. Fewer, better, sustained events and initiatives - within a long-term strategic context - are preferable to a proliferation of broad events with little continuity.

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Acronyms

AI

Atlantic Initiative

AIIS

Albanian Institute for International Studies

ASI

Ankara Strategy Institute

BCSP

Belgrade Center for Security Policy

BIRN

Balkan Investigative Reporting Network

CIA

Central Intelligence Agency

CIMIC

Civil Military Cooperation

CoE

Council of Europe

CSO

Civil Society Organization

CT

Counter-Terrorism

CVE

Counter Violent Extremism

DHKP/C

Devrimci Halk Kurtulus Partisi-Cephesi,
Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/
Front

DPC

Democratization Policy Council

EU

European Union

FATF

Financial Action Task Force

FTF

Foreign Terrorist Fighter

GCERF

Global Community Engagement and Resilience
Fund

GCTF

Global Counterterrorism Forum

HCHR

Helsinki Committee for Human Rights

IBM

Integrated Border Management

IC

Islamic Community

ICITAP

International Criminal Investigative Training
Assistance Program

ICJ

International Court of Justice

IDM

Institute for Democracy and Mediation

IPA

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance

ISIL

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

IS

Islamic State

ISIS

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

IOM

International Organization for Migration

KCSS

Kosovo* Center for Security Studies

LEA

Law Enforcement Agency

LGBT

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

MOJ

Ministry of Justice

NGO

Non-governmental Organization

**OPDAT**

Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training

ORSAM

Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies

OSCE

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

OSF

Open Society Foundation

PKK

Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan; Kurdistan Workers' Party

PVE

Prevent Violent Extremism

RAN

Radicalization Awareness Network

RCC

Regional Cooperation Council

RWI

Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

SCN

Strong Cities Network

SEE

South East Europe

SEECF

South-East European Cooperation Process

SEESAC

South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons

SETA

Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research

SOCTA

Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment

TAIEX

Technical Assistance and Information Exchange

TEPAV

The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey

TOBB ETU

TOBB University of Economics and Technology

TPO

Transkulturalna psihosocijalna obrazovna fondacija

UN

United Nations

UNDP

United Nations Development Program

UNSCR

United Nations Security Council Resolution

US

United States

USAK

International Strategic Research Organization

VE

Violent Extremism

WBCTI

Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Initiative

Introduction

The topic of violent extremism has increasingly become a part of policy discussions among domestic officials, international actors, academic researchers and civic activists in South East Europe over the past several years. The prominence of this issue has been driven to a large extent by the concerns of ISIL/*Daesh*-inspired terror, the threat of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) gaining battlefield experience in Syria and Iraq and then returning to their home country, and the substantial media attention which surrounds high-profile acts of terrorism. The role of social media and global outreach in overcoming borders has illustrated the negative side of increased global communication, mobility and connectivity, and demonstrated new security threats. There is a growing recognition that traditional counter-terrorism (CT) measures may not be enough to successfully counter violent manifestations of extremism and terror; measures to prevent violent extremism (PVE) and counter violent extremism (CVE) are required to truly reduce risk factors.

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) commissioned this study to better understand the situation regarding violent extremism, and related planned and on-going governmental and non-governmental activities in preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism in SEE (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey).

The aim of the research was to identify gaps and unnecessary overlap, and contains conclusions and recommendations. The survey was conducted via field work and in-depth interviews with over hundred experts and stakeholders to understand their diagnosis of the challenge, to understand ongoing activities in PVE/CVE and to seek their recommendations for more effective domestic and regional initiatives. This report summarizes this research exercise and is aimed at being a tool for governments, international representatives and independent actors to better understand trends, initiatives and challenges across the region.

The report is structured as follows. First, a description of the methodology is provided. Second, a short overview of some relevant key global or regional efforts and actors is presented. This is followed by a summary chart consolidating the information collected on the seven cases. Next, a review of each of the seven RCC Participants included in this research is provided, including a short situational overview of the key issues in each location, and then a review of ongoing or planned PVE/CVE efforts in that location, or, as applicable, highlights of participation in any regional initiatives. This is followed by a set of consolidated findings and analysis, as well as outstanding challenges and questions raised throughout the research. Finally, a set of recommendations is offered, as well as concluding remarks.

Methodology

An independent consultant was hired by the RCC for thirty days to conduct limited document review and primary data collection in the seven target locations. Two research days were spent in Albania, Kosovo,* Montenegro and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in mid-March. In Serbia, a half-day was spent in Novi Pazar in mid-March, and two and a half days in Belgrade in mid-April. Five days in Turkey in May were split between Ankara and Istanbul. Research in BiH was spread out from March through June as this is the author's place of residence.

Over hundred individuals were consulted through field trips to each target location and interviews with a wide variety of stakeholders. Interviews were mostly face-to-face, though in around half a dozen cases Skype interviews or phone calls

were held. A variety of stakeholders participated, including government ministries/bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations and embassies. Two sources served as useful starting points for each location: RCC CVE Focal Points and United States (US) Embassy CVE Focal Points in each location. The support provided by the RCC Focal Points varied greatly, with some, for example Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia providing extensive support through facilitation of meetings with numerous relevant officials. In others cases support was more limited, yet appreciated. In Albania and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, there were no CVE focal points appointed at the time when the field visits were conducted. The table below summarizes the affiliation/characteristics of the individuals consulted:

	Think Tank/ Policy Group	Govt./ Officials	Intl. Orgs/ Embassies	Civil Society	Male	Female	Total
Albania	4	1	1	1	5	2	7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4	1	11	2	16	2	18
Kosovo*	5	5	5	0	11	4	15
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	6	0	3	2	9	2	11
Montenegro	2	5	2	1	7	3	10
Serbia	2	11	10	5	13	15	28
Turkey	13	1	3	3	13	7	20
General	1	1	2	1	4	1	5
Total	37	25	37	15	76	36	114

In the limited amount of time it was impossible to meet with all potentially relevant stakeholders. There is, therefore, variance in the list of organizations and individuals contacted. For example, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) officials were included in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and Turkey, but not for the other locations. Similarly, bilateral embassy representatives were contacted based on the different levels of activity and awareness, as

well as availability, in each location. Experts from NGOs, universities and policy groups/think tanks were contacted in each location, with the aim of speaking both with organizations working on the specific issue of PVE/CVE, with those knowledgeable about issues relevant to PVE/CVE and those implementing projects that may not have been explicitly designed to address PVE/CVE, but which share the same long-term goals.

Semi-structured interviews were organized, with a set of framework questions developed to lead conversations (see Annex). Interviews were held in English, Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. It quickly became clear that knowledge and awareness of CVE efforts among respondents varied greatly, and the interviewer shaped discussions according to each interlocutor. Chatham House rules were used; for that reason specific attributions to respondents are not made.

While the aim of the research was to find out what governments and NGOs are doing to PVE/CVE, and to identify acknowledged needs and recommendations, it would be impossible to place such information in any context without some general background on the nature of the real or perceived threat of VE in each location. Therefore, at the beginning of each case study review there is a short page situational overview of issues that shape the debate and drive the response. The issues included for each case are:

- ▶ Nature of extremism/VE
- ▶ Drivers of radicalization
- ▶ “At risk” communities
- ▶ FTFs
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ Funding
- ▶ Prisons
- ▶ Refugees
- ▶ Highlights of strategies, actions plans and relevant initiatives

Information included in these summaries was collected during interviews; in some cases additional sources are cited. However, this is not meant to be comprehensive, but to provide minimal basic context for understanding the ongoing initiatives and the noted recommendations.

Just as the data collection was qualitative in nature, the analysis was similarly qualitative. Broad trends were sought, as well as interesting specific comments. There were many similarities among responses, which were validated in terms of both the diagnosis and the suggested recommendations. Recommendations are offered for each individual jurisdiction studied, as well as generally (regionally). The recommendations reflect the conversations with stakeholders. Those places that have engaged the most on the issue of PVE/CVE tended to offer the most comprehensive and most detailed recommendations, reflecting

governmental and - even more importantly- non-governmental study and consideration of the topic. This is in itself a finding.

In addition to the narrative, some comparative tables are included to provide a more concise summary of issues across the region.

The summary of engaged actors and PVE/CVE initiatives in each of the seven cases is aimed at being thorough, but is not necessarily comprehensive. The following summary is indicative of the range of regional and targeted domestic initiatives underway or being considered as of June 2016. It is possible that some activities are not included. For example a number of good governance and human rights projects have been ongoing in these locations for years, and while they share many of the goals of PVE/CVE (e.g., tolerance, critical thinking, active citizenship, etc.) they were not necessarily conceived as PVE/CVE initiatives. There could be some grassroots level projects designed with PVE/CVE goals in mind that are being quietly implemented, falling under the radar screen. Further, the field is quite fluid, and it is possible that new efforts have developed or matured since the initial contacts.

It is also possible that some specific PVE/CVE projects have not been noted in this report. Some smaller projects may be underway, and simply unknown to the respondents. Finally, it is possible that some projects may be deliberately keeping a low profile precisely due to the sensitive nature of the topic; many respondents noted that press and publicity can often be detrimental to the success of very grassroots efforts. However, based on discussion with over 100 individuals, a good majority of the most significant efforts have been noted, and this does provide a solid overview of the state of play in the first half of 2016.

Global and Regional Initiatives

Some of the organizations that are engaged in the seven cases being studied also have regional approaches that provide useful context. Some selected key regional/global initiatives are described below; only those directly relevant to this study are included.

Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)

BIRN has contributed to the conversations on violent extremism and CVE through two main ways. BIRN's "ISIS in the Balkans" series is a part of BIRN's general core Mission, and they plan to continue to research issues like recruitment and judicial proceedings. BIRN acknowledges that the issue can only be properly covered with more thorough investigative reporting pieces, going beyond daily reports or trial monitoring. The United Kingdom (UK) Foreign and Commonwealth Office funded a short (five - six month) project in 2015-2016 called, "Strengthening Media Reporting and Understanding of Extremism in the Western Balkans." The series combined training for BIRN staff by BBC experts on how to use social media when investigating radicalization, how to validate videos, and other skills, and also facilitated more in-depth reporting. The final report was discussed in a conference held in Sarajevo in March 2016.³

There has been limited and selective spillover of these BIRN pieces into the mainstream media, limiting the potential overall reach of the research and reporting. Numerous respondents noted the need for improved research and journalism on this topic, and for capacity building including the following:

- ▶ Additional relevant expert-level skills (as noted above) training (financial crimes research, investigative techniques, analysis, etc.) by experts who have themselves reported on these themes
- ▶ Integration of these skills into journalism faculties, perhaps in coordination with improved offerings in security studies faculties

³ "Balkan Jihadists: The Radicalization and recruitment of Fighters in Syria and Iraq." BIRN. March 2016. Available at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/file/show/Balkan-Jihadists.pdf>

- ▶ More original academic research on these issues

BIRN's Balkan coverage is extensive, but does not include Greece or Turkey; they are a small group with a small number of editors, and the inclusion of these cases would significantly expand the initiative, requiring more funding and personnel. However, BIRN does cooperate with *Turkish Weekly*.

EU funded initiatives

■ Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN)

The RAN⁴ provides a forum for experts and practitioners from throughout Europe to share experience and good practice on the issue of radicalization. Nine working groups address issues ranging from prisons to local authorities to health and social care. The RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices serves as a living resource center. Some of the respondents noted familiarity with RAN and an interest in receiving RAN support for domestic initiatives.

■ VoxPol

The EU-funded VoxPol - Virtual Center of Excellence for Research in Violent Online Extremism⁵ - supports research on the issue of social media as a tool in radicalization, and potentially in de-radicalization. Broader issues including the impact of PVE/CVE on freedom of speech and expression are also considered.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

FATF was established in 1989 and aims to combat money laundering and criminal financial activities, including the financing of terrorism. Turkey is a member of FATF. Other initiatives support the implementation of FATF objectives. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the OSCE held an event in Belgrade in June 2016 to share regional good practice in combatting terrorism financing by using financial intelligence unit legal power.

⁴ For more on RAN see http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/index_en.htm

⁵ For more on VoxPol see <http://voxpath.eu/>

Global Coalition to Counter Daesh

The Global Coalition to Counter Daesh⁶ was established in September 2014 with the aim of degrading and defeating Daesh through military means, countering financing support for Daesh, preventing the flow of FTFs, supporting stabilization of areas liberated from Daesh and countering the Daesh narratives. All seven of the RCC Participants studied in this report are partners in this effort.

Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)

The GCTF⁷ was launched on September 22, 2011, with the mission to reduce the vulnerability of people everywhere to terrorism by effectively preventing, combating, and prosecuting terrorist acts and countering incitement and recruitment to terrorism. It provides a forum for national level coordination professionals to meet their counterparts, in particular in civilian capacity building including the rule of law border management and CVE. Turkey was a founding member of the GCTF.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

In 2015 the OSCE Secretary General, together with the Serbian Chairmanship, launched the United CVE campaign.⁸ This provides a framework for the OSCE to apply its comprehensive security approach to the issue of terrorism and efforts to PVE/CVE. Some events are organized by the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, other by various OSCE field offices, through regular budgets and extra-budgetary projects. Overall, the OSCE is quite active, organizing a number of events, and is very effective in bringing together various governmental and non-governmental actors.

RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation

RACVIAC⁹ supports dialogue and cooperation on security matters in SEE, including issues related to the threat of violent extremism. All of the RCC

participants noted in this study are members, with Kosovo* invited to participate on a permanent basis in 2014. Together with the OSCE and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina a conference on FTFs was held in autumn 2015.¹⁰ The follow-up is planned for autumn 2016, with the cooperation of the RCC and the OSCE.

Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

The RCC was launched in 2008 as the successor to the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe and supports the Euro-Atlantic integration processes in the region.¹¹ Its strategy includes a focus on regional development and economic growth, security cooperation, the fight against organization crime and migration management.

Following the tasking received by the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) ministers (representing foreign, justice and home affairs), the RCC devised its Southeast European Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters (SEE Regional CVE-FTF Platform for short). The Platform was adopted by the RCC Board on 15 October 2015. The Platform is a pragmatic document, consisting of a short concept paper and a work plan with a list of envisaged activities. The Platform is connected with the EU-backed Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism Initiative (WBCTI).

Under the Platform, the RCC established the Group of SEE National Focal Points for CVE-FTF, which held its first session in Sarajevo on 27 January 2016. Its main task is to take stock of the RCC, national, and other CVE efforts in the region, and to give guidance for the future work. The intention is to ensure a functioning policy cycle, with results of all activities serving as a feed for recommendations for the RCC and its Participants throughout the region. In addition, two regional workshops dealing with PVE/CVE were held - one in May 2016, for law enforcement personnel and state attorneys (prosecutors), and the other in June 2016, with academic and civil society participants. The second workshop, which dealt with enabling factors and drivers to radicalization and violent extremism, was performed with the cooperation of the OSCE and the US State Department. Preparations are under way for the establishment of a web-based platform for exchange of information on PVE/

⁶ For more on the Global Coalition see <http://theglobalcoalition.org/>

⁷ For more on the GCTF see <https://www.thegctf.org/home>

⁸ More information available at <http://www.osce.org/cio/205146?download=true>

⁹ For more on RACVIAC see <http://www.racviac.org/>

¹⁰ Report available at http://www.racviac.org/downloads/2015/IRC-05_report.pdf

¹¹ For more on the RCC see www.rcc.int.

CVE in SEE. This study is also part of the activities under the Platform.

South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC)

SEESAC functions under a mandate from the RCC and UNDP to control and reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region. A Regional Security Sector Reform Platform facilitates the sharing of information and expertise.¹²

Strong Cities Network (SCN)

SCN¹³ was launched in September 2015 to bring together mayors, local level policymakers and practitioners to share good practice and experience on how to make communities more resilient to the threats of violent extremism. Several of the case studies in this report have cities that are members. A global summit was held in spring 2016.

UN Global Strategy

The UN's Global Strategy approaches the issue of violent extremism as a complex global threat that requires a complex and comprehensive preventive approach. UNDP's development and rights-based approach to this issue has been reflected in the UNDP Global Strategy on PVE. An event in autumn 2015 in Oslo marked the first time that UNDP practitioners and experts have looked at PVE from the human development perspective.¹⁴ In late 2015 an Action Plan was presented to the UN General Assembly, but it was not endorsed as there were concerns about the definition of CT.¹⁵ At a recent meeting in Geneva, it again was not endorsed. It will go to the General Assembly again in June 2016, and, if approved, funds can begin to be released and programming started within that framework.

¹² For more on SEESAC see <http://www.seesac.org/index.php>

¹³ For more on the SCN see <http://strongcitiesnetwork.org/>

¹⁴ More information available at <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/en/plan-action-prevent-violent-extremism> http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674

¹⁵ More information available at <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/ga11760.doc.htm>

US Initiatives

The US is involved in supporting many of the global initiatives on this topic, and embassies are directly supporting PVE/CVE research and/or practice in the seven cases in this report. The US State Department recently published its terrorism report for 2015, which includes summaries of CT and CVE issues globally.¹⁶ In addition to in-country embassy support, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity for CVE programming, with a special focus on: Civil Society CVE Capacity Building in the Western Balkans (Maximum award \$445,500); Civil Society Empowerment to Counter Violent Extremism Online and Creation of CVE Content in the Western Balkans (Maximum award \$488,500); Women in Law Enforcement: Forging Connections and Increasing CVE Effectiveness (Maximum award \$300,000); and Countering Violence Extremist Messaging and Recruitment in Jordan (Maximum award \$600,000).¹⁷

Other

A theme that was common across all seven RCC Participant case studies was the challenge of ensuring that religious officials, and in particular, imams, have a constructive role in prevention, especially at the community level. The government of Austria had a pilot program from 2008-2014 ("Imam training about Austria and Integration") to work with Imams, offer imam training, and develop links between the Islamic community and the broader society. This effort was often targeted as communities that were new to Austrian society, and had the aim of helping to integrate people generally as well as into the broader social welfare system and services. In that sense it was a kind of referral system. Programs like this could offer lessons to stakeholders struggling to develop their own approaches, and the Austrian experience in relevant in light of the large Diaspora communities from the region in Austria.

¹⁶ More information available at <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2015/257516.htm>

¹⁷ More information available at <https://www.grant-solutions.gov/gs/preaward/previewPublicAnnouncement.do?id=56312>

Summary Chart of PVE/CVE Initiatives - Highlights

This chart summarizes the various PVE/CVE initiatives noted by respondents. All significant noted efforts are included; some smaller efforts may be noted the following sections.

	Strategies/Action Plans	Research/Baseline Studies	Activities	Global Coalition to Counter Daesh	GCTF	Strong Cities Network
Regional	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ V. Azinovic working with 12 regional scholars on book/e-book ◆ BIRN - ISIS in the Balkans; Strengthening Media Reporting and Understanding of Extremism in the Western Balkans (UK funded) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) ◆ UNODC AML CTF regional focal point based in Bosnia and Herzegovina 	-	-	-
Albania	<p>Strategy Adopted by Council of Ministers on 18 November 2015 (Decision 930)¹⁸</p> <p>Note: Draft strategy includes Annex with summary of proposes 1) priorities, 2) measures, and 3) proposed actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AIIS study (English version forthcoming) ◆ Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) study, “Religious Radicalism and Violent Extremism in Albania” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Hosts NATO CT-CVE Center of Excellence ◆ US DOS funded project “Promoting Democratic Values and Active Citizenship Among Muslim Youth”, implemented by Islamic Community ◆ US Support to IDM to work in 7 madrassas to teach democratic citizenship course 			

¹⁸ Available at http://www.qbz.gov.al/botime/fletore_zyrtare/2015/PDF-2015/203-2015.pdf

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ US ICITAP/OPDAT support on CT issues, policing and regional prosecution ◆ OSCE: early stages of planning ◆ UNDP: early stages of planning ◆ IOM: early stages of planning ◆ EU EV focal point appointed ◆ Possible RAN initiative 	Yes	-	Centar Municipality (Sarajevo)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<p>Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Preventing and Combating Terrorism, 2015-2020¹⁹; adopted July 2015</p> <p>Includes Strategic Program for Implementing Priority Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 2 Atlantic Initiative (AI) FTF reports ◆ AI report on drivers of radicalization ◆ AI - possible development of media toolkit ◆ SOS report, “Bosniaks Between East and West” (forthcoming) ◆ DPC/AI Security Studies; policy note on CVE and education ◆ CNS publication: “Savremene muslimanske dileme” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ IOM: Prevention project; completed inception phase in 6 places; grassroots level, community referral mechanism approach; working with IC; planning 3 year engagement ◆ OSCE: Sept 15 - April 2016: “Support to Dialogue on Prevention of VE in Bosnia and Herzegovina”; early warning and response; civil society, social media, education; security sector ◆ UNDP/joint UN project in drafting phase; integrated border management and CT; human development approached to PVE/CVE ◆ Norwegian embassy - support to Islamic Community project with youth and imams; support to AI and SOS ◆ Global Analitika - partner with OSCE 			

¹⁹ Available at http://msb.gov.ba/PDF/STRATEGIJA_ZA_BORBU_PROTIV_TERORIZMA_ENG.pdf

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ TPO Global Ethics program in schools; in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica-Doboj canton; would like to work in Mostar, Republika Srpska 			
Kosovo*	<p>Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism, 2015-2020, September 2015²⁰</p> <p>Action Plan - 2015-2018; adopted in September 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ KCSS report ◆ UNDP assessment: Comprehensive Assessment to Counter Violent Radicalization in Kosovo* ◆ UNDP municipal research (summer 2016) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ RCC CVE focal point in place ◆ EU outreach and work in 2 municipalities - Vucitrn and Mitrovice; debates, awareness raising ◆ EU - Possible IPA or TAIEX funding ◆ G-CERF ◆ KCSS work with municipalities along border; outreach in schools; TV debates ◆ Interfaith Dialogue Effort ◆ Rotary club project in schools - US funded ◆ US CIMIC engagement with youth ◆ Project "Partners Kosova*" - grant from US to work with young people ◆ US considering support for project with women in Gjakova ◆ UNDP support for sharing good practice (Bounce, Prevent, Aarhus) ◆ Referral mechanism being pilot tested in select municipalities ◆ IOM: considering options ◆ OSCE: considering options 			

²⁰ Available at http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/STRATEGY_parandalim_-_ENG.pdf

Montenegro	<p>CVE Strategy (2016-2018) adopted December 2015²¹</p> <p>Action plan Adopted April 22, 2016</p>	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ RCC CVE focal point in place ◆ MOJ notes plans to organize educational events for the media with the OSCE; will also use UNDP and TAIEX mechanisms 	Yes	-	Ulcinj
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	National Strategy in the Fight Against Terrorism; Adopted March 15, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Analytica: “Assessment of efforts in countering violent extremism, view from civil society”; to be published August 2016; conference in September; US funded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ OSCE considering options; ongoing community policing work relevant ◆ IOM discussed options with government before political crisis ◆ SAVE Mothers’ Club (US) ◆ US considering Peer 2 Peer project with local universities 	Yes	-	Ohrid; Cair (Skopje)
Serbia	<p>Draft National Strategy for the Prevention and Countering of Terrorism for the Period 2016-2021</p> <p>Public discussion/ adoption anticipated following government formation</p>	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ RCC CVE focal point in place ◆ Policing - general/community ◆ OSCE - general, no specific CVE programming; ongoing community policing support ◆ Swiss/OSCE support for Municipal Safety Strategy development in Novi Pazar ◆ UrbanIn youth exchanges and activities ◆ Community Support Foundation set up ◆ HCHR youth project in Sandzak (US funded) ◆ DamaD with BCSP- project in Sandzak; prevention, early warning; referral mechanism approach; using Channel model; Swiss funded ◆ Friends of Sandzak/Friends of South Serbia 	Yes	-	Novi Pazar

²¹ Available at <http://www.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rId=223292&rType=2>

Turkey	No explicit strategy document	Numerous reports by ASI; Global; SETA; USAK; TOBB ETU; ORSAM; TEPAV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ RCC CVE focal point in place ◆ US support to GLOBAL and TOBB ETU ◆ UNDP considering options - Istanbul/Ankara ◆ Diyanet activities ◆ Turkish National Policy outreach 	Yes	Yes	Antalya
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Albania

Situational Overview

Nature of Extremism/VE

While respondents noted that all forms of extremism can pose a threat, the form of extremism mostly viewed as a threat today is the ISIL/Daesh threat as potentially related to the new practice of Salafism. Given the rich multi-religious tradition, and the commitment to secularism of Albania, there is concern that extremism among any one group could lead to growing extremism in other parts of society.

Drivers of Radicalization

Albania's specific tradition of a secular Albanian identity is viewed as an asset, though respondents noted a risk that external forces could try to hijack Albanian nationalism under a banner of religion in an attempt to radicalize citizens. Respondents point to a number of factors to blame for radicalization. Following the Communist period, imams often went to the Gulf States to study, and outside organizations provided funding and support (referred to by one respondent as "easy money"). New NGOs, some with Gulf state funding, came in early 1990s, and many people were ready to cooperate with whoever came to Albania to help the economy to rebuild. The post-Cold War transition, flux and instability create conditions conducive to radicalization. Respondents note that in Albania as in other at-risk places (such as Central Asia), there is a sense of attraction for a society that functions, that provides stability, predictability and functionality. People in these places feel excluded from economic and political life, making them susceptible to radicalization and the promises offered.

However, this ideological import introduced a new religious interpretation that didn't previously exist in Albania. In those early years in the 1990s, Salafists were increasingly present, even at times managing madrassas. Respondents note that this began to change around 2004, due to less money coming in from Gulf countries, but also a more engaged Islamic Community leadership. It was further noted that the 2010 decision of the Albanian government to ban the activities of many foreign charities had an impact.

Not all of the mosques in Albania are under the control of the Islamic Community. In March 2014 some of the main sources of FTFs were identified at two mosques outside Tirana, and the Islamic Community began to take more active responsibility. However there are still different opinions on the number of "unofficial" mosques, with respondents giving estimates ranging from a dozen to around 200. Respondents note that the Islamic Community has an interest in both downplaying the extent of the problem and in addressing it, and that this has been a difficult position to maintain. Efforts to achieve such a balance can paradoxically increase distrust of the Islamic Community, with people either viewing it as "in bed with the state" or as blind to ongoing social challenges. Many respondents noted that the challenge now is to empower the moderates, and disempower the Salafists.

At Risk Communities

While acknowledging that it is impossible to develop a definitive profile of "at risk" populations, respondents did note a focus on certain municipalities, such as Pogradec and Kukes, in the east bordering Kosovo* and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This region is characterized by a low level and quality of education, weak schools and institutions, and a lack of opportunities for young people. In such circumstances outside influences can play an outsized role.

FTFs

Some respondents noted that they think that many Albanians went to Syria and Iraq out of ignorance or idealism, believing they would be fighting Assad's oppressive regime (as called upon by the US and others) and feeling a shared sense of duty based on Albania's own history of dictatorship. Only later did they learn about ISIL/Daesh ideology. However, others question this interpretation, suggesting that people who left knew exactly what they were getting into. According to this perspective, blaming lack of information or awareness undermines the whole issue, and ignores the important elements of worldview, religion and belief.

Respondents note that estimates suggest that 150-200 FTFs went to Syria; around seventy to eighty have

returned, some returning very quickly, after just a few weeks once they saw what was happening. The numbers of Albanians going to fight in Syria/Iraq peaked in 2013, and then started to decline. Several respondents noted that fighters stopped going to Syria not because of what was happening there, but due to what was happening in Albania in terms of a law enforcement response: strict FTF laws, tough sentencing, arrest of imams alleged to be recruiting, border controls, etc. Before this, “you could go without consequence; now there are consequences.” Others noted that increased coverage in the media showed the brutality of the war and deterred new recruits.

Social Media

While the role of social media/Internet is a factor, especially among youth, it was noted that if no one in the community, like an imam, is also encouraging them, it is unlikely they would go to Syria; real world and social media tools work hand in hand, with online tools reinforcing messages. One respondent followed extremist Albanian language web sites until in 2015 they started to be shut down. Following this many groups became more subtle, whereas before it was easier for security officials to track these people and elements. Social media is broadly viewed as a factor that can promote radicalization.

Funding

The government has an obligation to freeze the assets of terrorist groups, but there is little clear public data available that could indicate whether this has been effective. Several respondents noted the link between extremist activities, their funding and illicit trafficking and organized crime more generally, suggesting more study and evidence is needed to develop effective policies and structures for implementation.

Prisons

There is very little being done on the issue of prison radicalization, either in terms of research or practice. A respondent interested in the issue noted it is very difficult to get access to or response from officials on this issue, leading to a reliance on anecdotal word of mouth about controversial in-prison sermons by questionable clerics. While the CVE strategy includes reference to rehabilitation and reintegration, there is a basic reason not to return as FTFs face prison. This can lead to a situation in which a FTF is unable to return home, at times in spite of having a wife

and children in their home country. Alternately, an FTF can return and be sentenced under tough foreign fighter laws. There is a risk of summary judgment and incarceration, but also slow judicial procedures that results in the accused remaining in prisons while waiting for the trial, potentially radicalizing during this time.

Refugees

Albania is on a secondary refugee transit route, and as geopolitical shifts play out could be subject to increased refugee flows by individuals seeking to use Albania’s coastline as a launching point to Italy.

Strategy/Action Plan/Initiatives

The “Albanian National Strategy - Countering Violent Extremism” was adopted in the first half of 2016.

The Albanian government started to seriously discuss this issue after the White House Summit in 2015, starting their own effort to develop a Strategy and Action Plan for CVE. The decision was made to separate CT and CVE strategies as they see them as two different issues and challenges. The strategy sought to look beyond just the law enforcement agencies (LEAs), instead including all national capacity - schools, teachers, social workers, religious communities - to mobilize everyone to work together in support of prevention. It was noted that the government had to start from scratch, as it had no experience in preparing a response to this kind of challenge; Albania has experienced Communist extremism before, but never religious extremism.

There are four Strategy focus areas:

- ▶ Education: better explain the issue and dangers and “vaccinate” students against extremism; develop modules for teachers and students; consider introduction of a culture or history of religions approach; the Ministry of Education as the lead
- ▶ Engagement with religious leaders: ensure imams participate in implementation and can play a constructive role; improve the education system of imams to ensure support and continuation of Albanian values

- ▶ Social aspects: engage teachers who are in a position to reach out to their students; as Albania is a centrally organized state, and the central government is represented in all communities through the medical system, schools, social welfare etc., use the social welfare system to reach out to additional thousands of people, including the unemployed, the marginalized, youth, and offer a new perspective through jobs, training, etc.; the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth is the noted lead
- ▶ Academia and media: Engage academics to provide facts via studies and research to ensure a better systematic understanding of the phenomenon here; motivate universities, professors, journalists and researchers to work on such topics

The government sees these as important first steps, but acknowledges that more issues can and should be included - the issue of justice for example. However the Strategy is seen as a start. They are in the process of setting up a coordination/monitoring mechanism to oversee implementation. They plan to organize events to further introduce their concept, and to ensure continued support. (Albania has support from the US and EU, and is in the process of reaching out to others in SEE.)

Independent respondents describe the extent of consultation with civic groups as modest, noting that this reflects the reality of Albanian governance more broadly, as civil society dialogue and communication/coordination is not very institutionalized. However, some CSOs were invited to provide input and were consulted on certain aspects. While the Islamic Community was a participant in the strategy development, rural community representatives were not. Future refinement and iterations are urged to be more consultative.

Governmental and non-governmental actors alike noted that without action and dedicated follow up the strategy and action plans will remain just words on paper. However, having the documents provides a first step.

The Albanian government has also announced that it will open up a new NATO training center to focus on anti-radicalism, aimed at understanding drivers and designing prevention strategies.²²

²² "NATO Anti-Radicalism Center to Open in Albania." Transitions Online. 16 May 2016. Available at <http://www.tol.org/client/article/25890-albania-nato-training-centre-terrorism.html>

Local International Engagement

Embassy of the United States

The US Embassy is supporting projects with the Institute for Democracy and Mediation and with the Islamic Community (see below). Fejzi Shaholli of the Islamic Community in Albania participated in the US International Visitor Leadership Program in 2016, with a focus on CVE.²³

In addition, US ICITAP (International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program) and OPDAT (Office of Overseas Prosecutorial and Development Assistance and Training) programs are involved in broader CT issues, policing and regional prosecution.

European Union

Until recently the EU has not engaged heavily on the issue of CVE but there are some signs that this could be changing. An EU CVE Focal Point in Albania was appointed. The EU is also looking at working in Albanian through the Radicalization Action Network (RAN).

General EU technical support to judicial reform and strengthening the rule of law is viewed as contributing to a more conducive legal framework for prevention and prosecution, which will not only assist in CVE but also organized crime.

International Organization for Migration

As noted above, Albania is on a secondary refugee transit route, and could be subject to increased refugee flows. The IOM is working on a plan for engaging more with the government on this issue. The IOM is also looking at lessons from its recent engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina to determine applicability of similar programing in Albania.

OSCE Presence in Albania

The OSCE Presence in Albania is engaged in CVE activities generally through the OSCE United CVE effort. They have had meetings with the Islamic

²³ For more information see <http://www.iie.org/programs/IVLP>

Community and other stakeholders, but a more specific strategy has not yet been announced. It is not yet certain whether efforts will focus on mitigation, prevention or counter-terrorism, or some combination.

UNDP

None of the respondents noted specific UNDP programming on the issue of CVE. UNDP has cooperation with the Islamic Community, but there are as of now no concrete initiatives.

Civil Society

The Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS)

Through its ongoing work AIIS organizes regular meetings and networking efforts to bring together security sector experts. They cooperate with policy groups throughout the Western Balkans, and also noted cooperation with the International Strategic Research Organization (USAK) in Ankara (see Turkey section of this report).

In 2015, AIIS published a report (in Albanian) entitled, “Evaluating the risks to national security and state/society capacity to react: the emergence of a new radical influence and religious extremism in Albania,” by Enri Hide, Associate Senior Researcher of AIIS. A conference was held in December 2015, with support from the Open Society Fund.²⁴ The English version of the report will be available and online in mid-2016.

On May 27, 2016 AIIS held a conference entitled, “Religious Radicalism and Extremism as a Security Threat: The case of Albania and the Western Balkans.” At the event AIIS noted its plans to build up a regional coalition of experts on these topics.²⁵

Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)

IDM published a report entitled, “Religious Radicalism and Violent Extremism in Albania” in

2015 with funding from the US Embassy in Tirana.²⁶ The report includes research and extensive polling data and analysis.

IDM is also implementing a project with US Embassy support to work with seven madrassas to implementing democratic citizenship course, and is developing CVE outreach and public service announcements.

Islamic Community

The Islamic Community implemented a one-year pilot project beginning in 2015 with US Embassy support entitled “Promoting Democratic Values and Active Citizenship among Muslim Youth,” and plans to continue and expand the effort. The project looked at human rights, democratic values and the issue of violence in society, in five of the less developed parts of Tirana; neighborhoods viewed as potentially at-risk due to limited socio-economic opportunity. The project focused on 15-25 years olds, mostly male but some female. They met after school and on weekends; they also had cultural/social events.

There were three phases to the project: 1) getting to know the participants, youth, local government, religious players, etc.; 2) organization of eight seminars per location (forty total) with Islamic Community representatives, experts, and others to discuss human rights, active citizenship and some explicit topics related to FTFs and Syria, etc.; and 3) joint work among the participants to develop mini projects/workshops related to what they had been discussing during the program.

Participants worked in small five to six person groups and then implemented the projects in their community. Examples of projects included development of counter narrative messages, organizing meetings with local community members and people of influence in the community to talk about these issues; football tournaments, where they had the chance to distribute awareness materials; and gathering mothers of young people to talk about these issue and their role.

A second project will be implemented throughout Albania, but with a focus on Pogradec, and the east. These programs will be assessed as they move forward to ensure fine-tuning and evaluation. Counter-messaging opportunities to work with individuals who went to Syria and returned to

²⁴ More information available at <http://www.aiis-albania.org/?q=node/69>

²⁵ More information available at <http://www.tirana-times.com/?p=121678>

²⁶ “Religious Radicalism and Violent Extremism in Albania.” Institute for Democracy and Mediation. Available at <http://idmalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Religious-Radicalism-Albania-web-final.pdf>



send a message of de-radicalization are under consideration.

Recommendations

Research

- ▶ Support additional study of the situation in prisons, including conditions and radicalization, in general and regarding FTFs and at-risk individuals, as a first step towards development of rehabilitation options.
 - ▶ Support research on the moral, social and financial role of Diaspora communities in places including Switzerland, UK, Italy and Germany.
 - ▶ Support independent yet cooperative study of the Islamic Community, including domestic and foreign imam training practices and trends.
 - ▶ Support research on the links between organized crime and VE, including shared illicit trafficking practices and trends.
 - ▶ Support continued analysis of online recruitment, including development of a public relations profile in the Albanian language as developed by ISIL/Daesh, to identify trends and build a visual map.
- ▶ Continue to support judicial reform and a strong, professional, independent judicial system able to cope with these emerging challenges.
 - ▶ Strengthen media to improve reporting on this issue and the role of journalists in supporting genuine debate based on facts; such initiatives should also link journalists with imams so reporting is based more on shared trust.
 - ▶ Improve central government outreach to rural communities in general to ensure more even regional development.
 - ▶ Assess efforts to instill the values of community policing, and following diagnosis develop programs to strengthen links between police and citizens at the community level.²⁷
 - ▶ Engage with the Ministry of Education to develop specific implementation plans for all educational elements of the Strategy; in particular ensure awareness programs in high schools to ensure youth are aware of issues and risks.
 - ▶ Engage with social welfare experts and mental health professionals to ensure sufficient support and availability of services; in the absence of social welfare provisions and psychologists, and in light of continued social stigma, it can be easier to seek help from an imam than a mental health professional.

Activities

- ▶ Develop initiatives to support “Community Imams” better equipped to engage with their congregation, identify at risk youth and ensure mosques are a social institution embedded in society, and not isolated.

²⁷ A former community policing program supported by Sweden was noted as a possible foundation for future work. See <http://issat.dcaf.ch/Learn/Resource-Library/Case-Studies/Small-Grants-Scheme-SGS-in-Albania-Swedish-Support-on-Community-Policing-Programme-SACP>

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Situational Overview

Nature of Extremism/VE

As a society only a generation away from violent war and displacement, individuals noted that there are many manifestations of extremism present in Bosnia and Herzegovina: right-wing nationalist, separatist, anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT), and extremism undergirded by a foreign Salafist ideology. While the last is attracting the most attention due to the global nature of the threat as well as incidents by ISIL/Daesh-inspired lone wolves,²⁸ measures aimed at countering VE among any one threat can at the same time help to counter other manifestations, ending counter-productive escalatory spirals of intolerance.

Drivers of Radicalization

Respondents note that risks and drivers include a sense of injustice, grievance and normlessness that has emerged in the post-war era. Young people who did not experience the war are often dissatisfied with the slow pace of post-war change, and feel their social, economic and political prospects are limited. A sense of belonging often missing in the society can be filled by affiliation with extremist groups. While there are many such groups, recent security concerns tend to focus on Salafist communities that may have ISIL/Daesh sympathies.

The country's Islamic tradition is rooted in the Ottoman Empire and moderate Hanafi interpretation of the faith. During the war from 1992-1995, foreign fighters (*mujahidin*) came to fight, with some of them staying, due to marriages or political support. Respondents note that by February 2002, Bosnia and Herzegovina canceled 104 citizenships of the former foreign fighters; however there are estimates that many more retained their citizenship. Still, this engagement,

together with subsequent post-war engagement including the establishment of charitable organizations, support for imam training abroad, the construction of mosques and an influx of much needed money, brought with it new Salafist interpretations of Islam previously foreign to local believers. Increases in investment and tourism relationships with investors having conservative styles of faith and often dress (particularly the Gulf states) have recently increased visible signs of the new conservative Islam in many communities.

The head of the Islamic Community, Reis-ulema Husein-efendija Kavazovic, is broadly seen as being ready to respond, yet unsure how to do so without potentially appropriating blame or threatening the IC's legitimacy. The 2016 order for illegal mosques (*para-jamaats*) to either close or to register formally has been viewed by many as an important step. However, others have questioned the legitimacy of this move in light of the right to practice religion and to assemble. Furthermore, there is the risk that targeting these groups could simply drive them further underground, making them more difficult to monitor.

The tradition of the Islamic Community and associated scholarship in Bosnia and Herzegovina, going back to 1882, and further institutionalized under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was noted as a possible factor in supporting needed intellectual and theological debate and resilience. However, it was noted that while the madrassa curriculum is set up to be able to respond to leftist agendas, it is not designed to refute attacks from the far right, which is a new phenomenon. Additionally, while generally unified, the Islamic Community is not immune to its own internal debates, and Imams are involved in their own competition of ideas. Further, some respondents noted the Islamic Community is not yet accustomed to working in partnership with CSOs, noting there is a need for a more collaborative approach.

One respondent noted that given the negative situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina - the high unemployment, the war, untreated trauma, the attention foreign Salafists pay to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the freedom to travel, widespread Internet access, availability of weapons and ammunition, etc. - a reasonable question might be: "why isn't the extremist influence stronger?" However, hate speech, divisive public rhetoric and

²⁸ The 2011 US Embassy shooting in Sarajevo and the 2015 terrorism incidents in Zvornik and Rajlovac, brought significant media attention to this issue.

often bleak youth perspectives on the future can create conditions in which extremist teachings may gain currency.

At Risk Communities

With regard to potential Islamic extremism, a number of cantons have been identified as particularly at risk: Una-Sana (Bihac), Zenica-Doboj, Tuzla and Sarajevo. Six municipalities were “treated” in the inception phase of the IOM project (described below): Bugojno, Buzim, Jablanica, Prijedor, Foca, Maoca. In addition, Zavidovici, Ovce and Bocinje Donje have been noted as potential at-risk communities for historical or current reasons.

FTFs

Two studies of the FTF phenomenon as it relates to Bosnia and Herzegovina are described below. On a per capita basis Bosnia and Herzegovina is among several parts of Europe that have been most affected by this problem. Over 180 men, sixty women and eighty children are believed to have left Bosnia and Herzegovina for Syria and Iraq between 2012 and 2015. The study is further broken down to provide data according to how many of these are believed to have been killed, which have returned or have remained in Syria and Iraq. Other trends are noted, in particular following 2015, after the more rigorous legislation and law enforcement measures were put in place.

Social Media

Internet access is widely available in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and smart phones are ubiquitous. Many local language websites and social media platforms target a Bosnia and Herzegovina following. One site targeted as among the most inflammatory, *Put Hilafeta*, has been closed down; however, observers question how long it will be until a new version is available through another server. Experts note that the Bosnia and Herzegovina legal framework makes it difficult to efficiently shut down sites viewed as promoting VE. However, while social media is viewed as having a real multiplying effect on radicalizing people, it is not viewed as a primary source of radicalization, meaning that engaging with real people remains a pathway towards radicalization, with Internet sources simply providing backup.

Funding

A number of respondents noted that Bosnia and Herzegovina is building a better regulatory environment to prevent money laundering

as well as the financing of terrorism. Recent improvements in money laundering/terrorism financing legislation are important; however, harmonization of the entity level criminal codes is required to be effective. Further, implementation in practice remains challenging. Wire transfers and cash transactions - from foreign organizations or Diaspora contacts - are viewed as potentially significant, though little hard data is available.

Prisons

No specific studies of the risk of prison radicalization were noted, though respondents agree that more information is needed and that “contamination” in the prison environment is a risk. There is anecdotal evidence of radicalization occurring at the prison in Zenica, which should be corroborated. There were no reports of pilot or more comprehensive efforts to study rehabilitation and reintegration options within the prison system.

Refugees

While in 2015 the Bosnia and Herzegovina government noted that it was prepared to deal with any possible influx of migrants travelling up through Bosnia and Herzegovina from the south to the EU, the threat never materialized, likely due to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s hard-to-navigate terrain (particularly in the south) and other more direct transit route options.

Strategy/Action Plans/Initiatives

The Bosnia and Herzegovina CT Strategy was developed and adopted in 2015. An Action Plan has been drafted and should soon be formally adopted.

While the Ministry of Security notes that it consulted with civil society and independent experts on the strategy, other respondents note that consultation was not sufficiently widespread, and that more will be necessary to ensure effective implementation and community support.

The strategy’s monitoring mechanism is focused on a Ministry of Security CT focal point. However, it remains to be tested in practice, as do regular reporting formats. Several strategy coordination meetings are planned for the second half of 2016 to engage all relevant and competent bodies in

implementation. The government is hoping to receive funding in support of participation in a RAN First Line Responders initiative. The Ministry notes that two of the biggest challenges facing strategy implementation are effective coordination and information sharing, and integrating the full scope of governmental and non-governmental actors in the process. Independent observers note concern that monitoring and implementation will be made more difficult due to ongoing political disagreements, governmental fragmentation and coordination that is often based more on interpersonal relationships rather than institutionalized practice.

Local International Engagement

Embassy of Norway

The Embassy of Norway has funded three directly relevant initiatives.

First, two Atlantic Initiative reports (see below) were supported by Norway. Support for a third report is under consideration.

Second, the Social Overview Service receives support from the Embassy, and a report entitled, “Bosniaks between East and West” should be published in September.

Third, the Embassy has been supporting a project with the Islamic Community from late 2015 to June 2016. (For more information, see below.) The Embassy is waiting for the final report and will consider options moving forward in cooperation with the IC.

Embassy of the United Kingdom

The British Embassy has supported a number of initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the IOM project (noted below), and the noted regional BIRN project (noted above). The UK is supporting a project called “Understanding and Countering Violent Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” which is being implemented by the Atlantic Initiative and includes a paper on radicalization trends in Bosnia and Herzegovina (“Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the ‘Hearts and Minds’ of Bosnian Muslims”). Other reports could stem from this research. Together with Norway, the UK also supported the second Atlantic Initiative study

on FTFs, “The New Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters’ Bosnian Contingent.”

Following these efforts, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is doing an evaluation of this engagement to determine how to best spend limited funds moving forward.

Embassy of the United States

Much current US support is being channeled through support for the IOM and OSCE projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Chief John Brennan visited Bosnia and Herzegovina in April 2016 for CT related meetings, signaling interest in this issue in this country.²⁹

There are plans for additional future engagement. The US Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs has put out a call for applications for a project to strengthen the judicial system with particular attention on financial crime related cases, including corruption, organized crime and terrorism. The two-year project should begin in August 2016.³⁰

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The IOM has implemented US-funded projects in Afghanistan and Pakistan on PVE/CVE-centered community strengthening. They are also engaging on this issue in the Balkans, with a focus on prevention. They are not engaging in deradicalization, and while they coordinate with the Ministry of Security, they are leaving policing and intelligence issues to other stakeholders.

The IOM has finished the inception phase of a pilot project aimed at supporting prevention in six targeted locations in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bugojno, Buzim, Jablanica, Prijedor, Foca and Maoca. They have been engaging with identified young people in each community who enjoy local credibility in order to get suggestions of what young people and community leaders think is needed to strengthen that community. While generally

²⁹ Taylor, Guy. “John Brennan, CIA Chief, in Bosnia on Unannounced Counterterrorism Visit.” *The Washington Times*. 22 April 2016. Available at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/apr/22/john-brennan-cia-chief-bosnia-unannounced-countert/>; Toe, Rodolfo. “CIA Chief Visits Bosnia for Anti-Terror Talks.” *Balkan Insight*. 22 April 2016. Available at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/cia-chief-visits-bosnia-for-anti-terrorism-talks-04-22-2016>

³⁰ More information available at <http://www.mreza-mira.net/43172-strengthening-criminal-justice-institutions-bih/>

aimed at promoting more youth engagement, the project envisions work with families, media, employment centers, mayors, police, the Islamic Community, etc.; in essence a local referral mechanism approach to identify at risk individuals and respond early and appropriately. A team from the University of Cambridge came to Bosnia and Herzegovina to help to develop the methodology.

During the post-pilot review phase the IOM is working to determine whether their initial assumptions are correct. In considering options for moving forward, the IOM notes that while they were not expecting it, they have consistently heard of the need for more psycho-social support and education reform. The next phase is expected to last three years, and could expand into some larger locations, for example, Sarajevo and Zenica-Doboj canton.

This project is supported by the international community, including the US, the UK, Italy and Germany. A project Steering Board with the donors, as well as other interested stakeholders, serves as a mechanism to monitor the project, as well as to share information on PVE/CVE more generally.

OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

The OSCE Mission has been engaging in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the war, including a range of political-military, economic and human dimension efforts. The Mission has implemented a project, “Support to Dialogue on Prevention of Violent Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, from September 2015 to April 2016, and is continuing with activities coordinated both through the Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and through the Secretariat in Vienna, including through the United in CVE framework. The focus of this work is primarily early warning and response. Activities include engaging with civil society event in October 2015; increased youth engagement on the issue; social media and Internet issues training; an education event with secondary school teachers and pedagogues; and local level events in various parts of the country. Brcko was supported in its development of a municipal CVE action plan; the OSCE will support the municipality of Zvornik in development of a local CVE plan in summer 2016. The Mission is working with the NGO Global Analitika as well as other identified partners.³¹ On the politico-military side, the Mission organized a TableTop training exercise aimed at prevention in

³¹ More information available at <http://globalanalitika.com/>

the first quarter of 2016, to bring together officials and civil society stakeholders to work through two scenario planning role plays. The OSCE organized an event with RACVIAC in autumn 2015³² and has engaged in other such conferences.

Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA)

While focused more broadly on the issue of security in BiH, TIKA has supported a number of projects since 2011 on issues including police education and training (domestic and international) and cyber-security.

UNDP/UN presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

UNDP provides relevant support through its Integrated Border Management (IBM) program, and support to the country’s CT strategy. The aim on the second priority is to ensure Bosnia and Herzegovina’s CT strategy and plans have a development angle, and are aligned with the UN’s Global Strategy and Action Plan, with a strong focus on human rights protections, etc. UNDP notes recent consultations with IOM to ensure complementarity

UNDP is in the process of developing a Joint UN Program that would more explicitly address various aspects of CVE.³³ A draft project under development and consideration would aim to strengthen the prevention pillar of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Counter Terrorism Strategy, potentially through support to legislative and regulatory reform; capacity development and enhanced regional and international cooperation; CVE in society (including public dialogue events and discussions, with youth/civil society, support to government awareness campaigns, support for the EU RAN approach and training with criminal justice officials and LEAs; and cooperation and knowledge management. As of this writing a final proposal has not been agreed or funded.

Ongoing UNODC programming supports some of the same goals. UNODC’s Container Control Program aims to ensure better border management and professionalism to reduce illicit border activity and trafficking. A UNODC Advisor (Anti-Money Laundering/Counter Financing of Terrorism) is based in Sarajevo, and advises Albania, Bosnia and

³² Report available at http://www.racviac.org/downloads/2015/IRC-05_report.pdf

³³ UNODC, IOM, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and possibly will include UN Women.

Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.

Civil Society

Due to the post-war nature of Bosnia and Herzegovina, numerous NGOs of varying size and format have been working on topics relevant to CVE for two decades on topics including tolerance, preventing hate speech, reconciliation, community strengthening, youth engagement and other topics. All are aimed at re-building communities, and at strengthening communities; goals of many PVE/CVE efforts. In addition to the NGOs noted below, *Mali koraci* (“Little Steps”), the Center for Peace (in Sanski Most), the Center for Non-Violent Action and the Post Conflict Research Center were noted as good examples of very grassroots civic approaches. Just a few relevant efforts are noted below, to provide a sense of the direct and indirectly relevant efforts underway.

Atlantic Initiative

The Atlantic Initiative has prepared two reports on the issue of FTFs, looking at trends and patterns of radicalization and recruitment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with data from document review, focus groups and interviews. The first, “The Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters’ Bosnian Contingent” was published in 2015.³⁴ A follow-on report, “The New Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters’ Bosnian Contingent” was published in June 2016.

A report entitled, “Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the ‘Hearts and Minds’ of Bosnian Muslims,” was in the final stages of preparation in June 2016, and, based on over 165 interviews, including with Salafist believers, explores the underlying causes of radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a specific study of the spread of Salafist beliefs, and the impact on believers as well as communities. A follow-up, the project, “Understanding and Countering Violent Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, could include development of a media toolkit.

In addition to this research and reporting AI experts participate in relevant Bosnia and Herzegovina and

³⁴ Azinovic, Vlado and Muhamed Jusic. “The Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters’ Bosnian Contingent.” Atlantic Initiative. 2015. Available at http://atlanticinitiative.org/images/THE_LURE_OF_THE_SYRIAN_WAR_THE_FOREIGN_FIGHTERS_BOSNIAN_CONTINGENT/The_Lure_of_the_Syrian_War_-_The_Foreign_Fighters_Bosnian_Contingent.pdf

regional conferences and provide advisory support on this issue.

Center for Advanced Studies

In 2009/2010, and with support from the UK, the Center for Advanced Studies published “*Savremene muslimanske dileme*” (“Contemporary Muslim Dilemmas”), a slim volume on relevant issues that looked at point by point arguments and counter-arguments (an early effort at counter-narratives) related to liberal and radical interpretations of Islam. Available online, it was one of the most downloaded books in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time.³⁵

Democratization Policy Council (DPC)

The DPC published a series of relevant reports in autumn 2015. Together with the Atlantic Initiative, a series of security risk analysis reports included the following:

- ▶ Policy Note #1: Inflammatory political rhetoric and hate speech in Bosnia and Herzegovina: political elites and the media
- ▶ Policy Note #2: Bosnia and Herzegovina after the February 2014 protests: is there a potential for renewed violent social unrest?
- ▶ Policy Note #3: EUFOR: The West’s Potemkin Deterrent in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- ▶ Policy Note #4: The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Unfulfilled Promises
- ▶ Policy Note #5: Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Nexus with Islamist Extremism
- ▶ Policy Note #6: The Police Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina - Persistent Fragmentation and Increasing Politicization.³⁶

In addition, DPC published, “Countering the Cultivation of Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Case for Comprehensive Education Reform” in autumn 2015.³⁷

³⁵ Document available at <http://cns.ba/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Savremene-muslimanske-dileme.pdf>

³⁶ All reports available at <http://www.democratizationpolicy.org/policy-notes-issue-notes>

³⁷ This paper was written by Valery Perry, the author of this report, who is a Senior Associate in DPC. The report is available at <http://www.democratizationpolicy.org/uimages/DPC%20Policy%20Note%2010%20Extremism%20and%20Education%20in%20BiH.pdf>

Global Analitika

Global Analitika is engaging with the OSCE on issues related to CVE, noting a particular interest in psycho-social elements of radicalization and de-radicalization.

Islamic Community

The Islamic Community is implementing a Norwegian-funded project that includes various elements:

- ▶ Education of youth (twelve to eighteen; but also youth in their twenties) and parents about possible misuse of Internet to send extremist messages; two publications were distributed as a resource³⁸
- ▶ Training of trainers (about thirty imams) on prevention of extremist behavior
- ▶ A multi-day winter camp/seminar, including training in non-violent communication, decision-making, negotiations, multicultural and multi-ethnic dialogues, etc.

The aim of the activities is to create a core of trained imams and youth leaders to remain engaged in this topic. The issues are approached delicately, with entry points including the negative aspects of gambling, drinking, drugs and pre-marital sex, to create foundations for productive and active young people.

The IC has several ideas on how to move forward if continued support is secured. One option under consideration is the development of training modules for imams (there are approximately 1800 altogether in Bosnia and Herzegovina) to teach them how to deal with the issues of extremism and VE, and how to identify at risk people in their congregations. This is not already being done. Another idea is to work with imams from Bosnia and Herzegovina who speak Arabic and have been appropriately trained to work with refugee populations living abroad such as in Norway.

³⁸ Pandzic, Asim. "Kako zastititi djecu na Internetu: Prirucnik za roditelje." Rijaset Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini. 2016; Pandzic, Asim. "Sigurnost djece na Internetu: Prirucnik za djecu." Rijaset Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini. 2016. The publications are not available online; however the publisher web site www.elkalem.ba

Transkulturalna psihosocijalna obrazovna fondacija (TPO)

The NGO TPO³⁹ started a "global ethics" effort in schools four years ago (Inicijativa Etos), with a partner in Switzerland (the Hans Küng Global Etos program, Tübingen). The aim of the effort is to try to show the common ethics in all people, groups and religions, to empower a new generation. They saw a need for this kind of work, to look at common ethical issues and shared ethic. Themes include how ethics have developed, arguments from the three monotheistic faiths in Bosnia and Herzegovina three main religious communities in BiH, and arguments from non-religious traditions. Participants then go through these arguments to encourage critical thinking and assessment. TPO is working in high schools and elementary schools in three cantons - Sarajevo (where the course was officially integrated into the curriculum in a pilot program), Tuzla, Zenica-Doboj, and is interested to start the work in Mostar and in Republika Srpska, though this has been difficult for various political reasons. The web resource site etos.ba was set up as a resource; teachers upload their lesson plans, class plans, examples of their projects, etc., to share with others.

Recommendations

Research

- ▶ Support research on the issue of prison radicalization, including the extent of the threat and possible policy options to prevent and counter the threat, including separation and isolation of targeted high risk prisoners.
- ▶ Support research and analysis of radicalization from the perspective of the victims to ensure better support; paths towards treatment are needed for appropriate cases, including a range of social and psychological support; evidence based programs and examples should be applied.
- ▶ Support study on the relationship with Diaspora populations, including, but not limited to, Austria, Germany and Switzerland; this could focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina or be regional in its scope.

³⁹ More information available at <http://www.tpo.ba/b/novosti1.html>

- ▶ Support continued social media review and analysis, to understand trends and patterns of domestic dialogue, as well as various links with foreign actors.
- ▶ Determine the factors that make communities more or less prone to extremist influence.
- ▶ Diagnose key security weaknesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including critical coordination/communications challenges and gaps, and develop a plan to overcome these weaknesses.
- ▶ Support scholarship programs aimed at confirming to questioning Muslims that democracy and liberalism do work for them, and that democracy, constitutional liberalism and Islam are compatible.
- ▶ Support education reform that will mainstream critical thinking and anti-extremist worldviews, and reduce the tendency for mono-perspective narratives.

Activities

- ▶ Organize mechanisms for institutionalized coordination and information sharing, first among relevant Bosnia and Herzegovina actors, and also among Bosnia and Herzegovina and regional counterparts/stakeholders.
- ▶ Provide support to quality investigative journalism on relevant topics, including FTFs, funding of terrorist activities and trans-national links, and use findings as basis for public discussion and dialogue.
- ▶ Consider the elements of the judicial system that require reform or improvement to manage and process complicated VE and FTF cases.
- ▶ Support exchange of information and networking among domestic researchers, as well as throughout the region.
- ▶ Support a real competition of ideas among theological and other scholars on relevant issues.
- ▶ Engage with school pedagogues and psychologists who are not yet sufficiently aware of their role in preventing radicalization and support prevention efforts; this need to be remedied, and a program of support to develop relevant professional skills implemented.
- ▶ Support efforts with the religious communities to identify ways to teach about other faiths in a constructive manner beneficial to all of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens.
- ▶ Identify options that may be used in a secular society to support the constructive and scholarly-grounded training of clerics to disseminate anti-extremist views and identify at-risk members of their congregation.
- ▶ Support the exchange of information among religious communities in the region to provide examples of good practice and different options.

Kosovo*

Situational Overview

Nature of Extremism/VE

The main acknowledged E/VE threat in Kosovo* is the impact of ISIL/Daesh-inspired groups, and in particular returning FTFs. However, the tense situation in the north creates space for other manifestations of nationalist extremism, potentially leading to escalatory spirals. One respondent noted that while most VE attention deals with the Albanians in Kosovo*, few are looking at risks among the Bosniak community in Kosovo*.

Drivers of Radicalization

After 1999, Salafists began coming to Kosovo*, bringing money, NGOs/charitable organizations, new religious interpretations and new influence, often preaching that the way Islam had been practiced until 1999 was in fact incorrect. Imams from Kosovo* went to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Yemen and Egypt and then returned and started teaching from schools of Islam different than the Hanafi tradition of Kosovo*. These returning imams weren't necessarily radical in their behavior/actions, but in their thought and teaching; this was new. Respondents note that extremists are suspected to have come to Kosovo* through The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as well. Imams began to see factions in the Islamic community. Poor, rural, marginalized communities have often been target of such outreach; however, signs of radicalization have also been evident in the capital Prishtina.

Law enforcement agencies started identifying and monitoring people with extremist/radical views shortly after the war in 1999, and by 2001 or so started seeing some people changing their behavior, dress, etc. As years passed, they saw the numbers rising. As the global and local context evolved - 9/11, Afghanistan, Israel/Palestine, Arab Spring, etc. - respondents explain that some local people "woke up" during this period. This was significant as in Kosovo* religion was always something secondary. The socio-economic situation provided a foundation for the exploitation of grievance. Inflammatory imams have made connections between corruption and

economic woes to speak against western values and the government. (Corruption was often noted as a contributing factor to radicalization.) This has been a slow, long-term process over a generation. The opportunity to go to Syria was fortuitous for radicalized individuals who were coming of age after this period of political and theological flux.

Respondents note that the Ministry of Internal Affairs was aware of the potential threat, but it was difficult to get serious and coordinated commitment to act until the media (and videos on social media) started publishing information about Kosovo* citizens who had gone to Syria. This catalyzed support for a broader effort, beyond police response. Security officials note that while they haven't heard of immediate threats to/in Kosovo*, there is a longer-term risk in light of the number of FTFs that have returned, and the potential of using the territory as a potential recruiting site and smuggling hub for persons and weapons. Respondents note that the potential for lone wolves also cannot be discounted.

The Islamic Community has not been optimally proactive in dealing with this issue. The lack of a Law on Religious Freedom has provided an excuse to be minimally engaged, and in fact can make it difficult to act on reports of imams preaching incorrect religious doctrine. Respondents note that while there are moderates, they often don't enjoy Islamic community support. Some respondents suggested that some moderates have toned down their public rhetoric, but in fact continue to preach non-moderate beliefs. Islamic Community elections in the first half of 2016 could lead to opportunities for change, but some respondents noted conservatives remain engaged at this level of community governance.

At Risk Communities

Respondents consistently report that the most at risk municipalities are along the border with The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania. Kacanik, Ferizaj, Gjilan, Hani i Elezit, Lipjan, and Peja have been noted as particularly at risk locations. They all share the fact that they are poor, rural and often offer few economic, social or cultural opportunities.

One of the gaps noted that facilitates alienation in these communities is the lack of cooperation between the central and local levels of government. Ferizaj was noted as a possible good example, as the Kosovo* Police regional director started to meet with local officials and municipal security councils to build relationships.

Respondents noted a lot of crossover between The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo*, noting that kin networks have existed in this region for generations. There is also regular crossover between Kosovo* and Albania. While much of this traffic is natural and related to family, community or business interests, some is illicit. However, in spite of some border management weaknesses, few donors are interested in investing in border management issue if the goal is ultimately EU integration, meaning that the borders will diminish their importance.

FTFs

It is generally agreed that around 300 people went to Syria, with the first going in 2012. Motivations differ, ranging from a well-intended interest in supporting the Free Syrian Army, to mercenary work to genuine support for jihadist ideology. Women have also gone, either as wives or having been recruited themselves.⁴⁰ Recruiters pick the poorest places, and the poorest people, often targeting orphans and widows. Imams who were encouraging people to go there have in many cases been arrested, with some cases still in the courts.

Around 120 FTFs have returned, with approximately seventy under surveillance and forty-fifty in jail. They are arrested when they return, interviewed etc., to find out their role in the wars, and why they went. Surveillance isn't always systematic or 24/7, due to insufficient manpower and skills; this presents a risk. Procedures for interviewing returning FTFs and determining the scope of their involvement are still evolving.

The number of people going to Syria has dropped, with respondents attributing this to stronger law enforcement, tougher legislation and more awareness of the risks. Kacanik had been viewed as "a city of jihadists," but in the past year no one has been reported as having gone to Syria.

⁴⁰ Xharra, Arbana. "Few but Fanatical- the Kosovo Women who go over to ISIS." *Balkan Insight*. 26 January 2016. Available at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/few-but-fanatical-the-kosovo-women-who-go-over-to-isis-01-22-2016>

Social Media

Online recruitment remains a problem, with Albanian language sites reaching not only Kosovo* Albanians, but Albanians throughout the region. However, direct in-person outreach is viewed as needed to provoke the initial and genuine spark. More study would be needed to determine whether cases of self-radicalization are common. The Kosovo* police and Kosovo* intelligence agency have set up a cybercrime unit which monitors certain portals; this work is underfunded and understaffed, but coordination and effort has begun.

Funding

Legal frameworks have changed to allow financial intelligence units to take steps such as freezing bank accounts, etc. The Ministry of Internal Affairs closed some NGOs accused of accepting money from groups promoting VE. However, it is difficult to independently trace money coming into Kosovo* from other parts in the world, and foreign and religious community financial and asset holdings are not transparent. The role of the Diaspora was also noted.

The government has brought forward amendments to the anti-money laundering/counter financing of terrorism law to their parliament. The law requires work to meet international standards, including on issues related to criminalizing the financing of terrorism.

Prisons

There are concerns that prisons could become sources of radicalization, both hardening attitudes and potentially attracting new recruits. Respondents note anecdotes about conservative imams and clerics working in the prisons, or of increased Koran orders for inmates. There is no articulated strategy for dealing with this challenge, now or if more FTFs return. Issues that require attention include the optimal way to hold these at risk groups (together, or distributed throughout the prison population). While the Aarhus model of reintegration has been proposed to prepare prisoners to go back into society, prisons often lack even basic psycho-social support.⁴¹ There is also no clear policy or consequent support for prisoners who may have families on the outside, and little understanding of the effect that imprisonment

⁴¹ The city of Aarhus in Denmark has been working to reduce radicalization among youth since 2007. More information is available at <https://www.aarhus.dk>.

could have on further radicalizing family members in the absence of intervention.

Refugees

The refugee crisis was not noted by respondents as an important issue in Kosovo*.

Strategy/Action Plans/Initiatives

Until summer 2014, the government mostly focused on CT, not CVE. In 2014, there were more than 130 arrests, including FTFs, recruiters and collaborating imams. Illegally operating mosques were closed, as were several NGOs with ties to extremist activity. However there are differing opinions regarding the depth and breadth of these operations. Some respondents described it more as an exercise in public relations to show that something was happening and the government was acting. Others were concerned about the lack of proper investigation.

In 2015 PVE/CVE began to get more attention. In September 2015, the government approved the National Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization which Leads to Terrorism. The strategy goes to 2020 - a five-year plan. The Action Plan is finished and is envisioned to be a flexible document, responsive to ongoing implementation experiences. The Kosovo* Security Council is the body responsible for monitoring implementation of the strategy, with a five-person working group (technical) and a larger government working group involved in implementation. The larger working group includes Ministries' representatives (Labor, Foreign Affairs, Education, Security), NGOs, religious communities and others who lead the actions indicated in the Action Plan. The larger group should meet twice per year. A National Coordination Mechanism contact leads the joint working group. A donor conference was organized to support the strategy implementation; there were mixed comments on the success of the conference.

An acknowledged weakness of the CVE Strategy development is that it did not include local levels of government, or local level input. However, the government decided that time was critical, so the process moved forward. As a part of implementation, the government is reaching out

to municipalities to improve central and local government communication. Respondents note that this is the first time the government is going out to municipalities to talk to communities in such a way.

Another noted weakness was the lack of broader civic consultation in the drafting stages. This is attributed to the weak civil society, but also different definitions and conceptions of consultation.

A Referral Mechanism model will be a key part of work with communities moving forward. It was noted that Gjilan could be a pilot municipality. This mechanism will consist of education, social-welfare department, teachers, parents, psychologists, Islamic community representatives, etc., with the goal of early detection of young people at risk for radicalization. Once a teacher, parent or youth leader suspects that an individual is in need of support, the Referral Mechanism will be mobilized to determine the best support options available to constructively reach out to the individual. A challenge will be to ensure sufficient educational, employment and psycho-social resources to these at-risk individuals.

Overall, Kosovo* is still in the early phases of implementation. Respondents are fairly confident the police and security services have the capacity to fulfill their role. However, there is across the board less confidence in the bodies responsible for prevention - social welfare, education and judicial processes.

Regional cooperation on this matter is complicated by the Kosovo* status issue. For example, Kosovo* authorities have limited cooperation with Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina, but often through other partners due to the politics involved. Kosovo* is not a member of Interpol. Officials do note some CT operations with The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania, with the Kosovo* Intelligence Agency working with the Skopje-headquartered intelligence agencies of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. There is regular cooperation with police and intelligence/security services in Albania, including regular focal points and contacts. Contacts with Montenegro are characterized as limited, as the scope of the potential problems is viewed as limited. Officials note that it is useful to meet colleagues and counterparts informally at conferences, if they cannot meet formally at bilateral meetings.

Local International Engagement

Embassy of the US

The US has funded several projects to promote debate on this issue. The KCSS research (see below) was supported as a baseline research report. KCSS is a big implementer, conducting workshops on the topic as well.

The US is supporting “Partners Kosova” (see below) to engage with youth.

The US Embassy sponsored moderate Imam Yahya Hendi from Georgetown University to speak with representatives of the IC and citizens in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo*.

US Army Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Support Element has organized outreach events with young people on the topic, and the bureau of Education and Culture started a program to teach young people filmmaking to give them something constructive to do. The US Embassy funded a local Rotary Club project that organized sessions with high school students to discuss matters directly and indirectly related to radicalization and extremism.

An effort to work with women and youth in Gjakova is under consideration.

ICITAP is working with UNDP to implement various aspects of the Strategy.

European Union

The EU is engaging with the government and looking for long-term financial support options and opportunities, possibly through Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) or Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAEIX) funds. The government has so far expressed interest, especially on the part of the rehabilitation and reintegration aspects of the strategy.

The EU supported efforts in two municipalities - Vucitrn and Mitrovice - to organize debates, meetings, schools discussions; to raise awareness of risks; prepare first responders, including social workers, health workers etc.; what to do if you see signs of someone being radicalized. Other non-CVE projects focused on youth and municipal, assessments overlap with PVE/CVE goals.

The EU has contributed to the Swiss Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) which is planning to begin a project in Kosovo* in 2017.⁴²

GCERF

The Swiss Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) has \$5 million allocated for projects.⁴³ Kosovo* is one of the pilot projects selected for work. Work is anticipated to begin in early 2017. The EU has contributed to this project.

International Organization for Migration

The IOM notes the potential to engage in Kosovo*, and is considering opportunities for regional engagement based on initial work in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

OSCE

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo* is engaged through the OSCE United in CVE program and existing local programming. It has five regional centers and thirty field teams that can provide broad field-level information and insight. There is no current dedicated CVE project. However, it was noted that the OSCE is working with the Ministry of Internal Affairs on plans for an autumn 2016 conference on the topic.

UNDP

The UNDP contact point is working closely on issues of CT and CVE, and is located in the same building as the Ministry of Internal Affairs; this seems to support coordination and cooperation.

UNDP commissioned a “Comprehensive Assessment to Counter Violent Radicalization in Kosovo*” by an author working with three local researchers (final draft June 2015). The assessment includes background on Islam in Kosovo*, drivers of radicalization including radical imams and online radicalization, a review of relevant issues looking forward (rehabilitation, etc.) and recommendations. The Report was given to the government to help develop the strategy and action plan; it was not broadly shared or made public.

⁴² G-CERF has approximately \$5 million to use on CVE, and Kosovo* has been selected as one of several target projects. See <http://www.gcerf.org/about-us/>

⁴³ See <http://www.gcerf.org/about-us/>

UNDP is hiring local researchers to do analyses in targeted municipalities where they see that mobilization did not happen or where it stopped; to determine what caused this pattern of evolution. (For example, why hasn't anyone been mobilized in Kacanik in the last eighteen months?) The report should be ready in summer 2016.

UNDP is also supporting more interaction with municipalities, particularly underserved municipalities, to listen to community needs and grievances, and develop more resilient communities. Future support could include job training, peer-to-peer groups, and other grassroots activities. Similarly, UNDP is supporting the development and implementation of the Referral Mechanism described above to identify at risk individuals. They have brought in outside experts to share their experiences in this issue. A team from the UK initiative PREVENT and trainers from the Belgian initiative BOUNCE have been engaged to train trainers, share materials and share good practice.⁴⁴ UNDP is also looking at the applicability of the Aarhus program for reintegration. Technical support to train individuals from municipalities in SPSS and trend analysis, including open data collection, analysis of statistics from the police and local polling and perceptions, and how to use and work with this data, is viewed as another contribution.

A UNDP respondent pointed out that other ongoing projects are relevant to CVE, noting youth employment programs, regular Human Development reports, reports prepared every two years assessing social, economic and cultural life in municipalities to provide a baseline for program development, and public polling conducted every quarter. A First Line Responders program, included a three-day training, was organized to build capacity in this area.

Civil Society

Kosovo* Center for Security Studies (KCSS)

KCSS is the only sizable implementer of CVE projects at this time. In April 2015 the Kosovo* Center for

⁴⁴ More information on Prevent, including some controversy surrounding the program, is available at the following sites: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf; <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/feb/10/cage-leaks-training-materials-prevent-anti-extremism-strategy>

Security Studies wrote a report on radicalization in Kosovo* with support from the US Embassy in Prishtina (“Report Inquiring into the Causes and Consequences of Kosovo* Citizens’ Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq,” and continues to participate in conferences and events on the topic.⁴⁵

They are implementing a prevention project, working with municipalities on the borders of Serbia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This includes organizing meetings with stakeholders to promote cooperation; work with high school students in secondary schools to raise awareness and deter youth from going to Syria; and organizing TV debates with imams and others (seven to date, more planned).

Interfaith Dialogue

Deputy Foreign Minister Petrit Selimi is leading up an Interfaith Dialogue effort (“Interfaith Kosovo”) which has been in place for several years.⁴⁶ The British Council has supported this, together with the MFA and other friends of the initiative. Discussion topics have included themes related to CVE and related topics. No other projects directly related to the religious communities were noted by the respondents.

Partners Kosova* Center for Conflict Management

Partners Kosova* is implementing a project named “Youth Public Engagement with Peace and Reconciliation to Counter Intolerance and Radicalization,” with support from the US Embassy.

The project aims to improve overall knowledge of the consequences of radical religious activities, and identify ways to prevent such radicalization. Partners Kosova* will organize public debates with different stakeholders; work with high school students on the consequences of radicalization and violent extremism, as well as support development of critical thinking and education on the difference between traditional and radical religious practices; and contribute to general awareness on the radicalism phenomenon through

⁴⁵ Kursani, Shpend. “Report Inquiring into the Causes and Consequences of Kosovo* Citizens’ Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq.” Kosovo* Center for Security Studies Occasional Paper 04/2015. April 2015. Available at http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Report_inquiring_into_the_causes_and_consequences_of_Kosovo_citizens'_involvement_as_foreign_fighters_in_Syria_and_Iraq_307708.pdf

⁴⁶ More information available at <http://www.interfaithkosovo.org/>

radio talk shows, and digital marketing. The organization will facilitate informational meetings, public debates and workshops with municipal representatives, high school directors, the Kosovo* police, security forces, religious leaders, lawyers and local judges and prosecutors.

Other

The Group for Political and Legal Studies and the Balkan Institute for Financial Research have done reports on issues indirectly related to CVE, including illicit financial practices.⁴⁷

Recommendations

General

- ▶ The strategy and action plan should be used as a basis for donor coordination.
- ▶ The number of implementing partners, researchers and NGOs working on this issue should be expanded to ensure more numerous and different perspectives and broader support, particularly at the local/community level.
- ▶ The first stages of implementation of the Referral Mechanism should be monitored, and results shared with stakeholders in Kosovo* as well as in the region.
- ▶ There is a need to develop mechanisms to ensure that Kosovo* can effectively work with Interpol and other such bodies, with special attention to ensuring access to Interpol Red Flag watch lists and other critical information.
- ▶ Visa liberalization would take one grievance away from frustrated citizens and provide young people with the option to travel and study freely.
- ▶ Stakeholders should consider whether hotlines could be a tool in CVE, learning from experience with hotlines to report domestic violence, police corruption and other topics; evidence from past programs with CVE relevance should drive policy decision making.
- ▶ There is a real need for more cooperation among stakeholders in actually implementing the strategies, domestically and in the region.

- ▶ Practical skills-sharing with experts and professionals are needed even more than broad generalist conference and events; peer to peer and expert mentoring is more useful than broad thematic events.

Research

- ▶ Support the development of more expert and academic voices studying this issue to create an environment in which rigorous debate is possible.
- ▶ Support more research on options for reintegration/deradicalization, in general and in prisons.
- ▶ Support diagnostic work on the possibility for more robust regional/rural economic development plans, in general and in support of effective referral mechanism implementation.
- ▶ Support rigorous study of programs (globally, in any context) in which the individuals who initially radicalized individuals are then used to de-radicalize them; former cult or gang member situations may be relevant; ensure evidence-based data and findings before beginning program development.

Activities

- ▶ Develop a working group or other mechanisms to engage scholars, theologians, activists and citizens to identify ways to strengthen religious communities' efforts to counter extremism, while ensuring that their engagement is community-driven and transparent.
- ▶ Support more and more informed public discussion fora and debates on issues including religion in a secular society, civic citizenship in diverse communities and the balance between religious views and universal human rights.
- ▶ Organize more training with journalists on related topics, including VE drivers, PVE/CVE responses, investigative techniques to effectively research VE, investigation techniques to report on financial crimes, and how to report on gender issues related to E/VE.
- ▶ Strengthen social/psychological support schemes, generally but especially in prisons, where recruitment can occur; this should include hiring of competent professionals, training, placement and broader awareness on social-psychological treatment options to reduce current stigmas related to counseling.

⁴⁷ More information available at <http://legalpolitical-studies.org/>; <http://bifr.org/?lang=en>



- ▶ Develop multidisciplinary working groups of experts and stakeholders to determine how to address issues related to VE in the formal school curricula; this should include broad reform to more actively promote critical thinking, media literacy and civic education; there is also a need for discussion of various options for informal and formal confessional and sociology-based religious education.
- ▶ Develop more effective legislative frameworks and subsequent practical training and empowerment to improve links between police and prosecutorial investigations and follow up; improve coordination between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.
- ▶ Develop stronger inter-institutional cooperation and coordination among domestic bodies, particularly those ministries/bodies that have not viewed extremism as an issue in their competency (education, labor, social welfare, and health).
- ▶ Determine methods to ensure that families are also educated about the risks of radicalization and alternatives, particular in remote, rural and marginalized areas.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Situational Overview

Nature of Extremism/VE

In light of the domestic political situation, any forms of extremism can be damaging to the equilibrium. Respondents pointed out that while ISIL/Daesh-inspired extremism and the threat of FTFs has put this issue in the spotlight, Orthodox extremism might also contribute to an escalatory spiral. Security, governance and educational reforms aimed at reducing any one type of extremism would very likely contribute to reducing extremist thoughts and trends in general.

Drivers of Radicalization

The impact of Salafism is present but is not described as widespread or deep. Respondents note that radicalization started in the early 1990s, as Saudi influence increased through both the training of imams and the entrance of Salafists into the country and its mosques. Foreign actors with different Islamic traditions brought money for assistance to education, cultural and humanitarian support, at a time when few others were interested in the country. Ethnic Albanian students who studied abroad in the 1990s returned, and more conservative public manifestations (e.g., dress) of religion became incrementally more evident. While this was once done simply in exchange for money, some respondents note that it has taken on a more indigenous momentum. This represented a shift among some in the conception of the Albanian confessional identity. Respondents note that radicalization is happening in various places, including in homes, and in illegal/unregistered congregations. Clashes between Salafists and the Islamic Religious Council (Islamic Community) were noted, as were links between these extremist groups and general criminal activity and organized crime.

While the Islamic Community is formally unified, some critics question its legitimacy amid allegations of corruption or inconsistent implementation of doctrine. The Islamic Community notes it has long had proof that some imams in some mosques were

preaching radical messages and urging youth to go to Syria, and sought official support to counter this. The government became involved in this issue in June 2015, when actions were taken to make arrests and bring mosques back under Islamic Community's control. Thirty-five warrants were issued, and over a dozen arrests made.

At Risk Communities

Respondents note that radicalization is more evident in several Albanian majority municipalities around Skopje, with Cair and Gazi Baba in particular highlighted. One respondent noted that Cair and Gazi Baba are like slums compared to downtown Skopje; people are not integrated, and don't feel a part of the country. In the 2015 operations to retake several rogue mosques, four were in Cair, and one in Gazi Baba. Kumanovo has also been noted in this respect, particularly in light of the security incident and arrests there in 2015.⁴⁸

FTFs

The Ministry of Interior estimates that around 150 FTFs went to Syria or Iraq, with around seventy to eighty returning. The legal framework has been changed to respond to this threat. A research report is currently being drafted (see below).

Social Media

Albanian language sites exist in the region. No respondents noted studies of messages particularly targeted to this country. There is no coordinated effort to identify or take down extremist sites. For example, while one alleged leader of a radical group was arrested in 2015, his Facebook page is reportedly still online and updated by supporters.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ "Skopje Charges 30 with Terrorism after Kumanovo Clashes." BBC News. 11 May 2015. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32695909>

⁴⁹ This refers to Rexhep Memishi, arrested with 8 other people. Marusic, Sinisa Jakov. "Skopje Arrests Nine ISIS Suspects." Balkan Insight. 7 August 2015. Available at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-arrests-nine-isis-suspects-08-07-2015>

Funding

No respondents noted any significant efforts underway to ensure effective implementation of anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism financing laws.

Prisons

No respondents noted information on real or potential radicalization in the country's prisons, nor of efforts to pro-actively prevent this from happening.

Refugees

The government of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was facing a significant crisis in 2015 as tens of thousands of refugees were passing through the country from Greece on their way to Serbia and the EU. This added strain to the government and the state budget. Since the EU-Turkey deal was agreed, the flow of refugees has slowed. However, the potential for renewed transit by refugees will continue as long as the conflicts in Syria and Iraq continue.

Strategies/Action Plans/Initiatives

A National Coordinator for CVE was appointed in 2015, initially within the Ministry of Interior, but later moved under the government's General Secretariat. A "National Strategy in the Fight against Terrorism" was adopted on March 15, 2016, and includes mention of CVE for the first time in this official context. Respondents consulted were unaware of this strategy development, thereby indicating that non-governmental consultation was not extensive. As of this writing it is unclear how the strategy will be monitored, implemented or coordinated.

Local International Engagement

Embassy of the US

In The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the US Embassy is supporting several discrete projects.

The local policy organization Analytica is a key partner (see below).

Beginning in September 2016, the US Embassy, in cooperation with the OSCE, will implement a program with the SAVE Mothers' Club (Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE)⁵⁰), an organization based in Austria that uses the unique position of women - and in particular mothers - in recognizing the signs of radicalization.

In May the Embassy hosted Adrian Shtuni as a CVE speaker. The US Embassy also sponsored moderate Imam Yahya Hendi from Georgetown University to speak in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo.⁵¹

The US Embassy is considering a project called "Peer 2 Peer" with a local university to promote the discussion of violent extremism and how to best counter it.

The US Embassy also encouraged Cair municipality (in Skopje) to join the Strong Cities Network.

The Embassy nominated a member of the Islamic Community to attend the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) in 2016, and supported a researcher from The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to attend the CVE Researchers Summit at the UN General Assembly in September 2015.⁵¹

International Organization for Migration

The IOM notes that the government of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has expressed interest in the IOM approach, but that the political situation has slowed follow up.

⁵⁰ More information available at <http://www.women-without-borders.org/save/>

⁵¹ Agenda available at <http://hedayah.ae/pdf/cve-research-conference-2015-agenda.pdf>

OSCE

The OSCE Mission is at the early stages of investigating needs and options. It was noted that a number of ongoing human rights and democratization efforts (anti-hate speech campaigns, youth clubs, etc.) are technically supporting similar goals. However there is also interest in considering the need for specific and targeted approaches. There is coordination with the US Embassy (see below).

In 2015 a project with the Islamic Youth Forum⁵² was under consideration, a young, mostly male assembly of Muslims dissatisfied with the Islamic Community. However, the decision to work with this group was put on hold until further analysis of options can be completed. In addition to other issues, the challenge of prisons and prison radicalization; community policing work aimed at identifying early indicators of radicalization; and supporting prevention through community policing, are being considered.⁵³

Civil Society

Analytica

Analytica began a one-year project in September 2015 entitled “Assessment of efforts in countering violent extremism, view from civil society,” a policy study with a focus on FTFs.⁵⁴ Funded by the US Embassy, Skopje, researchers have conducted interviews and focus groups, and reviewed relevant documents to determine the threat of FTFs, and current and needed institutional responses. The goal is to support the authorities in planning, policy development and the development of options to CVE, including FTFs. The report is expected to be finished in August 2016, with a conference in September.

⁵² More information available at <http://www.islamicfinder.org/getitWorld.php?id=63273&lang=arabic>; for various points of view about this groups see <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/2303/moderate-balkan-muslims-are-targeted-by-wahhabis>;

⁵³ “OSCE Mission to Skopje supports conference on prevention of violent extremism and radicalization.” OSCE web site. 30 October 2015. Available at <http://www.osce.org/skopje/195871>

⁵⁴ Analytica web site. Available at <http://www.analyticamk.org/en/projects/current/9-category-en-gb/500-assessment-of-macedonia-s-efforts-in-countering-violent-extremism-view-from-civil-society>

Analytica previously published other relevant papers, including, “We Did Criminalize It - Now What? Western Balkans Response to the Foreign Fighters Threat,” by Andreja Bogdanovski (September 2014).⁵⁵

Islamic Religious Council (Islamic Community)

The Islamic Religious Council developed a project concept/proposal related to reintegration and re-socialization of FTFs. This was shared with some embassies and donors but has not yet attracted funding for implementation.

It was noted that the Islamic Religious Council is working on its own CVE strategy to stop radical terrorism.

Recommendations

Research

- ▶ Upon publication and discussion of a baseline report on the issue, additional research priorities can be better set, agreed and initiated.
- ▶ Support additional academic and journalistic research and analysis to create a larger pool of experts able to provide an evidence-based foundation for debate.
- ▶ Support information exchange on research and practice in the region to strengthen the development of perspectives on the issue domestically.

Activities

- ▶ Organize public discussions of the National CT Strategy in Skopje but also in other communities to both inform the public of the strategy and also to gather input needed for effective action plan development, implementation and social buy-in; discussions should include officials, politicians, experts and community leaders and with strong and informed moderators; discus-

⁵⁵ Bogdanovski, Andreja. “We Did Criminalize it - Now What? Western Balkans Response to the Foreign Fighters Threat.” Analytica Policy Brief. September 2014. Available at http://www.analyticamk.org/images/stories/files/2014/Foreign_Fighters.pdf



sion should show this is not a domestic problem but part of a broader global challenge.

- ▶ Bring together more civil society stakeholders and researchers to build up a stronger platform for study and consideration of this issue.
- ▶ Consider how to use civil society and individuals to jointly monitor social media sources that promote extremism, to cast a wider net that can then be used by authorities.
- ▶ Support moderate leaders in the religious communities to deter extremist views in congregations and identify at risk individuals.
- ▶ Support the concept and implementation of community policing approaches.
- ▶ Support general reconciliation and tolerance promotion efforts to counter the manipulation of ethnic/national and religious symbols, which can create an escalatory spiral of conflict that is conducive to the cultivation of extremist views. At the most basic level confidence building measures are needed to build social and political trust.
- ▶ Support expert discussions on the role of education in either cultivating extremist views or promoting more open views is important, including discussion of civic/citizenship education, critical thinking and religious instruction; engage teachers, pedagogues, students and parents to ensure a holistic perspective.

Montenegro

Situational Overview

Nature of Extremism/VE

Most interlocutors do not see violent extremism as a significant problem in Montenegro. However some respondents noted changes in society and political life that could lead to potential problems. While there have been few FTFs, authorities are aware of the risk of ISIL/*Daesh*-inspired extremism. Some respondents noted that the Orthodox communities have their own extremists, including some who went to fight in Ukraine.

A respondent who engages with youth in civic activities noted being alarmed that young people, contrary to the expectation of being naturally more progressive than the previous generation, are becoming more radical on a range of issues, from religiosity to women's issues to lack of tolerance against difference, including LGBT rights.

Drivers of Radicalization

Respondents note that individuals going abroad to study can come back with different views of religion than those traditionally present. The Islamic Community in Montenegro is described as moderate and pro-active. It was noted that former Chief Mufti in Novi Pazar (and current politician) Muamer Zukorlic visits Montenegro at times but does not enjoy a real foothold, and that both the Islamic Community of Montenegro and intelligence services monitor his activities. However, there is some concern of efforts to establish cross-border, pan-Bosniak initiatives that could threaten the status quo.

Some individuals reported that Bosniak-majority areas are poorer and less developed than the rest of the country, and that Bosniaks do not feel fully integrated into the Montenegrin polity in spite of their representation in the government. The lack of civic belonging can also be traced to the general lack of participatory culture, or strong faith in democratic governance. If the only activity in a town is offered by an Islamic community center,

then it should not be surprising that young people will congregate there. Religious communities have set up their own schools to work with youth.

Respondents were unable to note any formal baseline study or analysis of drivers of radicalization or manifestations of extremism in Montenegro.

At Risk Communities

While noting that VE is not perceived as a significant threat, respondents noted that any attention on this issue has been focused on (poorer) Bosniak municipalities (Rozaje, Bijelo Polje) in the north along the border with Serbia in Sandzak, and in Albanian border areas (Plav).

FTFs

The number of FTFs is fairly low: officials note that fourteen left and two came back. Those who return are under surveillance, and there is confidence that LEAs are capable of this task. A Special Prosecutor to investigate terrorism was set up in June 2015; in March two FTF cases started.

Montenegro will sign the Council of Europe Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism to address the FTF phenomenon, and the related action plan on prevention of radicalization and extremism.

Social Media

No respondents provided information on the role of social media in the promotion of extremist views or VE activity in Montenegro.

Prisons

No respondents noted the issue of prison radicalization.

Refugees

There have been no problems concerning the refugee crisis, but this could change if the route shifts with people passing from Albania through Montenegro.

Strategies/Action Plans/Initiatives

The government of Montenegro worked with a variety of domestic bodies and external experts to develop the CVE Strategy and Action Plan. NATO aspirations facilitated this task. Efforts were made to ensure a broad framing of the challenge to encompass all potential manifestations of extremist threats. The Ministry of Justice formed a working group with expert and logistical support from the US Embassy, including Interpol, the police and other officials. The Association of Municipalities sent a representative to work on the effort for the local perspective. The strategy is aimed at encompassing all potential manifestations of extremism. The Strategy has four goals - two preventive, two repressive.

The working group did not engage NGOs or religious communities in the development of the strategy for security reasons, though some respondents noted that they have been included on sensitive issues in the past. The working group did send the Action Plan to some civil society organizations for comment. The NGOs contacted noted that they were unfamiliar with the strategy/action plan development process; later, one respondent noted receiving the Action Plan for comment. Officials noted possible plans for education and outreach with the media on the topic, potentially in cooperation with the OSCE, UNDP or EU TAIEX.

It was noted that the Strategy and Action Plan, and lessons from the development process, were shared with Albania to facilitate their own work on the topic.

Local International Initiatives

Embassy of the United States

The US Embassy has been the key external driver in the development of the strategy and action plan, through direct expert support and support for relevant conferences and working groups in the development and implementation of the strategy and action plan to date. In addition, ICITAP

(International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program) and OPDAT (Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training) are working on various law enforcement support activities.

Civil Society

None of the civil society respondents consulted noted any direct engagement on issues of PVE/CVE, though their expertise in areas ranging from security studies to policing to civic education is often relevant to the broader PVE/CVE environment.

Recommendations

Research

- ▶ Support independent baseline studies and analysis by researchers and academics on the issue and nature of possible threats in the medium- and long-term to provide data and context.
- ▶ Support research on the regional impact of extremism, VE, organized crime and the financing of VE, and the specific impact on Montenegro.

Activities

- ▶ The government and international partners should engage with CSOs in ongoing implementation and refinement of the strategy and plans.
- ▶ Establish regional coordination and information sharing mechanisms at governmental and local levels.
- ▶ Donors and outside experts should support local efforts for education reform; short-term modules on topics such as “How to be an entrepreneur” will not address bigger deficiencies, such as the lack of critical thinking and media literacy.
- ▶ Education and in particular civic education is required to ensure the long-term preventive success; some NGOs have been working for years on relevant topics and have connections in communities (Juventus (youth); Pedagogical Center

- (teachers); Center for Civic Education, etc.)
- ▶ Consider the possibility of using the SOCTA (Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment) methodology and approach to monitor VE/CVE.
 - ▶ Provide support to strengthen community policing efforts, among LEAs as well as citizens.
 - ▶ Consider the lessons Montenegro could offer from its own experience; Montenegro could be a good regional hub for events and meetings (no travel/visa complications).
 - ▶ Support more open and genuine public debate on issues like religion and public life in Montenegro, engaging academic community, experts, etc.
 - ▶ Engage the Islamic Community in any efforts to develop counter-narratives.

Serbia

Situational Overview

Nature of Extremism/VE

While there are differing views concerning the extent of the potential for violent ISIL/*Daesh*-inspired extremism, there is general agreement that there are at risk communities. However, rising examples of far-right nationalist inspired extremism, expressed through hooliganism and serious incidents of street violence are also noted, as are any movements that threaten the territorial integrity of the country. Any links between groups espousing extremist thoughts or engaging in VE and political parties are of grave concern.

Drivers of Radicalization

Before and during the wars of 1990s, many young people went to study Islam abroad (Gulf States, North Africa, Indonesia), learning more conservative interpretations of Islam. In Sandzak there was no historical tradition of local Islamic theological faculties for such study.

In addition, foreign influences came into the region. Islamic fundamentalists came to Sandzak after 2000, and from 2004 slowly became more visible on the streets. In 2006/07, several Wahhabis were arrested; one was a known criminal /trafficker. This is not a new phenomenon, but no one really appreciated the extent of the problem until the recent global attention on the threat of VE and FTFs.

The Islamic Community in Serbia split in 2007, with different communities following the Reis in Belgrade, or the Reis in Novi Pazar. Respondents note a number of different reasons for the initial split and the continuing schism, but agree that the resulting weakness of the Islamic community has allowed space for external influences to move in, for parallel institutions and processes to develop and has hampered effective counter-measures. The Islamic Community in Novi Pazar (which falls within the Sarajevo Rijaset) has grown in size, scope and influence, and provides significant employment. Several respondents stated that both ICs have suffered losses of legitimacy, and have

been unable to offer moderate options. The recent appointment of a new Mufti, Abdulah Numan, could offer a chance to unify the IC, but as of this writing it is not yet certain how this will affect the situation.⁵⁶

Sandzak has a large youth population, who see very few opportunities. In the absence of jobs, stronger social services and educational opportunities, parallel societies centered on conservative interpretations of the faith and with foreign funding (often from Gulf states) offer kindergartens, youth activities and other services. (Over the years it has become more systematic and institutionalized). In addition, numerous respondents noted the role of Diaspora communities, in particular in Austria, Germany and Scandinavia. The role of the media was noted in promoting religious nationalism and sending divisive messages.

At Risk Communities

The communities in Sandzak are viewed as most at risk, due both to minimal social and economic opportunities, but also due to the increasing influence of foreign, conservative forms of Islam (including Salafist practices). Sandzak is a traditionally poorer and less developed part of Serbia, and there is some disagreement on how to define and refer to the region (Sandzak, or Raska). Mevlid Jasarevic, who shot at the US Embassy in Sarajevo in 2011, was from Novi Pazar.

Southern Serbia, including Presevo and Bujanovac, are municipalities with sizeable Albanian ethnic populations along the border with Kosovo*. These communities are quite poor and undeveloped, and described as having weak ties to the government in Belgrade. One respondent noted Southern Serbia is “the hostage of unfinished business in Kosovo*,” resulting in little positive political or economic or social development.

FTFs

It is estimated that seventy FTFs have gone to Syria from Sandzak, though there is little public or independent data. A respondent noted seeing

⁵⁶ “Islamic Community Assembly Names New Mufti of Serbia.” B92. 31 May 2016. Available at http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2016&mm=05&dd=31&nav_id=98166

the first people going to Syria three years ago, supported by funding through various sources. While the outflow to Syria has stopped, this does not mean radicalization is not continuing. Laws prohibiting FTFs can be difficult to apply, as it can be hard to prove engagement or presence in Syria. Five people were indicted in September 2014, and two cases are being prepared in 2016. Of these, 6 people are accused of fighting with ISIL/*Daesh* and 21 of providing logistical support.

Some respondents note that it is important to treat foreign fighters from Serbia who went to Ukraine the same as those who went to Syria.

Social Media

No respondents noted studies on the role of social media in recruiting or promoting extremist ideologies.

Funding

Respondents note that external funds are needed to support various social/charitable endeavors, particularly in Sandzak. Foreign funding from the Saudis and the Diaspora (primarily in Vienna) are noted. It is presumed that funds are received through wire transfer but also through cash. Serbia has been recently evaluated by Moneyval, and the forthcoming report is expected to note room for improvement on issues related to countering terrorist financing, including legal framework for judicial procedures, asset freezing and risk-based counter-measures.

Prisons

No respondents noted the issue of prison radicalization or the potential for such radicalization.

Refugees

The Serbian government was facing a significant crisis in 2015 as tens of thousands of refugees were passing through the country on their way to the EU. Since the EU/Turkey deal the flow of refugees has slowed. Even if the Balkan route has been closed, Serbia is still open to migration challenges.

Strategies/Action Plans/Initiatives

A Working Group on CT began to develop a Strategy and Action Plan in mid-2015, with support from both TAIEX and the OSCE. Serbia had not had a defined CT strategy document before, though there had been a previous attempt by the Ministry of Justice to develop one. The 2015 effort was led by the Ministry of Interior. TAIEX supported the effort with Slovene experts, and other relevant documents from Montenegro, the US, UK, Russia and other locations were reviewed during preparation. Together with advice from the EU and the OSCE, the government decided to combine CT and CVE in one document, so the strategy includes both repressive and preventive measures. Competent ministries and other governmental bodies involved include the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP), Defense, State Attorney's Office (prosecution), Finance, Education, Youth and Sport, Culture etc. Each signing Ministry/government agency will have an internal plan and timeframe for their work.

The Belgrade Center for Security Policy provided written comments during the drafting process. There is a working draft version, and plans to have discussions with civil society and national minority groups perhaps following formation of the government. The OSCE is prepared to assist the government in identifying CSO stakeholders for further consultation as such relationships are not yet firmly established.

The strategy goes from 2016-2021. Following adoption, a working group and monitoring mechanism should be formed to ensure implementation and regular monitoring and reporting. Authorities note that they will need EU and other international expertise, in particular with new threats like cybercrime and cyber security.

Local International Initiatives

Embassy of Switzerland

Switzerland is supporting the NGO DamaD in Novi Pazar (see below) through their Human Security pillar of project support.

The Swiss are also working on a project together with the OSCE and local government bodies to support the development of municipal safety strategies. In Novi Pazar a draft was prepared and presented to the public, but has not yet been adopted. At this stage the draft does not note VE as a significant problem, focusing instead on broad social, political and economic issues.

The Swiss Embassy also supports the Center for Inclusive Governance, which organizes regional fora to facilitate discussion with politicians, parties, activist and interested citizens, addressing both community-level and higher level topics.

The Swiss government partners with the EU and others on general and broad development support, including issues such as tackling unemployment and supporting infrastructure development.

Embassy of the US

The US is supporting NGOs in Sandzak including DamaD and the HCHR (see below).

Novi Pazar is a member of the Strong Cities Network and the Embassy was considering support options, including possible funding of the city in events such as the Global Forum.

ICITAP continues its work in Serbia, and while to date has not specifically worked on CVE there has been talk of a possible project in Sandzak.

International Organization for Migration

The IOM notes that it would be willing to discuss the applicability of their approaches in the Serbian context, but noted such engagement would be depending on strong political commitment and support.

OSCE Mission to Serbia

The OSCE Mission to Serbia's main office is in Belgrade. There is also an office in Novi Pazar.

The OSCE has been supporting police reform and modernization efforts, including community policing, for over ten years. Generally speaking the police are more familiar and comfortable with repressive "traditional" measures of policing, rather than the community-based approach needed in community policing. In 2013 the country adopted a Strategy for Community Policing, followed two years later by an Action Plan (August 2015). There is little consistent understanding of the nature of extremism, VE threats or how to both respond and prevent such manifestations.

As a part of community strengthening efforts, the OSCE organized joint programs for training of the multi-ethnic police force in Presevo and Bujanovac; to engage the Roma, Albanian and Serb communities; and together with the High Commissioner for National Minorities set up a bilingual (Albanian and Serbian) Economics Faculty in Bujanovac.

In addition, the OSCE supported the CT strategy development as described above.

The OSCE noted that various local organizations have sought support for CVE relevant projects and initiatives; UrbanIn and Impuls recently asked OSCE for financial support to do a project with youth in Novi Pazar which is under consideration.

The OSCE has been working on community policing for years, including with/through Municipal Safety Centers, and is developing an extra-budgetary project that would support a more explicit PVE/CVE approach.

Other

Like-minded embassies and international organizations in Serbia gather informally through the Friends of Sandzak and Friends of South Serbia initiatives to share information on development and activities in these two regions of concern. This was noted as an effective information sharing and coordination mechanism, and an example of early warning.

Coordination is generally described as good, but is not regular or institutionalized. The best coordination tends to be issue-based, as demonstrated during the refugee crisis.

Civil Society

A variety of projects are related to general promotion of civil society and good governance. Transparency International implements a project on media ownership, and the Council of Europe and Scandinavian governments support CSO projects. The following are examples of some of the most relevant or potentially relevant CSOs.

Academic Forum 10

Academic Forum 10 is a new organization that includes academics and activists interested in contributing to and starting conversations on various social and political topics. It was formed by activists in Novi Pazar, Bujanovac, Nis, Presevo and Bela Palanka, but also has contacts in Belgrade. Their interest is promoting multiculturalism, human rights, tolerance and other similar values. It engages in a cross-section of issues pertinent to PVE/CVE.⁵⁷

Belgrade Center for Security Policy (BCSP)

BCSP is serving as a consultant on the DamaD project (see below). A BCSP researcher has researched issues related to right-wing extremism in Serbia generally; a publication on this topic is forthcoming. BCSP provided comment on the Serbian government's draft CT strategy.

Center for Inclusive Governance

The Center for Inclusive Governance⁵⁸ has held roundtables with stakeholders from Belgrade and Sandzak.

Community Support Foundation

The Community Support Foundation is a newly established Foundation founded by an activist who started the NGO UrbanIn. A report with the working title of "The Challenges of Growing Radicalization in Multicultural and Multiconfessional Communities and the Search for Solutions" is being researched and drafted. The Foundation is also drafting a project idea to address the issues being identified

⁵⁷ For more information see <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/otlas-partner-finding/organisation/akademska-inicijativa-forum-10.3723/>

⁵⁸ For more information see <http://www.cigonline.net/>

through this work and research, including polling to find out more about what citizens and targeted stakeholders think about issues relevant to E/VE.

DamaD

The NGO Kulturni Centar DamaD⁵⁹ is working on a project in Sandzak related to prevention of extremism and early detection of signs of radicalization, working primarily with and through young people. Their "whole community approach" is similar to a referral mechanism. The project has recently started, and the Belgrade Center for Security Policy is a consultant on the project. They are developing Memoranda of Cooperation and protocols with local authorities (including Municipal Security Councils) to provide a foundation for work to prevent radicalization, and various response and procedural options. (For example, what should a teacher do, how an Islamic community representative can react, etc.). They are using the Channel Model (UK), modifying it as needed for local needs. Initial field research will include focus groups, interviews, etc. are aimed at determining needs and whether/how such a referral mechanism could work in practice.⁶⁰ The project is supported by the Swiss Embassy; there have been discussions on whether it may continue, potentially with OSCE support as well. The project began in autumn 2015 and will last until August 2016.

Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (HCHR)

For two years, with support from the US, HCHR has been working with a group of young people (20-25 years) in Sandzak to develop a cadre of trainers familiar with forms and manifestations of extremism. These young leaders are then able to go into communities to do outreach with communities. They also work to increase and improve communications with local police.

Respondents note that the work is difficult; there have been historically difficult relations between Bosniak communities and the police (particularly ethnic Serb police officers), and the region is very insular, making it difficult to build confidence in

⁵⁹ For more information see <http://www.kcdamad.org/>

⁶⁰ For more on the Channel model see Ghaffar Hussain's "Countering Extremism: Learning from the United Kingdom Model." George Washington University Program on Extremism Occasional Paper. October 2015. Available at <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/HussainPaper-Final.pdf>

communities where people don't want to be seen as "ratting out" their peers.

In 2016 HCHR will do a poll of 700-800 people to get a sense of what people know and think about the issues surrounding extremism.

Open Society Foundation (OSF)

OSF issued a call for proposals (March 2016 deadline) in which one of four targeted themes was combating extremism.⁶¹

Sandzacki odbor za zastitu ljudskih prava i sloboda

The Sandzacki odbor⁶² ("Sandzak Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Liberties") implemented a project with smallest local administrative units called *mjesne zajednice* (local communities) related to the election campaign, which was not about CVE but touched on similar themes of participation and inclusion.

UrbanIn

UrbanIn is one of a few NGOs in Novi Pazar working on grassroots issues including human rights promotion, youth engagement, good governance and political participation.

UrbanIn representatives participated in an OSCE CVE event in Vienna last year; the Sarajevo RACVIAC event in autumn 2015; and a large CVE event in Berlin in late May, with a diverse groups of global participants. They noted frustration that after these large events there are few demonstrations of changes on the ground.

UrbanIn has implemented a program with Swiss support for over a decade. This intercultural program called "Living Together" consists of events, exchanges between Serbia and Switzerland, and within the country. The theory of change is that by exposing young people to different parts of the country and Europe, they will be more able to expand their horizons and adopt more tolerant views; if a young person from Cacak gets to see Novi Pazar and meet people, it's harder for them to accept the hatred and stereotypes that often dominate media. The program was developed together with secondary school teachers and is aimed at promoting critical thinking; the question

is how to mainstream it into schools. UrbanIn is seeking support to continue and expand this kind of effort.

UrbanIn has developed a concept for a project with local and regional scope, entitled "Preventing Radicalization and Violent Extremism Among Youth." The project is envisioned to include work with youth in several municipalities in Sandzak (Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin, Priboj, Prijepolje, Nova Varos); presentations on the traditional European Islam in the region; and development of a regional youth network focused on this issue.

Recommendations

Research

- ▶ Support research on the nature of the extremism and radicalization in Serbia, with specific attention to Sandzak, Presevo and right-wing extremism generally.
- ▶ Support scholarly and policy research on the topic of Balkan Islam in general and within Serbia, to understand specificities of this population.
- ▶ Support research on the activities of extremist groups and organized crime, including journalists and academics.
- ▶ Engage experts to determine whether the history of religion is taught in a way that vaccinates students against stereotypes.
- ▶ Monitor pilot efforts at developing referral mechanisms in at risk communities, and share results within Serbia but also regionally.

Activities

- ▶ Assess and potentially recalibrate police reform and community policing support efforts to effectively implement PVE and CVE activities. Early warning and detection skills are required, as are techniques to genuinely build bridges with communities. Community policing should be mainstreamed into the formal policy training institutions and curriculum.
- ▶ Support general and investigative journalism on this topic - including techniques to effectively research and report - to assist in public awareness of the issue and policy discussions.

⁶¹ For more information see <http://www.balkancsd.net/cfp-open-society-foundations-serbia-four-calls-for-proposals-deadline-13-03-2016/>

⁶² For more information see <http://san-odbor.org/>

- ▶ Support the development of domestic regional development strategies, in general but in particular in those regions/communities that have long experienced low socio-economic investment and engagement, and which exhibit signs of susceptibility to the influx of extremist ideas.
- ▶ Work with experts to ensure effective frameworks to prevent the financing of extremism.
- ▶ Support education reform and modernization. The education system in Serbia was described by one respondent as “the key source of all of Serbia’s problems.” Efforts to improve the overall quality are needed, as is the integration of critical thinking skills and media literacy.
 - ✦ Education in Sandzak - both informal and formal - has been particularly neglected. This greatly limits the exchange of ideas and debates.
 - ✦ Identify ways to work in universities to improve quality and opportunities, particularly in Sandzak.
 - ✦ Requiring students to study either religious education or democracy and human rights creates a harmful dichotomy, suggesting that religion and democracy/human rights are not compatible. This should be re-assessed.
 - ✦ Determine how to learn from and complement Ministry of Education progress in general school violence prevention programs.⁶³
- ▶ Support youth activities and exchange programs within Serbia and abroad to ensure more young people in Sandzak have the opportunity to travel and see life outside of their region. Support existing mechanisms such as school parliaments to provide constructive activities. More efforts are needed by political and community leaders at all levels to ensure that all citizens in Serbia feel that the country represents them, and allows for complex and multiple identities; a civic notion of citizenship should replace ethnic notions of citizenship.
- ▶ Support serious media and education discussion and debates on issues related to PVE/CVE, including secularism, tolerance, extremism, integration, etc.
- ▶ Ensure continued good cooperation with EUROPOL, INTERPOL and EUROJUST.
- ▶ Support regional information sharing on security issues and prevention techniques.
- ▶ Support the unification of the Islamic Community and its role in constructively engaging in prevention activities.
- ▶ Support efforts among all religious communities to speak out against extremism, hate speech and intolerance.
- ▶ Support more effective cooperation in the justice sector including joint actions; opportunities for such activity between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were noted.

⁶³ The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development has developed initiative to prevention of violence in 2005. Following the development of a Special protocol signed in 2007, a manual developed in 2009; and a Rulebook for schools in 2010, a unit was formed in 2012 and integrated formally into the Ministry in 2014. (UNICEF provided support for many of these stages.) According to these plans, all schools are obliged to prepare teams to counter violence and to have a plan to prevent violence in each school as a part of their annual plan, engaging teachers pedagogues, the police, and other stakeholders (though religious communities are not directly involved). The aim is to prevent any and all forms of violent behaviors (peer, family, digital, verbal, etc.) before they start, and to prevent escalation.

Turkey

Situational Overview

Nature of Extremism/VE

Turkey is unique in this study in that it is facing three different VE threats: ISIL/*Daesh* inspired extremism; the PKK (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan*; Kurdistan Workers' Party); and the DHKP/C (*Devrimci Halk Kurtulus Partisi-Cephesi*, Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front) and smaller leftist/Marxist-Leninist groups. Different respondents differently rank the threat of ISIL/*Daesh* vs. the PKK; but most agree that at this stage they are feeding off of one another. While the Turkish government is accustomed to the threat from the PKK, the ISIL/*Daesh* threat is new, and has grown and taken root quickly. The ISIL/*Daesh* threat is also viewed as more unpredictable. Nearly all independent respondents noted that the threat of radicalization and VE has not been taken seriously enough beyond military and CT response, and that more pro-active and preventive approaches are needed as well.

Drivers of Radicalization

Some respondents noted that the traditional power and influence of moderate Anatolian Islam (Hanafi) is being affected by Salafist trends that have been increasingly present and prominent recently. This is attributed to a combination of factors including weak engagement of the Islamic Community (Diyanet) in Turkey in support of traditional approaches to Islam, an increase in Salafist presence and thinking going back decades but gaining more prominence in the past 10 years, the ability to learn Salafist (and other very conservative) teaching and practice in person but also online, and the increasing role of Islam in Turkey generally. Several respondents noted that over the past decade an increasing number of students study in Madrassas, contributing to an educational and social shift.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Yeginsu, Ceylan. "Turkey Promotes Religious Schools, Often Defying Parents." *The New York Times*. 16 December 2014. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/europe/turkeys-religious-schools-rise-as-erdogan-exerts-sway.html?_r=0

Respondents note that Turkey faces a number of challenges, all of which can contribute to an environment in which radicalization is possible: domestic socio-economic changes, social scourges such as rape, domestic terrorism, conflicts in Iraq and Syria and the impact of the refugee crisis were noted by several respondents. In terms of ISIL/*Daesh* recruitment, it is impossible to draw a specific profile of at risk individuals, as there have been examples of people recruited who do not fit stereotypes. However, the young are the main target. Some respondents noted that in rural areas in-person recruitment is primary, while in urban areas it is often a combination of human contact and online resources.

Traditionally, the Diyanet has served as a key tool to prevent the spread of conservative and Salafist interpretations of Islam that are historically not a part of Turkish life and practice. However, fewer imams know the old Hanafi (often Sufi) practices. Many respondents noted that leaders are failing to convincingly send a message promoting moderate belief. While the Diyanet is a government body (it falls under the Office of the Prime Minister; all mosques fall under the jurisdiction of the Diyanet and those that do not are considered to be illegal), its ties to the government can be viewed as a strength in terms of stronger control, but can also be a potential weakness if it is not seen as legitimate, but as an instrument of the government. This can unintentionally result in some believers with more conservative or extremist views seeking to further distance themselves from the formal Islamic community.

There were different views among respondents on whether or not more moderate Islam - along the traditional Turkish model - would be a bulwark against more conservative/Salafist interpretations. (One respondent noted the need to "restore the factory settings" of Turkish Islam.) Some feel that after a period of time in which secular values were promoted, such a return to traditional practice would be beneficial. Others fear that a politically-driven return to Turkey's traditional Islam could damage the secular values of the Turkish Republic. Still others point out that those individuals most sympathetic to conservative or Salafist interpretations of Islam would view any effort of the Diyanet to engage more in traditional religious instruction to be a demonstration of their lack of independence from government policy.

At Risk Communities

Konya was often noted as a city in which many people practice conservative Salafism, and where ISIL/Daesh sympathizers can easily find safe houses and blend in.

Istanbul was noted as a key concern as well, as the country's largest city. A combination of urban/rural differences, economic migration, and the impact of refugees has led to more examples of conservative and Salafist practice in the city. The presence of an increasing number of conservative Salafist tourists contributes to this changing environment.

The border regions are all particularly vulnerable. Gaziantep was noted as a large urban area where ISIL/Daesh has been able to establish a presence in the city due to border proximity and difficult social conditions.⁶⁵

FTFs

Turkey has a history of FTFs going back to the wars in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Bosnia. In terms of Turks who went to Syria, respondents note that it's no surprise that the first who went had previous experience in these places. One respondent refers to this as the "first wave," with the "second wave" FTFs being recruited by the first wave. While border controls have improved dramatically over the past few years, cross-border traffic is still fluid, often reflecting kin networks as well as illicit trafficking.⁶⁶

It is relatively easy for people in Turkey to go back and forth to Syria to fight with the Free Syrian Army, or with other forces; however it is not always so easy to define who is and is not a radical. Turkey has a "no entry" list of approximately 380,000 people who are not allowed into the territory or are banned; around 3500 people have been deported. However there are ISIL/Daesh cells made up of people who entered Turkey before the border crackdown.

⁶⁵ Kizilkoyun, Fevzi. "ISIL Militants Prepared Suicide Vests in Gaziantep on Syrian Border: Police." Hurriyet Daily News. 5 December 2015. Available at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/isil-militants-prepared-suicide-vests-in-gaziantep-on-syrian-border-police.aspx?pageID=238&nID=92101&NewsCatID=509>

⁶⁶ Turkey is building walls and physical barriers to try to stem border problems. "Walls and Watchtowers Rise as Turkey Tries to Seal Border Against ISIL." Reuters. 3 February 2016. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mid-east-crisis-turkey-islamicstate-idUSKCN0VC270>

The number of Turkish citizens who will now have recent fighting experience in Syria and Iraq, including those fighting against Assad, fighting with ISIS, or fighting with the Kurds, is potentially overwhelming. Upon return to Turkey, there have been different patterns and practices. Some people were affected by Al Qaeda ideology and have kept in touch with comrades in Afghanistan. Others returned and lived normal lives.

The children of FTFs were noted as a particular target for constructive intervention to ensure that they are educated and are not alienated; without support they could be the next generation of radicalized citizens.

There have been some efforts to de-radicalize radicalized Turkish Salafists, but as with efforts elsewhere, no one is certain if these methods work in the long-term.

Social Media

There is broad agreement that the online strategies used by ISIL/Daesh are the most sophisticated. ISIL/Daesh videos have mentioned Istanbul and other historical references, and Al Dabiq has published Turkish language editions. On the other hand, it was noted that the PKK has improved its own use of online tools in the past several years, perhaps learning from ISIL/Daesh. ISIL/Daesh is said to have also established traditional publishing houses in Turkey to further spread their message. A number of relevant studies have been conducted on this phenomenon (see below).

While the Turkish government has taken some steps to shut down extremist web sites, they often pop back up.

Funding

No respondents noted any current hard data on mechanisms to finance terror, though all agree that terrorist groups are receiving substantial funds to conduct their activities.

Prisons

Radicalization in prisons is viewed as a potential threat if for no other reason than the numbers of FTFs in Turkey. Respondents reported few holistic or sustained efforts to prevent or respond to this phenomenon (see section below on the Diyanet).

Refugees

There are around 3 million refugees in Turkey, of which about 500,000 are in 22 camps. Many respondents noted that this is a population ripe for radicalization; people are near the volatile border areas, displaced, feeling a lack of justice, and often missing educational or employment opportunities. A respondent noted other examples of long-term refugee crises leading to radicalization, noting in particular the issue of Somali refugees in Kenya, where camps have become a main source of recruitment for Al Shabaab.⁶⁷

Even if the war in Syria ended today, refugees are already poor and alienated, and it will take some time for them to return home.

Employment and education are two significant challenges for the Directorate of Migration Management, within the Ministry of Justice. (The Disaster and Emergency Management Directorate, under the Prime Minister, oversees the camps.) While Turkey has taken steps to ensure refugee children can attend Turkish schools, there is at the same time interest among parents in Arabic language, rather than Turkish language, education. Some responses to this have included Arabic language apps, and elective Arabic courses. For those refugees living in mainstream society (i.e., not in camps), the government is seeking a balance between prohibiting work and allowing refugee labor to flood the local market. Still there is a problem of people - including school-aged children - working in the unregulated economy to support their displaced families. (For example, only 10% of employees in any sector can legally be refugees.) ORSAM (see below) organized a conference with Syrian academics on how to prevent brain drain by creating conditions so that Syrians who wish it - when they are able to do so - return to Syria. The prospects of long-term resettlement of Syrian Arabs in Turkey could have unintended demographic impact in the long-term.

A respondent noted that when one considers that Turkey has spent an estimated \$20 billion on the refugee crisis itself, the \$3 billion promised from Europe through the EU-Turkey deal is minimally significant. The challenges are serious. However, the refugee problem in Turkey is not as bad as was what Lebanon experienced, or Jordan, in terms of broad-based social and political impact; Turkey's size is an advantage. As it is a large economy,

⁶⁷ Burns, Avery. "Feeling the Pinch: Kenya, Al-Shabaab and East Africa's Refugee Crisis." *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*. Vol. 27, No. 1, 2010. Available at <http://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/34356>

it can absorb more people under appropriate conditions.

Strategy/Action Plan/Initiatives

There is no single articulated strategy that includes CT and CVE elements aimed at responding to these critical challenges. The recent surge in ISIL/Daesh attacks, but also other acts of domestic terrorism, has increased attention on the need to CVE.

The post of Under-Secretary for Public Order and Security was established in 2010 in the Ministry of Interior to develop CT strategies and coordinate with relevant ministries and bodies - LEAs, military, and civilian bodies. There is an increasing realization that military solutions are not the only solutions to CT, and that there is a need to tackle the root causes. Since religiously inspired extremism is relatively new in Turkey, there is currently no plan to counter radicalization.

Turkey is involved in many efforts to counter terror at the global level, including the Global Coalition to Counter Daesh, the Global Forum for CT, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (where it was chair of the Horn of Africa Working Group) and other international fora. Turkey also supports global CT efforts by providing access to air bases in support of regional military actions. It was also noted that Turkey's efforts to secure its borders contributes to CVE regionally, particularly related to the issue of FTFs.

Domestically, the Turkish National Police are engaged in countering radicalization, including awareness-raising, social projects, preventive engagement with families, and professional training of officers. The TNP has also established a research center within the Police Academy to better support the field.⁶⁸ Such efforts, in 81 provinces throughout the country, have great potential, and could be strengthened through more outreach and coordination with independent actors.

Diyanet

As the Diyanet is a part of the government in Turkey, it shouldn't be considered "civil society" as with

⁶⁸ Countering Violent Extremism Talking Points, provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

the other cases. Nearly all respondents noted that the Diyanet could be a powerful tool in addressing the spread of radical beliefs. An official noted a range of current activities, including placement of preachers in prisons, an educational camp for homeless children and a scholarship program. However, other respondents noted it would benefit from a more strategic and concerted effort to counter extremist beliefs, and could play a more active role in reaching the most at-risk populations.

In August 2015 the Diyanet published a 35-page report titled “Daesh’s Basic Philosophy and Religious References”⁶⁹. The report was prepared by the Religious Affairs Supreme Board under Turkey’s Religious Affairs Directorate and aims to inform all elements of the Diyanet about the philosophy/arguments of Daesh that negatively impact the Islamic faith. This can be viewed as an example of a counter-narrative tool. The report was viewed as quite good, but there was no longer strategic effort to spread awareness of this issue or the publication. One respondent noted that they are working with the Diyanet on similar work, but that they prefer not to disclose its content yet. While such concerns are valid, it is also important to ensure that people recognize that the Diyanet is acting on this timely issue of great public concern.

Local International Initiatives

Embassy of the US

The US Embassy is funding research studies by TOBB University of Economics and Technology / ORSAM (see below), and also GLOBAL Policy and Strategy Institute.

UNDP

The UNDP has an office in Ankara and a Regional Office in Istanbul. They are in the beginning stages of determining engagement options on this issue in Turkey, to ensure locally relevant and needed support and broader UNDP rights-based strategies. There is potential to mainstream PVE/CVE into existing projects on participation, inclusion and other relevant topics.

⁶⁹ Available at <http://webdosya.diyamet.gov.tr/anasayfa/UserFiles/Document/TextDocs/b7ca135a-c08f-4ee5-892b-4c181663630a.pdf>

Civil Society

Bahcesehir University

The Bahcesehir University in Istanbul is one of nearly a dozen universities that, with ERASMUS as the lead, applied for a Horizon 2020 grant to a significant radicalization/de-radicalization project.⁷⁰ The applicants are awaiting the decision.

The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI)

The RWI⁷¹ has organized various discrete efforts that can make a contribution to broader PVE/CVE approaches, with a rights-based approach. For example, they have organized some workshops on the topic with the Police Academy, coming in through the angle of violence against women and community policing themes and approaches. RWI also had a few pilot workshops to work with religious clerics to sensitively discuss human rights issues. There can be a sense in religious communities that there is a dyadic choice between faith and human rights, and this perception is made worse by often minimal interactions between clerics and secular rights advocates. However, through well-planned discussions it is possible to demonstrate the doctrinal foundation for human rights among religious texts. Such work is low-level, but very important. RWI noted that the European Council of Churches has a Human Rights Manual, and there has been discussion on developing a similar publication through work with theologians of all of the Abrahamic faiths in Turkey.

Research Centers/Think Tanks

Turkey has numerous think tanks and policy groups working on issues directly related to CT, PVE and CVE. The following is just a sample of the research done to date on these topics (note: only English language sources were reviewed):

⁷⁰ “Developing a Comprehensive Approach to Violent Radicalization in the EU from Early Understanding to Improving Protection.” See <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/2317-sec-06-fct-2016.html>

⁷¹ For more information see <http://rwi.lu.se/>



Ankara Strategy Institute (ASI)

The Ankara Strategy Institute focuses on legal, political and economic studies, and some of their research is relevant to broader radicalization trends. ASI has written on the Kurdish crisis and resolution options in “The Resolution Process.”⁷²

GLOBAL Policy and Strategy Institute

The GLOBAL Policy and Strategy Institute⁷³ has received support from the US Embassy to collect and analyze polling data of around 2500 people in approximately 25 cities. Researchers plan to ask up to 90 questions on various public opinion of radicalization, ISIL/Daesh, the PKK, etc.

GLOBAL researchers have studied social trends in Turkey based on extensive polling data, including on issue related to terrorism and radicalization.⁷⁴ In February 2016 they published, “ISIS in Cyberspace: Findings from Social Media Research.”⁷⁵ They’ve also done a study on social media trends entitled, “Google Based Reactions to ISIS’s Attacks: A Statistical Analysis.”⁷⁶

Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM)

ORSAM, independently or together with TOBB University of Economics and Technology, has prepared a number of relevant research projects and events on topics related to radicalization. For example, in December 2015 it organized a conference “Radicalization in the Mediterranean Region: Old and New Drivers.”⁷⁷ Relevant ORSAM publications include, “International Cooperation Against Foreign Terror-

⁷² Bahar, Halil Ibrahim. “The Resolution Process.” Ankara Strategy Institute Report No. 2013-2. March 1013. Available at http://ankarstrategy.org/site/assets/files/2465/z_m_s_reci_eng-1.pdf

⁷³ For more information see <http://globalpse.org/en/contact/>

⁷⁴ “GLOBAL Turkey’s Social Trends Survey.” 18 January 2016. Executive Summary at <http://globalpse.org/en/1094-2/>; full report at <http://globalpse.org/en/global-turkeys-social-trends-survey-2015/#>

⁷⁵ “ISIS in Cyberspace: Findings from Social Media Research.” Global Policy and Strategy Institute. 1 April 2016. Available at <http://globalpse.org/en/isis-in-cyberspace-findings-from-social-media-research/#>

⁷⁶ Canbegi, Halil Ibrahim. “Google Based Reactions to ISIS’s Attacks: A Statistical Analysis.” Global Policy and Strategy Institute. 26 April 2016. Available at <http://globalpse.org/en/google-based-reactions-to-isis-attacks/#>

⁷⁷ For more information see <http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/showActivity.aspx?ID=550>

ist Fights: The Experience of Turkey”⁷⁸ and “Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Turkey: As Assessment at the first Year of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178.”⁷⁹

ORSAM is conducting research to study ISIL/Daesh’s use of social media to assist in counter-messaging efforts; one researcher studied Turkish language Daesh social media for a year, discovering around 8000 Turkish language accounts. They are also studying the securitization of language on social media, and the strategic use of certain words and phrases.

Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA)

SETA prepares research reports, policy papers and organizes events on topics related to the topic of E/VE/CVE. In 2015 researchers prepared a report entitled, “European Islamophobia Report.”⁸⁰ “Turkey’s Syrian Refugees” published in 2015 provides an overview of this crisis on the southern border.⁸¹ A SETA researcher is studying the impact of the Syrian war on radicalization in general and in Turkey.

Together with ORSAM and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries, an expert group meeting on “Radicalization and Violent Extremism” was organized in Ankara in March 2016.

SETA engages with stakeholders in the Western Balkans. For example, in February 2016 SETA organized a conference entitled, “The New Dynamics of Radicalization: From the Balkans to the Middle East,” in Istanbul, which included KCSS participants from Kosovo*. In 2016 a SETA researcher went to Kosovo* to participate in an event with

⁷⁸ Yalcinkaya, Haldun. “International Cooperation Against Foreign Terrorist Fighters: The Experience of Turkey.” ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs. No. 22, February 2015. Available at http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/enUploads/Article/Files/2015219_policybrief22ing.pdf

⁷⁹ Yalcinkaya, Haldun. “Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Turkey: As Assessment at the First Year of the United States Security Council Resolution 2178.” ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs. No. 31, October 2015. Available at http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/enUploads/Article/Files/20151015_ORSAM%20POL%C4%B0CY%20BRIEF%20ingilizce%2031_duzeltimis.pdf

⁸⁰ Bayrakil, Enes and Farid Hafez (eds.). European Islamophobia Report 2015. SETA. Available at http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20160324132020_eir_2015.pdf

⁸¹ Kanat, Kilic Bugra and Kadir Ustun. “Turkey’s Syrian Refugees: Toward Integration.” SETA Report. 2015. Available at http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20150428153844_turkey%E2%80%99s-syrian-refugees-pdf.pdf

KCSS on how Turkey and Kosovo* can cooperate on the issue of FTFs. In June 2015 SETA organized a “Balkan Think Tanks Convention.”

The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV)

TEPAV researchers have been studying issues relevant to radicalization and extremism for years. TEPAV scholars and experts contribute to the literature through specific publications, through a TEPAV blog (for example, “Turkey is Losing its Natural Resistance Against ISIS”⁸²) and through the “War on the Rocks” policy forum (e.g., “The Theological Battle Between ISIL and the Turkish State.”⁸³ In addition they are currently working on major research paper that includes analysis of a large set of original data. The final report/analysis will use data visualization as well as narrative text to convey the results.⁸⁴

TOBB University of Economics and Technology (TOBB ETU)

TOBB ETU academic staff is implementing a few projects on this topic. Two years ago the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported research on FTFs, allowing TOBB ETU academicians to participate in the Global Terrorism Forum. Capacity on this issue has been developed jointly with ORSAM. They have received approval from the Directorate General on Migration Management to interview returned and captured FTFs, which will provide much greater insights into the phenomenon. EU funds have contributed to increasing domestic awareness of FTF threats.

Researchers have also studied Turkish language ISIL/Daesh outreach on social media, conducting social media analysis; the report should be published in mid-2016.

⁸² Demir, Hilmi. “Turkey is Losing its Natural Resistance Against ISIS.” TEPAV. 9 May 2016. Available at <http://www.tepav.org.tr/en/blog/s/5606/Turkey+is+losing+its+natural+resistance+against+ISIS>

⁸³ Demir, Hilmi and Selim Koru. “The Theological Battle Between ISIL and the Turkish State.” War on the Rocks. 4 May 2016. Available at <http://warontherocks.com/2016/05/the-theological-battle-between-isil-and-the-turkish-state/>

⁸⁴ The author was asked not to note the theme of this report at this time as the report is still in preparation.

USAK (International Strategic Research Organization)

USAK has nine research centers and employs around fifty people, including a researcher who deals with Balkan and EU issues. (Only SETA is larger.) USAK receives funds from donors including NATO and the EU. Relevant USAK reports include “Rise of Radical Group and Iraq’s Uncertain Future,” published in June 2014.⁸⁵

Recommendations

General

- ▶ Respondents noted that a real international commitment to ending the war in Syria is needed to create a stable geopolitical environment for any lasting PVE/CVE.
- ▶ A long-term preventive strategy is needed to seriously counter radicalization in Turkey; this can be developed in tandem with ongoing repressive/CT response and action.
- ▶ While a domestic strategy is needed, it needs to be embedded within regional and global PVE/CVE approaches to be effective.
- ▶ Effective management of the refugee crisis has been strength of the Turkish government and affected societies; however, it is vital that this support continues.

Research

- ▶ Continued independent research is needed to more precisely determine the true scope and potential of the FTF threat, including the numbers of Turkish FTFs, where they fought, and how to deal with them if/when they return
 - ✦ Research should include options for effective investigation and reintegration
 - ✦ Research should also determine best options of support for the families of FTFs who may have remained in or may return to Turkey
- ▶ Continued diagnosis of root problems leading to radicalizations, at the state and regional/com

⁸⁵ Dincer, Osman Bahadır and Omer Faruk Topal. “Increasing Violence and Deepening Divisions: Rise of Radical Groups and Iraq’s Uncertain Future.” USAK Report No. 42. June 2014. Available at http://www.usak.org.tr/_files/3042016111243-MZCX5PK8R0.pdf



munity level, and including polling and qualitative interviews/data collection

- ▶ Targeted research is needed on communities - in Turkey (Konya, Kilis) or just over the border (al-Dana) that are viewed as having significant real or potential Salafist presence, in order to establish whether there is a connection between it and VE and terrorism, and if there is, how strong and how it is manifested. Study and define the concept of “socio-economic drivers of extremism” to determine the nature of this factor in radicalization in Turkey.
- ▶ Support independent research on the nature of the increasingly heterogeneous Kurdish community to identify various agendas and threats, and opportunities for constructive collaboration.
- ▶ Support ongoing monitoring of Turkish language and other social media to understand changing outreach trends and provide a basis for effective counter-messaging.

Activities

- ▶ Develop pilot projects grounded in evidence-based research to work in at risk communities, targeting “gatekeepers” including teachers, coaches, families, etc. to engage in prevention and/or rehabilitation.
 - ▶ Identify and engage with moderate religious leaders for specific training in how to prevent extremists from taking root, and how to note early signs of possible radicalization.
 - ▶ Support and strengthen community policing efforts aimed at improving relations between police and citizens, particularly in at risk areas. This should include greater outreach and education on the topic, as little is known about community policing generally.
 - ▶ Support discussions on the nature of traditional Anatolian Islam in a modern and secular Turkey among academics, theologians, citizens and policy makers to bring these issue more into the public arena.
- ▶ Encourage the Diyanet to be more active in responding to ideological issues, to ensure that less space is available for extremely radical interpretations of the faith, which may lead to violence and terrorism. More open debates - written and through radio/television - is needed to highlight differences between Diyanet and ISIL/Daesh approaches.
 - ▶ It would be useful for the Diyanet to increasingly to reach out through informal institutions - not just mosques - targeting teahouses and other places where young people meet.
 - ▶ Work with the Diyanet would have the added benefit of potential impact on Turkish imams sent from the Diyanet to work with their congregations in Germany and other countries.⁸⁶
 - ▶ Support more and higher quality journalism on this issue as much media coverage is simplistic; this would be useful in terms of public policy but also in offering information that could deter young people from being attracted to foreign wars, radical groups, etc.
 - ▶ While many Turkish academics and think tanks are studying various aspects of this issue, other civil society groups - activists, community leaders, etc., are not engaged in this issue in any systematic way. This should change to ensure a more holistic, bottom up PVE/CVE approach.
 - ▶ Study and support formal and informal educational efforts to instill values needed to vaccinate young people against any flavors of extremism; this could include stronger reinforcement of moderate religious education, civic education and instruction in the history of religions more broadly.
 - ▶ Support scholarship and exchange programs to cultivate the next generation of scholars and researchers studying this topic.

⁸⁶ The MFA notes that 1256 religious officials work in continental Europe and the UK. “Countering Violent Extremism Talking Points,” provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Consolidated Findings and Analysis

A number of broad trends, findings and looming questions are evident through these individual RCC participant studies. While some are philosophical and other practical, all will shape the local and regional environments. Debates on these issues among officials, experts, analysts, community leaders and religious communities are needed.

- ▶ Counter-terrorism, preventing violent extremism and countering violent extremism are topics that have received increased attention by stakeholders in the region. There is significant variance in the approaches taken though there are also similarities.
- ▶ Each of the seven RCC Participants is aware of the threat of violent extremism and taking steps to address it through a variety of means.
- ▶ Violent extremism is generally viewed through the prism of ISIL/Daesh and the FTF threat. Other forms of extremism, i.e., domestic right-wing extremism, are noted as a secondary concern, if acknowledged at all. An exception is Turkey, which is facing a unique combination of indigenous and external threats.
- ▶ There is a tendency among interlocutors to state that what is most needed to prevent/counter VE is economic development and infrastructure investment. However, when discussing further, there is recognition that there is an ideological/worldview factor, and deeper inclusion/alienation issues that must be addressed as well.
 - ✦ Non-official respondents were the most likely to note that social exclusion, alienation and marginalization are contributing factors to radicalization. These respondents note that there are few political trends in support of greater inclusion of citizens in social and public life, or to cultivate multi-layered and inclusive identities in spite of the need for such policies.
- ▶ Respondents consistently note that they need more and more consolidated information about these issues and responses to the threat. There is often minimal knowledge of efforts occurring even in one's own location, and there is less awareness of efforts happening regionally. Many respondents were not aware of the basic reports available on the issue in the region.
- ▶ Extremism and latent or operational VE is viewed as a threat, though the numbers of adherents of VE, including but not limited to FTFs, are not in themselves inordinately high when compared with Western Europe.
 - ✦ All stakeholders consulted noted a drop in the number of individuals going to fight in Syria/Iraq since 2015, a decrease explained by a combination of increasing brutality, fear of legal consequences and greater awareness of the risks through exposure to ISIL/Daesh propaganda and increased domestic media coverage. However, nearly all respondents were clear in confirming that this drop does not mean that radicalization has stopped.
 - ✦ The absence of significant acts of terrorism and VE in the areas studied (Turkey as a notable exception) has made it possible for many societies to ignore the problem. However, extremism, with the potential to turn violent domestically or abroad, is viewed as a risk.
 - ✦ The refugee crisis was not noted by interlocutors as a driver of extremism in itself, but viewed as a tool that could be used by some officials with other agendas, and as a wedge issue that could promote growing populism and xenophobia. With the exception of Turkey, few saw refugee flows as a primary route for extremists to enter the region; there are easier ways. However, several individuals noted the overlap between refugee transit routes and the broader Balkan route that facilitates illicit trafficking in drugs, arms and people.
 - ✦ Turkey's geostrategic location makes it the most vulnerable to potential negative social and demographic repercussions of long-term refugee presence. While certain measures can be taken to try to minimize social challenges, only a solution to the war in Syria and instability in Iraq can truly end the flow.
- ▶ There are emerging views that could position various rights in opposition to one another, including on issues related to freedom of religion, assembly, speech and expression. Differing and at times conflicting interpretations of these

frameworks and differently held values could create tensions in protection and promotion of these rights. For example, a number of respondents in several places questioned why the rights of believers to assemble and pray in an unregistered place of worship should be prohibited, while the LGBT community enjoys support for their own public assemblies.

- ▶ The amount of consultation with civil society actors in developing CVE strategy drafts varies, but is generally low in spite of strong interest among NGOs and policy experts to participate in both drafting and implementation monitoring.
- ▶ CVE is broadly viewed as consisting of a combination of repressive and preventive measures
 - ✦ Reform of relevant legal frameworks has generally moved more quickly than practical implementation. Implementation is hampered by a combination of lack of awareness, lack of capacity and a lack of political will which will be needed to support effective holistic implementation.
 - ✦ There is consistently greater confidence in the ability to implement repressive measures including policing, intelligence, surveillance, arrest and incarceration. Community policing as a concept is minimally understood, and in practice remains weak throughout the region - particularly in communities populated by non-majority or marginalized groups.
 - ✦ There is markedly less confidence in the ability to commit to the preventive strategies needed, including more robust psycho-social support systems, stronger education and the cultivation of more resilient communities. Respondents note that such long-term projects are not always attractive to donors seeking short-term deliverables and “successes,” and are approached hesitantly by domestic officials wary of the political perils of long-term policy commitments.
 - ✦ Non-official interlocutors were most likely to note that the lack of independent institutions in each location contributes to ineffective response to the challenge of radicalization, and, in particular, to prevention.
- ▶ The number of independent expert groups involved on this issue is limited; in some of the case studied only one policy group is seriously engaged on the issue, and dominates the debate. The limited number of experts working on this topic has quickly consolidated into an expert cadre that dominates the conference and workshop circuit.
- ▶ In the lack of solid research on the specific nature of the issue and possible threat in each location, initiatives are often being developed based on tenuous or incomplete assumptions, thereby limiting potential effectiveness.
- ▶ Programs, projects and approaches have often been developed without deeper diagnostic exercises that would point to why such efforts - social welfare reform, regional development, educational modernization, local community strengthening, community policing, etc. - were not already priorities of the government at any level.
- ▶ Researchers and practitioners agree that more information is needed to diagnose problems and design responses. However, there is a challenge in collecting such information (particularly from individuals or communities who are increasingly opting out of the mainstream) and ensuring that information collection and consultation isn't perceived as intelligence gathering, thereby risking further alienation of at risk individuals.
- ▶ The optimal method of implementing laws related to returning FTFs is ill defined, though there is increasing sentiment that mass incarceration may be counterproductive. However, evidence-based protocols for interviewing, investigation, sorting, rehabilitating, reintegrating and monitoring FTFs and their families do not yet exist.
- ▶ The financing of violent extremism and related violent or terrorist activities is viewed as critical, and there are legislative frameworks to monitor electronic and cash transfers. However these are imperfectly implemented. Cash transfers and hawala⁸⁷ practices are even more difficult to monitor and prevent. The same mechanisms that would be most effective in stemming or stopping the financing of extremism would also serve to greatly reduce organized crime and corruption if rigorously implemented.
- ▶ There is a broad superficial understanding that counter-narratives are needed to counter messaging by extremists seeking new recruits. However, there is little data on what works, on how messages should be developed and delivered or which stakeholders are both legitimate and seen to be legitimate by target populations. There is

⁸⁷ Hawala is a traditional and informal system of money transfer in which money given to a network agent in one place then ensures an associate in the target destination provides the money to the intended final recipient. See “The Hawala System” by Mohammed El-Qorchi. December 2002. Available at <http://www.gdrc.org/icm/hawala.html>

acknowledged difficulty in getting to those people who have already opted out of the mainstream society; often the people participating in community efforts and activities are the people who are least at risk.

- ▶ There is a need for a debate on the proper role of moderate religious engagement as a counter-weight to religious extremism, particularly in diverse societies.
- ▶ There are interesting and often contrasting views on whether societies should tolerate peaceful manifestations of religious/ideological extremism, especially in cases of child marriage or other practices in conflict with human rights conventions. However, there is very little understanding of the location and driver of the “tipping point” that leads individuals from peaceful to violent extremism. There is also little understanding of the existence of such isolated groups with little connection to the broader society, and the potential impact on the polity at large; particularly in weak or fragile communities. This is a conversation that needs to be thoroughly considered and analyzed.⁸⁸
- ▶ There are bureaucratic and ideological debates on whether external actors/donors should fund/support/advocate for activities being implemented by religious communities and promoting doctrinal religious instruction (as opposed to so-

cial science approaches to teaching about world religions).

- ▶ The role of education - including civic education, religious education, religious instruction, and the broader need for quality education to support critical and analytical thinking - was noted in every country as an “antidote” to the temptations of radicalization.⁸⁹
- ▶ Certain donors have internal pressures to “brand” CVE projects as specific CVE efforts, a practice that some say can be counterproductive. Similarly, some implementing organizations seek aggressive public promotion of their CVE efforts to increase organizational visibility, while observers note that this too can be counterproductive.

While the previous sections have included numerous recommendations, a few are reiterated here.

⁸⁸ The forthcoming report on this issue by Edina Becirovic will fill a useful gap for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁸⁹ A policy brief published in 2009 examine the role of confessional religious education in public schools, even then noting, “assuming that clergy of some religious communities are negatively impacting the development of pluralistic Bosnia and Herzegovina society, CRE in public schools is a unique opportunity to wrestle powerful religious messages from such exclusivist theologians and parental figures.” Alibasic, Ahmet. “A Problem that Does Not Have to Be: Religious Education in Public Schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Open Society Fund, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Policy Fellowship Program 2008-2009.

Recommendations and Concluding Remarks

Regional Information Sharing

Stakeholders should consider a suitable mechanism for sharing information domestically. These mechanisms should include civil society actors and a regular yet not onerous/repetitive meeting schedule.

All respondents noted the need for more information about what is going on in this field in their community and also regionally. The main suggestions on how to remedy this included more expert-level networking to establish personal and professional contacts, and the sharing of relevant reports. Web sites and tools were not noted as a primary potential solution, though when respondents often acknowledged that such information asked could supplement the noted needed professional contacts and networks.

Past coordination efforts in the region offer many lessons in how online tools are maintained and used. Respondents tend to respond better when information is pushed to them (e.g., via appropriately timed email updates) rather than when they are expected to proactively visit sites seeking information. The push serves as a reminder and driver. Similarly, organizations do not always respond well to online tools that require them to upload information, particularly if that information must be entered in a cumbersome format different than their own organizational information tools. Further, while large organizations may be able to designate an individual to do such tasks, smaller organizations doing important grassroots work can lack the resources (linguistic, technical or simple administrative) to do so, leading to them actively or passively opt out of the information collection exercise.

However, it is clear that more information is needed. A web resource targeted towards the SEE region - and in particular on the RCC participants studied in this report - could, as a part of other efforts, reduce the existing information gap. Such a resource might include the following elements:

- ▶ Official strategies and plans

- ▶ Official CT/CVE focal points and contact information
- ▶ Information on ongoing official and non-governmental projects
 - ✦ Activity
 - ✦ Location
 - ✦ Timeframe
 - ✦ Focal point contact information

Two challenges are immediately evident: What language would the resource be in, and how would information be collected?

The issue of language is complicated when one considers the number of languages in the region. If English is viewed as the primary language, it could simplify the exercise, but could substantially limit content and use. It could also require substantial translation of documents not yet available in English, but important. However, if multiple language platforms are desired, this increases the complexity of the web architecture, and could limit the desired trans-regional information sharing.

Second, collecting information on a regular basis could be done in a variety of ways, each of which has pros and cons as illustrated below.

As options are discussed, these issues should be considered to ensure maximum utility and sustainability. This report provides a first step in the information collation and sharing process.

General Recommendations

- ▶ Officials and independent actors alike note that they need more information on what is happening in each location and in the region, in terms of diagnostic analysis and current or planned PVE/CVE activities. This report should be shared broadly to begin to fill this gap.
- ▶ Personal contacts and networks among appointed expert focal points can help to fill this gap. The RCC Focal Points for CVE should have updated Terms of Reference to facilitate a stron-

	Pros	Cons
Online web site/form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Allows user control ◆ Automatically maintain information on activities of seven RCC Participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Potentially costly to develop and set up ◆ Users may not be proactive in using, potentially leaving significant gaps requiring additional human input/oversight ◆ How will new stakeholders get access to the site; new CSOs, etc.? ◆ Who will have access? Will there be moderation? In the absence of moderation, will the information be independent and verifiable or an exercise in public relations?
Form/information sent to RCC Participant Focal Points for compilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Promotes coordination and communication between RCC FPs and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Would require revised ToRs and agreement by RCC FPs
Form/information sent to RCC office for compilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ One single RCC email could be shared with all current and future respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Requires RCC staff to manage exercise

ger role in sharing information. Those RCC participants that do not have a dedicated CVE focal point should appoint one.

- ▶ Depending on the actors and initiatives in each location, formal and regular consultation mechanisms - including independent experts and CSOs - should be established, with meetings at least twice yearly. This can then serve as the basis for more effective regional-level consultation.
- ▶ To effectively share information on PVE/CVE activities, information should be actively collected on a regular basis, perhaps twice yearly, and shared publicly to ensure access by all stakeholders.
- ▶ As strategies and action plans are developed and implemented, they should all have formal monitoring plans, including a clearly defined monitoring mechanism detailing responsibilities and providing an overarching analysis. This information should be shared with domestic stakeholders and regional partners. In addition independent monitoring and analysis should complement official monitoring.

- ▶ Regional-level monitoring and analysis of individual CT/CVE strategies and action plans can both facilitate domestic implementation while enabling regular exchange of good practices and lessons learned. Strategies and, in particular action plans, should be flexible enough to respond both to changing circumstances and project feedback.
- ▶ Each of the RCC participants applying the referral mechanism approach to early warning, prevention and intervention at the community level should share information about the mechanism implementation process domestically and with others in the region, to facilitate frank discussion among officials, experts and community leaders on what does and does not work, and why.
- ▶ Each RCC Participant should more regularly and broadly consult with civil society organizations (including religious communities) and policy groups to ensure broader based buy-in and support.
- ▶ National Coordination Mechanisms should be established in order to effectively implement

policies aimed at countering the financing of terrorism. These mechanisms should bring together officials, private banking managers and others on a regular basis to ensure policy and practical coherence. The UK and Austria are good performers on this issue.

- ▶ More expert research is needed to ensure evidence-based assumptions and response/program design. Specific topics are included in the case study summaries. A broad range of expertise and expert organizations should be supported and cultivated to ensure a wide range of perspectives and voices, and subsequent rigorous debate.
- ▶ While informal projects, camps and activities can target at risk youth and provide opportunities for preventive engagement, the best mechanism to prevent and counter the development of extremist views is through the school system. Respondents in every location noted the need for targeted and general educational reform and improvement. Examples of other successful education initiatives (e.g., to prevent school violence) can offer a road map on how to mainstream PVE/CVE themes into the curricula.
- ▶ Some respondents noted that there is a risk of “CVE fatigue” if *too* much emphasis is put on this issue to the exclusion of other pressing social issues. This could also lead to certain communities being unfairly targeted, potentially increasing their sense of isolation. Further, preventive activities such as social welfare reform, education support and strengthening of

psycho-social services may in fact contribute to communities resilient to radicalization, but should not necessarily be promoted or branded as such.

- ▶ Some respondents noted that they feel there can be little follow up in terms of either action or communication following conferences and events. Fewer, better, sustained events and initiatives - within a long-term strategic context - are preferable to a proliferation of broad events with little continuity.

It would be too simplistic to simply claim that these challenges are due to insufficient economic resources. A deeper diagnostic on the successes and failures of good governance over the past two decades - the period of time in which respondents note extremism has managed to gain a foothold, and which represents the evolution of a person from birth to adulthood - is critical if any preventive measures are to be properly calibrated and delivered. It is unfortunate that the geopolitical factors have facilitated the rise of VE, and the specific new global threat of VE. However, if this threat succeeds in leading to substantial reforms that strengthen governmental accountability, improve domestic and regional coordination, engage civic stakeholders in policymaking, introduce comprehensive education modernization based on critical thinking, tolerance and human rights and generally strengthen communities, then the threat and response will have resulted in positive change regionally as well as globally.

Annex: Framework Interview Questions

1. Is VE a concern in your society? Please explain.
2. Please define “violent extremism” as it exists in/applies to your society.
3. Does the government have a strategy and action plan for PVE/CVE?
 - a. When was it adopted?
 - b. Was there consultation with independent/civic actors?
 - c. Is there a coordination mechanism? Is there a monitoring mechanism in place?
 - d. Please comment on implementation to date
4. Please discuss changes to the legislative framework to strengthen capacity to fight against terrorism, to deal with FTFs, and to counter financing of terror
5. Please discuss coordination on issues related to CT/PVE/CVE, both domestically and regionally.
6. Are there any gaps in the legislative framework?
7. Are there outstanding weaknesses in implementation?
8. PVE/CVE strategies often include a combination of repressive and preventive measures. Please explain how your strategy/action plans addresses these various approaches.
9. The following issues are often noted as central to CVE; please comment on the relevance of the issue to your country/territory/community, and discuss key issues and response needs.
 - a. Identifying drivers of radicalization
 - b. FTFs
 - c. Prisons
 - d. Challenges of de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration
 - e. Role of social media in recruitment and counter-narratives
 - f. Financing of terror
 - g. Impact of refugee crisis
10. The following issues are often noted as key elements of a preventive CVE approach; discuss elements, initiatives, challenges.
 - a. Social welfare centers
 - b. Education (formal, informal)
 - c. Psychological counseling
 - d. Engagement with religious communities
 - e. Community policing
 - f. Resilient local communities
 - g. (Other)
11. Are there formal mechanisms to facilitate coordination and communication between the government and civil society - in general or with regard to the issues of CVE?
12. Is your organization/ministry/institution involved in any PVE/CVE activities? Discuss.
13. Discuss any other international or community initiatives supported now or in the past directly related to PVE/CVE.
14. Have you participated in any PVE/CVE events, workshops or conference? What have you found the most/least useful?
15. Are there sufficient coordination mechanisms available (potentially including officials, experts, academics, activists, community leaders)
 - a. At the community level
 - b. At high levels of domestic governance
 - c. At the regional level
 - d. Through online resources
16. Discuss any planned future initiatives, possible efforts, etc.
17. Recommendations - at the local and regional levels
18. Any further comments



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