



COMMENTARY

VOLUME 6

COUNTERING
VIOLENT EXTREMISM
IN MACEDONIA: CAN
COMMUNITY POLICING
DO SOMETHING
ABOUT IT?

www.analyticamk.org



Violent extremism continues to be one of the greatest security challenges globally. Following the number of terrorist attacks in Europe, it has become inevitable to work on a broader strategy on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). Therefore, CVE has become a common agenda of many countries that are affected by this phenomenon. Having this in mind, Macedonia has also focused to challenge this issue with what can be described as “state centric” approach.

So far, Macedonia has not implemented a specific strategy for CVE and no action plans that provide a more comprehensive policy against this phenomenon have been drafted. This results in limited awareness about this issue and no significant efforts to establish counter-narratives, as indicated in the State Department’s country reports on

terrorism in 2015.¹ In addition, there is a lack of institutional cooperation, especially between institutions at the national and local level. Macedonia’s response to violent extremism primarily focuses on repressive measures by security institutions at the national level. These are oriented on executive and judicial powers, with no focus on community engagement.² Thus, community engagement is a must for a more successful struggle against violent extremism. Hereby a possible implementation of Community Policing (CP) as a structured policy strategy could potentially help the

country for a more inclusive and holistic approach.

In fact, Community Policing, as a policing concept for an integrated and open policy model in transitional societies, has been implemented in Macedonia in the early 2000s. It was initiated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, following the 2001 Armed Conflict, in order to play a special role in transitional and post conflict society.³ Nevertheless, CP has gone passive after its very beginning, but yet remains a ‘silent’ mechanism that the country has adopted some time in its political history. Being so, CP is perceived to be an ideal model for the community engagement on CVE matters. As an already familiar concept for Macedonia, CP prefers a more receptive approach to the needs of the locals, by involving many stakeholders including civil society in the policy-making

1 U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism.

“Country Reports on Terrorism 2015”. Accessed on 14th November 2016 <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2015/257516.htm>

2 Stojkovski Filip and Selimi Kaltrina (2016) “Assessment of Macedonia’s Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism, view from Civil Society”, pg.12, http://www.analyticamk.org/images/Files/extremism-en-updated-FINAL-web_ceb98.pdf

3 Bogdanovski Andreja and Selimi Kaltrina (2015). “Community Policing Model in Skopje – from Idea to Reality”

ing process. In this regard, relying more on the Local Prevention Council which are one of the pillars of the CP, can boost its functionality on reporting extremist expansion on local level. This will help to improve preventive mechanisms on CVE in Macedonia.

In addition, bearing in mind that involvement of citizens in the CP model is seen as something of necessity,⁴ it can also play a role in the process of re-social-

4 Michael D. Reisig. "Community and Problem-Oriented Policing." *Crime and Justice* Vol. 39, No. 1 (2010): 9

ization and re-integration of former foreign fighters. The number of Foreign Fighter that have returned to the country is 86⁵ as of July 2016. Probably, by now, the numbers have increased. Unfortunately, Macedonia does not have concrete re-socialization and re-integration process for these persons.⁶ Hereby CP can show up as an important

5 Website of the President of the Republic of Macedonia. "Speech by the President Ivanov" June 22nd 2016. Accessed on 14th November 2016

6 Stojkovski Filip and Selimi Kaltrina (2016) "Assessment of Macedonia's Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism, view from Civil Society"

player in this process. Establishing a co-operative approach with CSOs on this matter will raise the awareness on this important topic and help the country to prevent bigger possible threats.

Consequently, Community Policing can be an important actor in the CVE arena. The country's policy making structures should focus more on shaping a tailored CVE strategy with not only centralized response, but involving local partners, respectively, and considering Community Policing as a working model for it.

www.analyticamk.org



SAMET SHABANI,
RESEARCH FELLOW,
FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY PROGRAM
sshabani@analyticamk.org