A Whole-of-Society Approach
to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism

A Guidebook for Central Asia

OSCE — Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Europe, Integration
and Foreign Affairs

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ATU	Action against Terrorism Unit
CSO	civil society organization
CVE	countering violent extremism
EU	European Union
FTF	foreign terrorist fighter
GCTS	Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy
HTS	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham
ICT	information and communications technology
ICCT	International Centre for Counter-Terrorism
IS-KP	Islamic State-Khorasan Province
KTJ	Katibat al-Tawhid wal Jihad
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODIHR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
P/CVERLT	preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism
PVE	preventing violent extremism
RAN	Radicalization Awareness Network
TNTD	Transnational Threats Department
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNOCT	United Nations Office for Counter Terrorism
UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VEO	violent extremist organization
VERLT	violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism

Glossary

This glossary serves to clarify key terms used in this guidebook. The definitions are for this guidebook only and are not official OSCE definitions.

Civil society — a diverse body of non-governmental actors, communities, and formal or informal associations with a wide range of roles, that engages in public life seeking to advance shared values and objectives.

Civil society actors — members of the community, including women, youth, and religious and other community leaders, including those who are well positioned to provide impactful and long-lasting contributions to the well-being of society.

Community — women, men, social groups, and institutions that are based in the same area and/or have shared interests.

Community resilience — the ability of a community to withstand, respond to, and recover from a wide range of harmful and adverse events.

Community security — general terms that refer to the mutually desirable goals of protecting local residents of, and visitors to, an area from threats posed by anti-social behaviour, social disorder, crime, and terrorism.

Community-targeted approach to terrorism — counter-terrorism policies and practices that, driven by the security priorities of a state, target communities for intelligence-gathering and enforcement activities to detect suspected terrorists and thwart their activities, especially active plans for attacks.

Conditions conducive to terrorism — the various social, economic, political, and other factors (e.g., lack of the rule of law and violations of human rights, lack of good governance, prolonged unresolved conflicts) that contribute to circumstances in which individuals might become terrorists.

Countering violent extremism — proactive, non-coercive actions to counter efforts by violent extremists to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers to violence and to address specific factors that facilitate and enable violent extremist recruitment and radicalization to violence.

Counter-terrorism — policies, laws, and strategies developed by state actors and implemented primarily by law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and sometimes by the military, aimed at killing or capturing terrorists, thwarting terrorist plots, and dismantling terrorist organizations.

Former violent extremists, "formers" — individuals who have disengaged from a path to violent extremism and radicalization that leads to terrorism and who can play a useful role in raising awareness and communicating credible counter-narratives.

Gender perspective — awareness and consideration of differential needs, experiences, and statuses of women and men based on socio-cultural context.

Mahalla — neighbourhood committees that unite the representatives of various ethnic and religious groups through the creation of a common identity based on a shared residence criterion. They act like self-government entities.

Public-private partnerships — voluntary, reciprocal, and trust-based collaboration between, on the one hand, one or more public authorities, and, on the other hand, one or more non-governmental stakeholders (e.g., civil society organizations, media, and businesses). The term *public* is used here to refer to public authorities.

Radicalization that leads to terrorism — the dynamic process whereby an individual comes to accept terrorist violence as a possible, perhaps even legitimate, course of action. This may eventually, but not necessarily, lead this person to advocate, act in support of, or engage in terrorism.

Whole-of-government approach — an approach to preventing and countering violent extremism that denotes public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues.

Whole-of-society approach — an approach to P/CVERLT that envisions a role for civil society actors and other non-governmental actors, as well as relevant government actors across sectors, in the prevention of violent extremism.

Foreword

Terrorist activity in today's world is complex, multifaceted, and not confined to national borders. Terrorist groups are less cohesive, and the threat they pose is harder to understand and predict. We are witnessing not only directed attacks in the OSCE area, but also self-inspired acts of violence. Some terrorist actors are foreign fighters; others have never left their communities. The goals, motives, and justification for the violence have changed as well, and the causes and drivers of violent extremism are multifaceted.

This reality requires a comprehensive, nuanced, and internationally co-ordinated response. The OSCE participating States have been unequivocal not only in their condemnation of terrorism and violent extremism, but also in their support of a multidimensional approach that focuses on the prevention of radicalization and of violent extremism that leads to terrorism (VERLT).

The OSCE's commitment to preventing and countering VERLT (P/CVERLT) reflects the growing awareness and understanding that effective counter-terrorism efforts are vital but insufficient without an emphasis on prevention. Understanding why individuals are willing to give their lives to a violent extremist movement or cause and working to address and mitigate the issues and grievances and that push them in that direction is a critical investment of our time and resources. While there is an increased awareness among policymakers in the OSCE area of the importance of P/CVERLT, there is still not enough dialogue, engagement, and co-operation with civil society and other non-governmental actors in conceptualizing, developing, and implementing impactful P/CVERLT activities and policies.

Successful P/CVERLT initiatives are rooted in a whole-of-society approach that harnesses the influence and efforts of civil society, in particular, families, women, youth, educators, and religious and community leaders. This guidebook reflects the OSCE commitment to the importance of trust-based partnerships between government and civil society actors in the prevention of VERLT, as well as our understanding of the complexities, benefits, and challenges of this relationship.

It provides practical guidelines and helpful background for both policymakers and practitioners who are working to advance P/CVERLT initiatives.

The Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) in the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department is a resource hub for the OSCE's 57 participating States, field operations, and independent institutions and helps support and implement the OSCE's counter-terrorism commitments. It is our hope that this guidebook will contribute to inclusive, multistakeholder processes in developing P/CVERLT programmes. We trust that the issues addressed in this publication will help shape constructive discussions and dialogue.

The guidebook reflects an explicit regional focus on the countries of Central Asia. Challenges unique to the region and examples of emerging good practice in these countries are highlighted. A companion publication developed for South-Eastern Europe was published in October 2018 and is available on the OSCE website (https://www.osce.org/secretariat/400241).

This guidebook is one in a series of guidebooks produced by the ATU on the challenges in developing and implementing effective programmes to prevent and counter VERLT. We anticipate that this guidebook, and our forthcoming publications, will prove to be valuable resources for policymakers and practitioners across the OSCE area who are working to foster inclusive approaches to peace and security.

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Executive Summary

Violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) threaten the countries of Central Asia. Traditional counter-terrorist operations are inadequate to tackle this threat and must be combined with efforts to prevent VERLT.

Effective prevention requires cooperation and coordination between relevant government actors — this is known as a "whole-of-government" approach. Whole-of-government actors include police; national security committees; committees on religious affairs, youth, and women; and ministries of interior, labour, education, and social welfare, among others.

Successful prevention also requires dialogue and cooperation between government actors and an array of non-governmental actors — this is known as a "whole-of-society" approach. The broader public, local communities, and the private sector should be seen by Governments as stakeholders and partners in preventing and countering VERLT (P/CVERLT), rather than as simply the passive object of law enforcement activities.

Whole-of-society actors that can be valuable P/CVERLT partners include youth, women, and community leaders. Youth and women can be vulnerable to recruitment into VERLT but they can also be powerful agents of social change who can steer individuals away from the dangers of radicalization to violence. Community leaders are critical for fostering cultures of tolerance and open dialogue, and for working with vulnerable community members in order to reject violent ideologies. Other key civil society actors include educators, researchers, the information communications technology and social media sector, and journalists.

Governments have the responsibility to ensure security and respect for human rights, as well as uphold the rule of law and implement policies that counter discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. But civil society actors are often well placed, knowledgeable, and experienced in working with specific groups to help identify and address the grievances that make individuals more vulnerable to VERLT. Private sector actors, too, have unique capacities that can make them ideal partners for Governments.

Additional advantages of whole-of-society partnerships include creating a space for constructive engagement between the State and its citizens, fostering trust and understanding, widening ownership of P/CVERLT policies and strategies, and providing feedback on and monitoring the impact of those policies and strategies. Over time, a whole-of-society approach will contribute to good governance more broadly.

Ideally, a whole-of-society approach should be integrated into all stages of developing, implementing, and monitoring P/CVERLT strategies, including PVE National Action Plans. These stages include situation analysis, knowledge creation, and research; drafting of objectives and activities; implementation of projects; monitoring and evaluation; strategic communication; and advocacy and feedback mechanisms.

Yet, these partnerships are not without their challenges. Problems include lack of trust and issues related to credibility and legitimacy; conceptual misunderstandings and differences in understanding of national security; personal safety risks; a dearth of existing mechanisms for co-ordination and co-operation; and a lack of the technical skills required to conduct effective partnerships.

Many of these problems can be overcome by adopting practical measures to encourage and enable effective partnerships. Governments and civil society should both discard negative and inaccurate stereotypes of each other, commit themselves to behaving professionally at all times, and strive for consensus on the VERLT terminology they employ. Governments should provide civil society and private sector actors with the legal and political space they need in which to engage those vulnerable to VERLT. Police and other security forces should not instrumentalize civil society organizations to gather criminal intelligence and detect threats within communities; such efforts would be counterproductive.

The OSCE is committed to supporting its participating States in developing effective, sustainable, and multidimensional approaches to the prevention of VERLT. Numerous policy documents (some of the most important are listed near the end of this report) attest to and explain the merits of various components of a whole-of-society approach

1. Introduction

Violent extremism and terrorism are, fundamentally, repudiations of the democratic values of tolerance, respect, inclusion, and diversity that underpin the work of the OSCE. While the 57 participating States of the OSCE experience different types and levels of threats associated with transnational terrorism, all States can benefit from a holistic security strategy that includes both human rights compliant counter-terrorism activities and an investment in the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT).

Traditional approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (P/CVERLT) have often relied on reactive security-based responses that involve identifying individuals and groups engaged in violent extremism, curbing the financing that sustains their efforts, preventing their movement and travel across borders, and disrupting their planning and activities.[1]

Although reactive types of measures, in full compliance of human rights, are necessary in order to confront already mobilized extremists, long-term success in reducing VERLT depends on designing and implementing effective prevention measures. Security or military responses do not address the social and economic root causes that feed the problem in the first case. Furthermore, such responses can potentially exacerbate radicalization and provoke backlashes if they are indiscriminate, overly restrictive, or drastically limit freedoms and fundamental human rights.

Increasingly, even security institutions have come to the realization that a security-based response is not sufficient to deal with root causes of terrorism. As a result, an increasing number of countries are developing Plans of Actions for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE Action Plans) or broadening existing security strategies to deal with preventive aspects.

Preventing radicalization requires understanding and tackling the grievances and motivations that lead people to join violent extremist organizations (VEOs);

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1   See William Braniff, "Recasting and Repositioning CVE as a Grand Strategic Response to Terrorism" (College Park, MD: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism [START], University of Maryland, 14 November 2017).

raising awareness of what makes individuals vulnerable to VERLT; promoting a culture of peace and inclusion through the mass media, the education system, and online; fostering dialogue and tolerance among ethnic communities; combating belligerent nationalism; and promoting transparent and accountable governance.

To tackle VERLT in these ways, States need to draw on the support of society in general, including civil society and businesses, and not rely solely on traditional security sectors and actors. P/CVERLT requires an emphasis on dialogue, co-operation, and partnerships between relevant government sectors (in particular, police and ministries of health, education, and social welfare) and non-governmental actors (including civil society actors, academia, the media, and the private sector). This approach is known as a whole-of-society approach. Partnerships among these actors improve the chances for conceptualizing, developing, implementing, and monitoring impactful and effective P/CVERLT activities and policies.

The importance of involving civil society in a comprehensive and multidimensional response to the threat of terrorism has been underscored in UN policy documents. The UN General Assembly, in its resolution adopting the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) on 8 September 2006, affirmed the determination of Member States to "further encourage non-governmental organizations and civil society to engage, as appropriate, on how to enhance efforts to implement the Strategy."[2]

The OSCE, as a Chapter 8 organization of the UN Charter, has an aligned policy framing. The OSCE's Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism, adopted in 2002, recognized that it was vital to engage civil society in finding common political settlement for conflicts and to promote human rights and tolerance as an essential element in the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism. In 2007, the OSCE issued Ministerial Statement MC.DOC/3/07 on Supporting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (a link to this statement, and to other relevant OSCE and UN instruments can be found in the Further Resources section near the end of this document.)

Since 2007, the OSCE has been engaged in building the capacity of participating States to counter terrorism. Key OSCE policy documents have emphasized the importance of governments engaging with a wide range of non-government actors — civil society, women, youth, business, industry, and media, among others — in efforts to prevent VERLT. For instance, Ministerial Council Decision 10/08

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2   United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution A/RES/60/288, 8 September 2006.

encourages States to "to continue to exchange ideas and national best practices about their [P/CVERLT] strategies and measures" with civil society, the media, and the private sector, and calls on States to " promote public-private partnerships in countering terrorism, where appropriate, among public authorities, the private sector, civil society, members and representatives of religious communities, and the media." These calls have been echoed in more recent declarations, such as the 2016 Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening OSCE Efforts to Prevent and Counter Terrorism and the 2015 Ministerial Council Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism. In the latter, participating States have acknowledged

> *the important roles that youth, families, women, victims of terrorism, religious, cultural and education leaders, civil society, as well as the media, can play to counter the violent extremist narrative that can incite terrorist actors, and to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, in particular by fostering mutual respect and understanding, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence among cultures, and by promoting and protecting human rights, fundamental freedoms, democratic principles and the rule of law.*[3]

There is a growing recognition that individual communities and the broader public are stakeholders and should be partners in countering terrorism in compliance with human rights law, rather than being simply the passive object of law enforcement activities.

This understanding is also in line with the OSCE's conception of a comprehensive approach that goes beyond the traditional view of physical security and considers economic, environmental, political, and community security as important goals of human dignity and freedoms. Such an approach recognizes that many different root causes and grievances — be they political, economic, social, psychological, or otherwise — can collectively add up to violent extremist behaviour and possibly lead to terrorism. Thus, a comprehensive security approach to P/CVERLT calls for multidisciplinary solutions, where justice, human rights, development, education, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and rule of law intersect to prevent the turn to violent extremism. It also calls for the engagement of civil society actors, in support of states' efforts, to the contribution of multifaceted, comprehensive, and sustainable solutions, and is aligned with the concept of whole of society.

A focus on partnerships for P/CVERLT brings together relevant government and non-governmental actors with complementary resources, capabilities, and

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3   OSCE, "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism", MC.DOC/4/15, ministerial declaration, 4 December 2015, https://www.osce.org/cio/208216?download=true.

expertise, enabling a wider scope and coverage of activities and the receipt of timely feedback on local needs. The benefits, modalities, and challenges of such partnerships between governments, on the one side, and civil society and the private sector, on the other side, need to be better explored in order to provide OSCE States with viable options for achieving a comprehensive and collaborative form of security, one built on genuine sharing of responsibilities at the national and subnational levels.

With these ideas in mind, this guidebook explores the advantages of a trust-based relationship between government and non-governmental actors, identifies the areas where partnerships best serve P/CVERLT, provides concrete guidance on how to strengthen and improve those partnerships, and examines the challenges to overcome in the Central Asian context. The ideas and guidelines presented in this publication are written to prompt dialogue and critical discussion between governments and non-governmental actors on how to strengthen partnerships for P/CVERLT. In this dialogue, based on trust, there should be a willingness to include and listen, as well as a capacity to be heard and contribute.

The publication is written for **policymakers and practitioners** who are working to craft and implement policies, strategies, and actions plans for P/CVERLT by helping them deepen their appreciation for the role of non-governmental actors in P/CVERLT and encouraging an inclusive process in the conceptualization, design, and application of these policies and strategies. This guidebook is also written for **civil society actors** — organizations and individuals — engaged in P/CVERLT, with the view of giving them new ideas and tools for developing P/CVERLT-relevant activities and contributing to government efforts in this regard. Another audience for this guidebook is **private sector actors**, which traditionally have not been active in P/CVERLT but which have the potential to play valuable roles in a whole-of-society approach to P/CVERLT.

This guidebook has been tailored to be relevant to the Central Asia region, a critical area of focus for the OSCE and others, and home to five of the Organization's field operations. To this end, in Tashkent in November 2018 the OSCE Transnational Threat Department (TNTD) Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) convened a group of governments, civil society actors, academics, and other experts from the region to harness their insights on the challenges and emerging good practices in the regional context.

The following section, Section 2, clarifies the concepts of VERLT, P/CVERLT, whole-of-society, and whole-of-government, among others, and explains the importance of respecting human rights in P/CVERLT policies and programmes.

Section 3 examines the Central Asian context for P/CVERLT. The region has

made significant strides in terms of prosperity, stability, and democracy, but faces threats from both foreign and home-grown VEOs. The complex array of factors driving recruitment by terrorist organizations such as ISIS/Daesh make it imperative for governments to partner with society in tackling VERLT.

Section 4 identifies the key actors who should be part of a whole-of-society approach to P/CVERLT. These include some groups — such as youth and women — who are often seen as part of the problem of VERLT but who can be vital contributors to the solution. The section explains why not only youth and women but also community leaders, educators, academics, journalists, information technology specialists, and even former violent extremists should be made part of P/CVERLT initiatives.

Some of the advantages of a whole-of-society approach are highlighted in Section 5. They include opportunities to share responsibilities and widen ownership of P/CVERLT efforts, to leverage the capacity and legitimacy of civil society organizations, and to provide peaceful outlets for groups and individuals who want their grievances addressed. Section 5 also looks at the challenges associated with a whole-of-society approach, which range from a lack of trust between government and non-governmental actors, different understandings of national security, and a lack of mechanisms for co-operation.

Section 6 offers guidelines on integrating a whole-of-society approach into a P/CVERLT strategy. Partnerships should be built and developed during all phases of such a strategy, from initial situation analysis to the drafting of activities and the implementation of projects. Co-operation and co-ordination should not stop with implementation, however, but continue through efforts to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programmes, communicate government strategies to the public, and incorporate feedback from civil society into constantly evolving programmes.

The final section, Section 7, presents a series of general recommendations for making P/CVERLT co-operation between government and non-governmental actors easier to achieve and partnerships more productive.

This guidebook not only draws upon the expertise and accumulated experience of the OSCE field operations in Central Asia, but also builds on previous OSCE publications, including the report *The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism: A Focus on South-Eastern Europe* published by TNTD/ATU in October 2018. A list of OSCE and UN instruments relevant to whole-of-society P/CVERLT approaches can be found near the end of this guidebook, along with a bibliography of key publications used in its development.

2. Key concepts

2.1 Understanding violent extremism, radicalization, and VERLT

The OSCE is mindful of the need to exercise great care when using certain terms in the field of counter-terrorism. The OSCE explains **"radicalization that leads to terrorism"** as "the dynamic process whereby an individual comes to accept terrorist violence as a possible, perhaps even legitimate, course of action. This may eventually, but not necessarily, lead this person to advocate, act in support of, or to engage in terrorism".[4] In line with this understanding, the OSCE intentionally uses the term **"violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT)"**, which implies that some instances of violent extremism and radicalization may *not* lead to terrorism.

There are different legal, policy, and academic definitions of "terrorism", "radicalization", and "violent extremism". These definitions serve different purposes and have not always been aligned. Efforts to enhance international co-operation and share and promote good practices have, at times, been hampered by these definitional variations.

In fact, the term **"violent extremism"** is rarely defined but generally refers to acts of violence that are justified by or associated with an extremist religious, social, or political ideology. The concept of violent extremism is broader and more expansive than terrorism, because it accommodates any kind of violence, as long as its motivation is deemed extremist.[5]

Neither the United Nations (UN) nor the European Union (EU) has an official definition of violent extremism. However, the UN Secretary-General's Plan

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4   OSCE, *Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach* (hereafter *Community-Policing Approach*) (OSCE: Vienna, February 2014), https://www.osce.org/secretariat/111438?download=true.

5   See Andrew Glazzard and Martine Zeuthen, "Violent Extremism", (Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, February 2016), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0895ae5274a31e000002c/Violent-extremism_RP.pdf; and Peter Neumann, *Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation That Lead to Terrorism: Ideas, Recommendations, and Good Practices from the OSCE Region* (OSCE, 28 September 2017), pp. 71–72, https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/346841?download=true.

of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism does state that "violent extremism encompasses a wider category of manifestations and there is a risk that a conflation of the terms ["violent extremism" and "terrorism"] may lead to the justification of an overly broad application of counter-terrorism measures, including against forms of conduct that should not qualify as terrorist acts".[6]

The term **"radicalization"** refers to the process by which an individual increasingly espouses or supports extremist ideas. Radicalization is typically caused not by a single influence, but by a complex mix of factors and dynamics. It is a concept with different interpretations. In some cases, the term is used in a manner that suggests an implicit link between radical ideas and violence. This is problematic, both because not all who hold radical (or extremist) ideas will engage in or support violent action, and because the ability to hold ideas — regardless of their nature — is enshrined in international law as a fundamental human right.[7]

2.2 Programmes and strategies to prevent and counter VERLT

The term **"preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism" (P/CVERLT)** refers to a spectrum of policies, programmes, and interventions intended to prevent and counter extremism related to terrorist radicalization. This framing adopted by the OSCE emphasizes the link between radicalization and extremism, on the one side, and, on the other side, acts of violence and criminalized terrorism. In this way, the OSCE explicitly underscores the importance of preserving fundamental freedoms when working to prevent these security threats.

P/CVERLT is different from counter-terrorism in that it is non-coercive in nature (e.g., it does not involve arrests, investigations, and prosecutions) and therefore does not target terrorists or terrorism directly. Instead, the focus of P/CVERLT is on (1) preventing and countering processes of radicalization that may lead to terrorism; (2) addressing and reducing grievances and structural social,

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6   United Nations General Assembly, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General, Seventieth Session, A/70/674, 24 December 2015, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674.

7   The right to freedom of opinion and expression is protected by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It stipulates that everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference. Furthermore, freedom of expression also protects the expression of views and ideas that disturb, offend, or shock (and that may strike some people as radical or extreme).

economic, and political conditions that may be conducive to violent extremism; (3) assisting those already radicalized to terrorism to disengage and reintegrate into society; and (4) building community resilience to VERLT.

Counter-terrorism, in contrast, refers to the suite of activities undertaken primarily by law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and sometimes by the military, "aimed at thwarting terrorist plots and dismantling terrorist organizations" and criminal justice responses that investigate and bring to justice those who have committed terrorist crimes.[8] While P/CVERLT national strategies and plans of action are primarily designed and driven by state authorities, their implementation is typically not limited to national government actors and includes a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including local and other subnational authorities, civil society, and the private sector. As such, P/CVERLT efforts can be best understood as programmes and policies that **complement** traditional counter-terrorism approaches.

Other analogous or overlapping terminology used in the international community include "countering violent extremism" (CVE), "preventing violent extremism" (PVE), and "preventing and countering violent extremism" (P/CVE). "P/CVE" is a broad umbrella term that covers activities implemented by governmental and non-governmental actors seeking to prevent or mitigate violent extremism through non-coercive measures that are united by the objective of addressing the drivers of violent extremism. Development organizations and practitioners, in particular, have individual preferences for applying the terms "PVE" or "CVE". For example, "PVE" has gained traction within the UN and among development agencies. Its emphasis is on addressing and mitigating enabling conditions and root causes of terrorism, such as weak governance, exclusionary social structures, and inadequate education.[9] However, there is often little difference in the specific objectives and actions on the ground between PVE and CVE.[10] As with P/CVE, they both have proactive and preventive efforts at their core. According to the UN Development Programme, "a distinction can usually be drawn between CVE, which is focused on countering the activities of existing violent extremists", and "PVE, which is focused on preventing the further spread of violent extremism", but "in practice, initiatives will frequently work on both aspects, with a combined approach".[11]

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8   Neumann, *Countering Violent Extremism*, 71–72.

9   UNGA, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

10   Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and Civipol, *EU Operational Guidelines on the Preparation and Implementation of EU Financed Actions Specific to Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Third Countries* (Brussels: European Commission, November 2017), https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/eu-ct-cve-guidelines-20171213_en.pdf.

11   United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives, and the Tipping Point For Recruitment* (New York: UNDP 2017), http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf.

The spectrum of activities, programmes, and types of engagements that fall under P/CVERLT is wide and encompasses efforts at the international, regional, national, subnational, community, and individual level.[12] The specific lines of efforts at the national level are generally determined by the priority action areas identified in the strategic frameworks of each country. Ultimately, the types of approaches and programmes are influenced by, among other things, the nature of the threat as well as prevalent social norms and political circumstances, structures of governance, resources, capacities, risk assessments, and traditions.

2.3 Understanding whole-of-government, civil society, and whole-of-society

The term **"whole-of-government"** describes co-operation and co-ordination among different parts of government. The concept came to prominence in the field of international relations, where it referred to co-operation among the security, diplomatic, and development sectors of a government. Whole-of-government approaches have since been employed in a variety of fields. In the context of P/CVERLT, whole-of-government efforts typically involve horizontal co-ordination among government institutions such as the police force and ministries of health, justice, education, and social services. A whole-of-government approach does not require that *all* parts of government are actively involved in a P/CVERLT effort, but it does imply that all *relevant* ministries and agencies are involved or could be involved.

While it has no precise definition, **"civil society"** is broadly understood as "the arena outside the family, market, and state".[13] Its components are often explained by what they are not, such as "non-governmental", "not-for-profit", and "non-commercial" entities, rather than what they are. In general, civil society is best understood as **a diverse body of civil actors, communities, and formal or informal associations with a wide range of roles, who engage in public life seeking to advance shared values and objectives**. Civil society actors typically

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12 Georgia Holmer and Peter Bauman, *Taking Stock: Analytic Tools for Understanding and Designing P/CVE Programs* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace [USIP], August 2018), https://www.usip.org/publications/2018/09/taking-stock-analytic-tools-understanding-and-designing-pcve-programs.

13 Centre for Civil Society (CCS), "Report on Activities, July 2005–August 2006" (London: CCS, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2006); and Charles Kojo VanDyke, *Concept and Definition of Civil Society Sustainability* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2017).

include individuals, such as community leaders, and a wide variety of civil society organizations (CSOs), such as grassroots associations; religious leaders and faith-based organizations; online groups and social media communities; international, local, and grassroots non-governmental organizations (NGO); labour unions and professional associations; charitable and philanthropic foundations; academic and research institutions; and recreational community groups.[14]

Depending on context, families and political parties can be considered part of the civil society mosaic; more commonly they are not. Although it seeks to shape policies, laws, and rules, civil society does not seek to gain control of state office; therefore, it is distinctly different from political organizations and parties that compete for control of the government. By implication, political parties are generally not considered part of civil society, although sometimes they are regarded as hybrid CSOs.[15] Similarly, families, households, and kinship networks are commonly excluded from the civil society realm and regarded as part of the private domain that is centred on intimate and blood-relation ties.[16]

Traditionally, civil society has operated in the physical space, but information and communications technology (ICT) innovations in recent decades have ushered in a new area of citizen engagement and have fundamentally changed the way people associate and seek to advance social goals. This technological revolution has resulted in the proliferation of social media communities of networked citizens that transcend geographical and social divides. These formal or informal networks have the ability to rapidly mobilize support, drawing attention to causes (positive or negative) that otherwise might have had very limited influence.

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14 The European Union's 2018 publication, *Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Thematic Programme 'Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Local Authorities' for the Period 2014–2020*, includes the following examples of CSOs: "non-governmental organizations, organizations representing indigenous peoples, organizations representing national and/ or ethnic minorities, diaspora organizations, migrants' organizations in partner countries, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organizations representing economic and social interests, organizations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organizations and organizations combating discrimination, local organizations (including networks) involved in decentralized regional co-operation and integration, consumer organizations, women's and youth organizations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organizations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, philosophical and non-confessional organizations, the media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations". See https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multiannual-indicative-programme-civil-society-organisations-and-local-authorities-2014-2020_en.

15 J. A. Scholte, "Global Civil Society: Changing the World?" CSGR Working Paper 31/99 (University of Warwick, Coventry, UK: Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation); https://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Global_Civil_Society_Changing_the_World.pdf; and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *Conducting a DG Assessment: A Framework for Strategy Development* (Washington, DC: USAID, November 2000), http://nsagm.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/0/3/12030125/pnach305.pdf.

16 Nevertheless, some political theorists view the family or the sphere of domestic life as an integral part of civil society. See GCS Knowledgebase, s.v. "Gender and Civil Society", by Jude Howell. 2005 http://www.gcsknowledgebase.org/blog/y20056/chapter-01-gender-and-civil-society/.

The term **"whole-of-society"** describes a cooperative and coordinated effort involving relevant government agencies and non-governmental actors, including those actors and sectors — such as the business sector — usually excluded from definitions of civil society. [17] The concept of whole-of-society originated in the field of public health but has since been applied to other endeavours to tackle problems that affect many different parts of society and that can be tackled effectively only by society-wide action and co-operation. To some extent, a whole-of-society approach can be seen as an expression of the principle of government reaching out to and working with actors outside of government to address an issue that neither government nor civil society can handle effectively by itself.

The effectiveness of a whole-of-society approach to P/CVERLT is largely dependent on the active and continued participation of a wide range of non-governmental actors in the design and implementation of programs. Among these actors, youth, women, and community leaders, including religious and ethnic community leaders, are key elements, able to provide impactful and enduring contributions to preventing VERLT. As is the case with whole-of-government approaches, a whole-of-society approach does not require that *all* government and non-governmental actors are actively involved in a P/CVERLT effort, but it does imply that all *relevant* actors are involved or could be involved.

Whole-of-government initiatives and whole-of-society efforts should be seen as complementary and can be pursued simultaneously (as well as sequentially). As a government works to enhance co-ordination among different government institutions, it can also develop partnerships between government institutions and non-governmental entities. Including all relevant government and society sectors in P/CVERLT efforts may be virtually impossible to achieve in practice, but taking steps towards that end — although inevitably piecemeal — will make P/CVERLT efforts more effective. Governments should not wait until they feel they have successfully implemented a whole-of-government approach before embarking on whole-of-society initiatives, especially because civil society actors as well as government actors should participate in the design of P/CVERLT measures, not merely in their implementation.

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17 Some actors, it may be noted, may occupy a gray area between government and civil society, such as government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs), which are not part of formal government structures but also do not have the independence from government that is often regarded as a defining feature of civil society and NGOs. In Central Asia, entitles such as the Youth Union and the Women's Union fall into the category of GONGOs. Just because they occupy this liminal position between government and civil society is no reason to exclude them from whole-of-society efforts.

2.4 The importance of respecting human rights

If P/CVERLT policies and programmes are to enjoy the support of civil society, they must protect human rights; not infringe upon civil liberties (in particular, the freedoms of opinion and expression, association, and religion or belief); and be in full compliance of legal frameworks, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and domestic criminal and civil law. Governments must be careful to ensure that any qualified restrictions are temporary, legitimate, necessary, and proportionate.[18]

States have an obligation to protect everyone within their jurisdiction against terrorist acts, and they have an obligation to do so in compliance with international human rights law. The promotion of human rights is in itself a powerful deterrent to violent extremism and terrorism, [19] and human rights-based P/CVERLT measures can actually increase operational effectiveness. By contrast, P/CVERLT measures that fail to respect human rights are counter-productive, not least because a lack of respect for human rights constitutes in many ways a condition conducive to terrorism, and can play into the hands of terrorists and terrorist recruiters who seek to undermine security, social cohesion, and human rights.

P/CVERLT measures that reinforce stereotypes, such as profiling, or which stigmatize certain ethnic or religious communities are also counter-productive because they undermine trust between authorities and the public and may contribute to the radicalization of individuals and groups who are wrongfully targeted. Defining early warning signs of terrorist radicalization is also problematic from a human rights perspective. The right to hold any ideology or belief — even if it is considered to be radical or extreme — as well as to peacefully express it, is a democratic requirement protected under international law and enshrined in OSCE commitments. Holding radical or extreme views should not be considered a crime per se if those views are not associated with violence or another unlawful act.

Respecting and protecting human rights can make law enforcement and P/CVERLT policies and practices more effective. Moreover, by protecting human rights, states can address conditions that encourage terrorism and can prevent the spread of violent extremism. P/CVERLT and the promotion of human rights are therefore complementary and mutually reinforcing objectives.

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18   OSCE, *Community-Policing Approach.*

19   UNGA, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

3. The Central Asian context

Since they attained independence in the early 1990s, the countries of Central Asia have made significant progress on several fronts. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have become more prosperous, stable, and democratic. One example of this democratic progress is the increase in the number and diversity of CSOs. These CSOs have been active in a wide variety of issue areas, addressing peacebuilding, democratization, good governance, the rule of law, gender equality, youth empowerment, and environmental concerns.

Despite such stabilizing efforts, Central Asian societies today, like much of the world, face the challenge of addressing terrorism and violent extremism. The threat reflects a combination of external (regional and geopolitical) and domestic trends. Threats from outside include jihadist international terrorism, international criminal activities in the region, the establishment of an ISIL/Daesh front in Afghanistan, and the potential return of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from Syria and Iraq to their countries of origin in Central Asia. The presence of FTFs in neighbouring Afghanistan, where an affiliate of Daesh has been created by the name of Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP), is a common concern to all Central Asian states. Even if the IS-KP is unable to take territory, it has the potential to influence the disenfranchised and marginalized populations throughout the region and inspire sectarian (Shia-Sunni) or intra-Sunni (Hanafi/Deobandi versus Salafi) violence, something that has not previously been a feature of the region.

The number of Central Asian FTFs who are operating outside of their country of origin is hard to assess. The figures cited by most sources tend to be at best speculations and difficult to verify. By most estimates, between 2,000 and 5,000 Central Asians travelled to ISIL/Daesh-controlled territory between 2013 and 2015. According to a July 2018 study by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, of the 41,490 people from 80 countries who affiliated with the Islamic State specifically, 5,965 came from Central Asia, and 30 per cent of those

were women.[20] Today, a distinction should be made between Central Asian FTFs who operated in Iraq and Syria in 2013-17 and those who have since moved to Afghanistan after ISIL/Daesh lost territory in the Middle East.

According to a UN report issued in January 2019,[21] ISIL/Daesh is now seeking to expand its area of activity in Central Asia and has called for terrorist attacks on public gatherings, primarily in the Ferghana Valley. ISIL/Daesh claimed responsibility for the killing of four foreign cyclists in Tajikistan in July 2018 and for an attack that sparked a riot in a high-security prison in Khujand, Tajikistan, in November 2018. Between 200 and 300 Uzbek nationals are among the fighters in each of the Khatiba Imam al-Bukhari and the Katibat al-Tawhid wal Jihad (KTJ), both battalions of the al-Nusra Front that has pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda. Approximately 40 to 50 fighters from Kazakhstan are reported to be in Syrian Arab Republic with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). The same number of Kazakh nationals are reported to be with ISIL/Daesh. According to participating States, there are approximately 500 FTFs in Badakhshan Province who are from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, the North Caucasus, and Pakistan; these fighters reportedly operate under the umbrella of the Taliban.

But not all threats are external, and counter-terrorism measures are insufficient to address root causes. All Central Asian countries have witnessed the phenomenon of radicalization to violence within their societies in recent years, though they have been affected differently and have responded differently. All have realized that a security-oriented response is not enough to deal with the root causes of domestic radicalization. A more comprehensive approach is needed, one based on an understanding of what motivates certain segments of society and certain individuals to join violent groups.

The process of radicalization to violence in Central Asia is not linked to only one driver. It is a complex system of possible triggers that include political, economic, ideological, religious, social, and psychological factors.[22] To be effective, P/CVERLT efforts need to encompass development and governance components. These include measures to increase the literacy of the population, create jobs, and reduce social exclusion and isolation. Preventing recruitment into VEOs among uneducated, unemployed, and marginalized youth calls for strategies to empower them and facilitate their participation in public economic

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20 Joana Cook and Gina Vale, *From Daesh to "Diaspora": Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State* (London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation. King's College, 2018).

21 The 23rd Report (January 2019) of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Daesh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

22 Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "Radicalization, Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Literature Review of Main Challenges, Possible Responses and Areas for Further Research" (study prepared for the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia and the UN Office of Counter Terrorism, August 2018).

and political life. Preventing the recruitment of women requires measures to educate them, raise their awareness of the dangers and risks, and empower them so that they can decide the course of their own lives. Countering the recruitment messages of VEOs requires enhanced education, both formal secular and religious. Preventing and countering the use of the Internet and new ICT tools for recruitment purposes needs multipronged strategies, all rooted in a commitment to human rights.

Governments should not devise and implement comprehensive strategies for P/CVERLT without input from society. Government should share burdens and responsibilities with civil society actors and other non-governmental actors that can bring their unique networks, expertise, and capabilities to help meet the challenge.

If governments and non-governmental actors are to work together on preventing VERLT, they need not only knowledge about what preventive measures work under which conditions but also an understanding of how to best make use of the comparative advantages of each side of the partnership. They need to develop a culture of partnership — a whole-of-society ethos that is able to overcome a lack of trust on both sides and encourage government and civil society actors to correct deficits in political commitments to dialogue and inclusion, resolve differences in conceptual understanding of P/CVERLT issues, and address operational shortcomings related to capacity, lack of experience, and fragmentation of effort.

4. Key actors

As explained in the Introduction, P/CVERLT requires an emphasis on dialogue, co-operation, and partnerships between relevant government sectors (in particular, police and ministries of health, education, and social welfare) and non-governmental actors (including civil society actors, academia, the media, and the private sector). This approach is known as a whole-of-society approach. Partnerships among these actors improve the chances for conceptualizing, developing, implementing, and monitoring impactful and effective P/CVERLT activities and policies.

4.1 Government actors

In Central Asia, the P/CVERLT agenda has been handled by multiple ministries. While counter-terrorism has been mostly the domain of national security committees, the adoption of PVE Action Plans has involved the creation of a host of new entities, such as prosecutor's generals and committees on religious affairs, which have been put in charge of monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plans.[23] This development opens up many possibilities for improved co-ordination and communication among a variety of ministries, departments, and committees. Insofar as these actors work with other government actors, this trend towards multiactor co-ordination represents progress towards the adoption of a *whole-of-government approach* by Central Asian States.

A whole-of-government approach to P/CVERLT is not the same as a *whole-of-society approach*, but many of the government actors involved in the former are likely to be involved in the latter. The kinds of government actors that are likely to have important or vital contributions to make towards a whole-of-society approach to preventing VERLT include, but are not limited to, the following:

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23 The institution responsible for coordinating these efforts differs from country to country. In Kazakhstan, for instance, that role is played by the National Security Committee; in Kyrgyzstan by the Committee on Religious Affairs; and in Tajikistan by the National Prosecutor's Office.

- Police;
- Ministry of Interior;
- Ministry of Social Welfare;
- Ministry of Education;
- Ministry of Employment;
- Committee on Women;
- Committee on Youth; and
- Religious Affairs

4.2 Non-governmental actors

A whole-of-society approach depends for its effectiveness on government actors working in partnership with a wide range of non-governmental actors. Prominent among the latter are youth, women, and religious and other community leaders. Youth and women are vulnerable to recruitment into VERLT but they are also potentially influential agents of social change and invaluable partners in P/CVERLT efforts. Community leaders are critical for fostering cultures of tolerance and open dialogue, and for working with vulnerable community members in order to reject violent ideologies.[24] Other influential civil society actors include — but are not limited to — educators and mentors, academics and researchers, journalists and other members of the media, social media and ICT actors, and former violent extremists. Each of these actors is discussed below.

4.2.1 Youth

Being young is a factor of vulnerability, but also one of opportunity.[25] Irrespective of country, religion, social background, or level of education, youth (which is defined by the United Nations as people between the ages of 15 to 24 years)[26] constitutes the social group most vulnerable to recruitment and mobilization efforts by VEOs. Psychologists and sociologists attribute this vulnerability to a number of physical and psychological factors, including, but not limited to, young

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24 UNGA, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism; and General Secretariat of the Council, Council of the European Union, "Council Conclusions on EU External Action on Counter-Terrorism" (Brussels, 19 June 2017).

25 Agnese Macaluso, *From Countering to Preventing Radicalization through Education: Limits and Opportunities*, Working Paper 18 (The Hague: Institute for Global Justice, October 2016; Anne Speckhard, *Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of the 'Lost' Children Living and Serving under the Islamic State* (New York: International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism, 29 March 2017); UN Security Council, "Open Debate on the Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace, 23 April 2015; and UNGA, Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines), adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 45/112 of 14 December 1990.

26 United Nations, "Youth: Who Are the Youth?" https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/youth-0/index.html.

people's search for identity and recognition and for a sense of meaning, purpose, and belonging; a tendency to rebel against societal norms and authority; peer pressure; and developmental changes during adolescence. Most young people are also adept at using communications technologies, including the Internet and social media, which are exploited by VEOs. A natural impulsivity and willingness to take greater risks may also contribute to young people's propensity to join groups or movements that may espouse violence.[27] Stuck between childhood and adulthood, adolescents are often acutely sensitive to their own and other people's grievances; and embrace political, personal, or religious values with intensity. At the same time, however, many young people have not matured in terms of understanding the consequences of their actions. They may feel politically disenfranchised because they want change but have no voice or representation in political systems and forums. They may also perceive injustices more acutely given their socio-economic exclusion and lack of opportunities.

In Central Asia, youth are especially vulnerable to the lure of violent extremism if they lack education in general and religious education in particular; are educated but are unemployed and hence frustrated and idle; have served in the armed forces but are currently jobless and without prospects; or have been deported as migrants from Russia and not properly reintegrated into society. When they are ostracized, marginalized, excluded, unemployed, and frustrated, youth are vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization.

But not all young people with grievances are susceptible to radicalization to violence. When their resilience is high and they are trusted by authorities, they can become agents of change, engaging in civic action, participating in local politics, and finding other ways of lobbying for their interests. Youth leaders are potentially the actors with the most influence over youth. Their voices can be particularly powerful in challenging VEO propaganda and undercutting the appeal of extremist violence. However, young people need to be empowered if they are to speak out. They need to be equipped with mobilization and communication skills to channel their energy, activism, and innovative ideas constructively and to confidently express their views in public.

The UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism highlights the importance of paying particular attention to the world's 1.8 billion young women and men, who constitute potentially invaluable partners in P/CVERLT, and urges UN Member States to identify the right instruments with which to support and empower youth as they take up the cause of peace.[28] The OSCE calls for engaging and

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27 Neumann, *Countering Violent Extremism*; and Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: Report on Findings and Recommendations (Joint OSCE Secretariat and OSCE ODIHR Expert Roundtable, 2012).

28 UNGA, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

empowering youth by creating opportunities for them to participate in public life in promoting human rights, dialogue, and democratic principles; facilitating their access to social services; and enhancing educational opportunities and access to employment. [29]

Effective P/CVERLT strategies need therefore to engage youth, not as beneficiaries of preconceived development interventions, but as a force that can help identify appropriate strategies, design them, and participate in their implementation.

Central Asian governments are all keen on developing youth strategies not only as part of their national strategies for sustainable development but also as part of their PVE efforts. Turkmenistan emphasizes the development of sport and education programmes as a means of promoting national values among young people. In Uzbekistan, more attention has been paid in recent years to creating employment for young people through promoting small businesses and entrepreneurship, organizing job fairs, and launching similar initiatives. The Uzbek government is also looking into the quality of the education system, as well as introducing education in order to foster tolerance among youth. Tajikistan has adopted a number of strategies to empower the youth, among them A National Development Strategy for the Period up to 2030 (adopted in 2016),[30] as well as a National Programme for the Social Development of Youth (2016-2018),[31] which include measures to create new jobs in order to reduce social tensions that could arise from the presence of a large number of able-bodied but idle people.

4.2.2 Women

Research on the role of women in terrorist activity shows that it is a misconception to understand women only as victims or passive supporters of violent extremism.[32] Women are known to play a number of active roles in VEOs, from gathering intelligence to recruiting and mobilizing resources and carrying out suicide attacks.[33] VEOs sometimes enlist female combatants as a tactical tool to humiliate

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29 OSCE, "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization". Other OSCE instruments and publications that call for empowering youth include Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism; and Youth and the Prevention of Violent Extremism: Workshops in Western Europe, Black Sea Region (February 1, 2017), Recommendations for Policymakers. Both are listed in "Relevant OSCE and UN Instruments" near the end of this report.

30 An English-language version is available at http://nafaka.tj/images/zakoni/new/strategiya_2030_en.pdf.

31 An English-language version is available at http://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=82093.

32 OSCE Secretariat and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Women and Terrorist Radicalization, Final Report* (Vienna: OSCE Secretariat; and Warsaw: ODIHR, 2011).

33 Loulla-Mae Eleftheriou-Smith, "Escaped Isis Wives Describe Life in the All-Female al-Khansa Brigade Who Punish Women with 40 Lashes for Wearing Wrong Clothes", *Independent*, 20 April 2015.

and shame men into joining, playing on masculinity and gender norms.[34] A clear-eyed assessment of women's involvement in violent extremism activities can help debunk gender stereotypes and improve understanding of the various roles they can play in P/CVERLT.

Although research on the situation in Central Asian societies is limited, violent extremism as a global phenomenon is increasingly understood to be linked to violence against women, especially domestic abuse and violence. A growing body of research also suggests that P/CVERLT activities should put a greater focus on the connection between masculinity norms and recruitment drivers. In Central Asia, men have been offered money to join ISIL/Daesh and thus to fulfil their gendered roles as providers for their households; women have been urged to fulfil their gendered roles as caretakers by following their husbands, and sometimes their sons, to exile in Daesh-controlled territories in Syria and Iraq. In order to design effective P/CVERLT programmes and interventions, it is therefore important to understand gender dynamics in society as a whole as well as the motivations of individual women and women's roles in the process of radicalization.[35]

UN Women has produced quantitative data about the recruitment of women in Central Asia into extremist groups from the region.[36] In Kyrgyzstan, for example, by 2016, 7.4 per cent of detected active members of VEOs were women, and women made up 23 per cent of all those who left for Syria.[37] According to some government officials, approximately two hundred Tajik women went to join their husbands in Syria and Iraq. Other local authorities estimated the number to be about half that number.[38]

More research is needed, however, to enable a clear distinction to be made between women as active participants in violent extremist activities and terrorist groups and women as passive participants. This distinction becomes ever more important when it comes to the question of prosecution of women returning to Central Asia from Syria and Iraq. Passive participants include women who were forced to follow their male family members. They include wives of Central Asian

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34 Alejandro Beutel and Krystina Pere, "From WWI to ISIS, Using Shame and Masculinity in Recruitment Narratives", START, 1 June 2016, https://www.start.umd.edu/news/wwi-isis-using-shame-and-masculinity-recruitment-narratives.

35 See Laura Huey, and Eric Witmer, "#IS_Fangirl: Exploring a New Role for Women in Terrorism", *Journal of Terrorism Research* 7, 1 (January 2016); Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), "The Role of Gender in Violent Extremism", RAN Issue Paper, (Brussels: RAN, 4 December 2015); Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Sara Zeiger and Rafia Bhulai, eds., *A Man's World? Exploring the Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism* (Washington, DC: Hedayah; and New York: Global Center on Cooperative Security, 2016); and USIP, *Charting a New Course: Women Preventing Violent Extremism* (Washington, DC: USIP, 2015).

36 See three reports from UN Women: *Women and Violent Extremism in Europe and Central Asia: Executive Summary and Recommendations* (2017); Anne Speckhard, Ardian Shajkovci, and Chinara Esengul, *The Roles of Women in Supporting, Joining, Intervening in, and Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan* (June 2017); and Anna Matveeva and Bahrom Faizullaev for UN Women, *Women and Violent Extremism in Tajikistan* (June 2017).

37 Speckhard, Shajkovci, and Esengul, *The Roles of Women*.

38 Matveeva and Faizullaev, *Women and Violent Extremism in Tajikistan*.

Parents Against Terrorism in Tajikistan

Nearly 1 million citizens of Tajikistan, most of them men, have at one point or another engaged in labour migration to the Russian Federation or to neighbouring countries, leaving their children without proper supervision and parental control and increasing their vulnerability to VERLT. While fathers are away, mothers in Tajik society are left to shoulder alone the responsibilities of supporting the family financially and parenting. The latter task should include steering children away from VERLT, but mothers often do not how to prevent youngsters from succumbing to the appeal of terrorism and violent extremism.

In order to address this lack of knowledge, the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe supported the Tajik government in launching a campaign called Parents Against Terrorism (PAT) in 2015. The OSCE worked in direct co-operation with the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment.

PAT sought to create awareness about extremism and provide practical advice on how to recognize and respond to early signs of radicalization to violence. It also sought to enable local communities to build resilience to VERLT from within; to highlight the role of mothers as positive agents of change; and to help establish linkages between stakeholders in relation to VERLT, particularly between communities, families, law enforcement agencies, clergy, and local administrations (*khukumats*).

The PAT campaign involved 180 local trainers/experts and reached out to over 7,500 direct recipients with advice on how to prevent VERLT among youth. Trainings focused on mothers as de facto educators in homes, many with absent fathers and husbands. The PAT trainings comprised several sessions with titles such as "Key concepts of VERLT", "Signs and causes of VERLT", "Introduction to the national and international legal framework on the fight against terrorism and extremism", and "The family and its role in the prevention of VERLT". Thecampaign also informed participants about the terrorist and extremist organizations that are active within Tajikistan.

> During the last cycles of trainings, in June and July 2018, participants heard from parents whose children had travelled to combat areas as FTFs. The parents described how their children were radicalized and recruited by violent extremist groups.
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> An evaluation of the PAT initiative underscored the need for such campaigns. The trainings brought to light the need for better socio-economic opportunities at home so that young people will not be tempted to join violent extremist and terrorist groups; the value of educational institutions; and the importance of families remaining in constant touch with labour migrants, who are the most at-risk group for radicalization to violence.

violent extremists taken to the Middle East, often without their knowledge or consent. Central Asian governments, like many governments around the world, are now looking into measures to tackle the return of such victims. For instance, in 2014, an amnesty provision was introduced into Article 401 of the Criminal Code of Tajikistan stipulating that women who return from ISIL/Daesh territory are exonerated and will not be prosecuted if they were taken without their consent and if they repent.

Other women, however, were willing recruits for VEOs. Some of these left Central Asia to fight for a cause or ideal. Some went to find a better life or to generate income. Some saw the act of following their husbands as part of their wifely duties. Others joined to escape from abusive relationships with their husbands or mothers-in-law. And yet another type of recruit are single women over the age of 25, considered to be past the age of marriageability, who were lured to ISIL/Daesh territory with promises of marriage.[39]

The vast majority of women, of course, do not participate in VEOs, whether passively or actively. Moreover, women can be key actors in preventing and countering VERLT, partnering with security and other state institutions in a wide range of P/CVERLT initiatives.

Women can have an impact on P/CVERLT efforts as policymakers, political leaders, educators, mothers, community members, and activists. They can shape and lead education programmes, proactively engage with vulnerable youth, and author powerful counter-narratives, especially when speaking out either as victims of

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39 Ibid.

terrorist attacks or as former violent extremists. They can directly intervene with girls and women at risk of radicalization to violence or already radicalized. Women can be powerful agents of change because they have the potential to affect their communities and impact decisions of their family members. Mothers, for instance, are well placed to recognize the early signs of radicalization to violence.

In light of the fact that women have different motivations for joining VEOs than men do, it is important to craft counter-narratives and alternative narratives and messages specifically for women. Unfortunately, this is seldom done, even in countries were counter-messaging is in other ways sophisticated.

Other measures are also called for. In the development of PVE National Action Plans, special attention should be paid to women's needs and roles. Tajikistan's National Strategy on Countering Terrorism and Extremism for 2016-2020, for example, devotes an entire section to gender equality and stipulates measures to strengthen the role of women, raise their political legal awareness, and promote the participation of women in P/CVERLT activities.

Although they can be critical players in the P/CVERLT field of practice, women may not realize their full potential as agents of positive change if they continue to be invisible in the public space in their societies and marginalized in private life. Women's empowerment is an essential condition for effective engagement in the P/CVERLT space. Research indicates a strong correlation between women's empowerment and a reduction in violent extremism, and conversely, between gender-based inequality and violent conflict.[40] The inclusive engagement of women in P/CVERLT also requires that they be involved in policy-making and represented in the security and law enforcement sectors. This representation would ensure that they can make a concrete contribution to P/CVERLT and are not treated as mere tokens of inclusivity. In Central Asia, as in many other countries, women tend to be under-represented in security sectors, law enforcement bodies, and government agencies charged with designing and implementing traditional approaches to countering terrorism and violent extremism. Greater efforts should be made to include them in decision making in security sectors.[41] The more that women participate in P/CVERLT policy-making and in P/CVERLT generally, the more empowered they will become, which in turn will make them more effective as agents of change.

The roles that women can play in P/CVERLT should be continually reassessed in

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40 Iffat Idris and Ayat Abdelaziz, *Women and Countering Violent Extremism*, research report (Birmingham, AL: GSDRC, 2017).

41 See OSCE, *Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terror — Good Practices for Law Enforcement* (Vienna: OSCE Secretariat, May 2019), https://www.osce.org/secretariat/420563.

light of growing knowledge about the different ways in which men and women engage in, and are impacted by, VERLT.[42] This type of analysis would help identify effective engagement opportunities for women in P/CVERLT. It would also help to produce better results from P/CVERLT initiatives—in the same way that the inclusion of women in peacekeeping and peace processes tends to increase the prospects for successful outcomes.[43]

Finally, it is important to recognize that not only mothers but also fathers have a significant role to play in P/CVELRT work. Due to their influential role in the family setting, fathers can be instrumental in shaping positive non-violent notions of masculinity. In the case of Central Asia, particular consideration should be given to the families of labour migrants left behind in their country of origin. In such families, the absence of the father figure for the majority of each year can have an impact on the moral education of the children, a vulnerability that is yet to be fully explored and adequately leveraged in P/CVERLT programmes. Incentivizing additional and more substantive research on the role of fathers both in facilitating and mitigating the influence of violent extremism would be an important step towards more effective gender mainstreaming in P/CVERLT programming[44]

4.2.3 Communities and community leaders

Some communities can create conditions that put their members at greater risk of becoming radicalized to violence. Examples include religious communities that propagate an extremely intolerant and violent interpretation of a religion; prisons, which are notorious hotbeds of radicalization to violence through exchanges among prisoners; and extended families in which — as is not uncommon in Central Asia — existing members of VEOs try to recruit brothers, wives, and other family members. But communities can also be powerful tools in preventing VERLT, combating its manifestations, and coping with its aftermath.

Working with community *leaders* can be particularly effective and increases the likelihood of P/CVERLT initiatives generating successful outcomes.[45] Community leaders can play an influential role as mediators, helping communities and government bodies to work together to address an array of public safety concerns, including VERLT. Community leaders can also be highly effective communicators of alternative narratives. As credible actors who know what

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42 Fink, Zieger, and Bhulai, *A Man's World?*

43 Ibid.

44 Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), "The Role of Families in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Strategic Recommendations and Programming Options", review report (New York: GCTF, 2016).

45 GCTF, "Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism" (New York, GCTF, 2013).

OSCE-supported trust building between law enforcement and the public in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan

In April 2017, the OSCE supported a public council meeting at the Ministry of Internal Affairs to discuss ways to enhance the level of trust between law enforcement and the public in Nur-Sultan. Kazakhstan's Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, the Head of the Committee of the Migration Service, and the Head of the Administrative Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as approximately 35 members of law enforcement and 30 representatives of civil society, gathered to discuss ways to enhance channels of communication between the public and law enforcement and ways to promote crime prevention and community policing throughout the country. A set of recommendations was drafted by participants and then submitted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for consideration.

Strengthening police and community interaction to address safety and security issues affecting communities was the focus of a series of training courses conducted by the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe, in co-operation with the international organization Saferworld, in October and November 2018 in Romit district and the towns of Nurek and Guliston. The courses, which involved 86 participants, brought together representatives of the police with members of public councils from all regions of Tajikistan and was part of OSCE efforts to inform the public councils about new approaches to policing in Tajikistan. Participants and national experts discussed the provision on public councils and police reform strategy and programme. They received practical training in methods of communication with citizens, while working on a sample working plan for community policing. The joint training helped to further enhance the already close co-operation between the regional public councils and police institutions in the framework of Tajikistan's ongoing police reform. Participants also conducted a practical exercise intended to develop closer co-ordination between local governments and the local communities.

messages resonate with vulnerable members of the community, they can mentor youth on the values of peace and tolerance and build resilience against messages of hate.[46]

Community leadership is not limited to traditional stereotypes, so it is wise to engage with a wide range of community members in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and beliefs. Religious leaders represent a specific form of community leadership, and faith communities are some of the most well-organized civil institutions in the world. Religious leaders serve not only as spiritual guides, but also as influential decision makers in a community, and have both societal and political influence.[47] The role of religious leaders in P/CVERLT thus transcends the domain of religious doctrine. They can be helpful in supplying "theological antidotes to extremist interpretations of religion", but they can also play wider roles in the realms of governance, human development, and peacebuilding.[48]

Other relevant community actors in Central Asia include leaders of sizeable ethnic communities. it is important to also recognize the grievances of minorities and ethnic groups who feel marginalized and are thus vulnerable to VERLT. Leaders of ethnic communities have a key role to play in fostering dialogue and building trust between authorities and communities, including their younger members. Such leaders also can make a significant contribution to the de-securitization of interethnic relations and to the erosion of stereotypes about certain ethnic groups being more prone to radicalization. In Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyzstan, this influential is played by the Assemblies of the People, which work to promote interethnic co-operation, understanding, and harmony.

One example of partnership between state and non-state actors that deserves to be explored in the context of P/CVERLT is trust-based co-operation between communities and police services.[49] Such co-operation can help to reduce tensions and discontent thereby lowering threats to public safety and ultimately fostering more resilient communities. Community-police partnerships can improve public perceptions of the police and help identify and address community safety issues and grievances.[50]

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46 Abbas Barzegar, Shawn Powers, and Nagham El Karhili, "Civic Approaches to Confronting Violent Extremism: Sector Recommendations and Best Practices" (report financed by the European Union, Georgia State University, British Council, and Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2016)

47 Peter Mandaville and Melissa Nozell, *Engaging Religion and Religious Actors in Countering Violent Extremism*, USIP Special Report 413 (Washington, DC: USIP, 2017).

48 Ibid.

49 OSCE, *Community-Policing Approach*.

50 Kurzman Schanzer and Miller Toliver, *The Challenge and Promise of Using Community Policing Strategies to Prevent Violent Extremism: A Call for Community Partnerships with Law Enforcement to +Enhance Public Safety, Final Report* (Rockville, MD: National Criminal Justice Research Service, 2016).

The role of mahallas in P/CVERLT

Mahallas are local citizens' assemblies. Article 105 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan recognizes mahallas as territorial units of self-government. The Government cooperates closely with them, seeing the mahalla system as an interface between the Government and communities, a place where people can express their opinions, present proposals, and raise their problems. The Government has come to count on the mahalla system to contribute to the rehabilitation of violent extremists who have returned from combat zones and to act as a moral compass to help steer young people away from the temptations of VEOs. As such, the mahalla system has become a key civil society actor in preventing VERLT.

A Presidential Decree promulgated in February 2017 called for measures to improve the functioning of the mahalla system, expanded mahallas' roles and responsibilities in educating the population, and encouraged them to act more proactively as an interface between the public and the Government. The decree also sought to boost the direct participation of communities in ensuring public order and security, to encourage awareness of potential threats, and to strengthen citizens' respect for the law.

Today, about 10,000 citizens' assemblies operate in Uzbekistan and perform more than 30 socially and economically significant tasks previously carried out by local government bodies. The mahallas tackle challenges such as enhancing crime prevention; improving citizens' (especially youth's and women's) knowledge of the country's laws and legal system; helping socially vulnerable groups of the population; promoting sports and healthy lifestyles; organizing leisure activities for boys and girls; and protecting the environment.

Mahallas have been recently empowered to play a role in working with citizens who have returned from combat zones abroad, including monitoring them for potential threats and rendering social assistance to families and communities with members who have become radicalized. The State also relies on the mahallas

(and several public organizations such as the Union of Youth of Uzbekistan and the Women's Committee) to provide youth with preventive education on VERLT. Furthermore, the mahallas are expected to play a role in enhancing tolerance and peaceful coexistence within and among diverse communities, thereby serving as a tool for conflict avoidance and conflict resolution.

Such partnerships are long-term investments that require patience and consistent outreach and engagement efforts in order to build trust and public confidence. They also call for careful attention being paid to appointments and recruitment strategies. For example, placing representatives of minority groups in minority-populated areas and ensuring adequate representative of minorities in law enforcement institutions are strategies that can foster trust between law enforcement and communities.

At the same time, police should be aware of and try to minimize certain risks when engaging with communities. These risks include stigmatizing particular communities through selective engagement; securitizing the police's relationship with communities; and using community policing to "spy on" communities. It is important to be mindful of the negative implications of pressuring community leaders or religious actors to provide information or report to authorities. Safety is everyone's concern but positioning community and religious leaders as informants erodes their credibility and standing within the community.

Community-oriented approaches gain the trust of local communities by consulting with them, involving them, and ultimately having them take responsibility as stakeholders in the prevention of VERLT.[51] When well formulated, such approaches also treat community concerns and safety as no less important than the national security concerns of the state, with the understanding that security issues are interrelated and that peace requires community engagement and the active participation of all of society.

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51 Basia Spalek, ed., *Counter-Terrorism: Community-Based Approaches to Preventing Terrorism Crime* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Interfaith dialogue in Kyrgyzstan

By adopting the Concept on the State Policy in the Religious Sphere for 2014-2020, Kyrgyzstan has tried to develop new approaches to strengthening interfaith dialogue, encouraging religious tolerance, promoting human rights and freedoms, and enhancing respect for different beliefs, as well as preventing VERLT. To support the implementation of this policy, and in particular the strengthening of interfaith dialogue, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek has supported an educational pilot project called "Basic History of Religious Culture", a secondary school course that teaches students the history of world religions and that was made mandatory for all schools in 2019. Between June and October 2018, the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek held a series of forums throughout Kyrgyzstan, which fed into discussion at a conference in November 2018 organized by the OSCE Office on Strengthening of the Inter-Confessional Dialogue. The conference was devoted to the issues of interfaith harmony and tolerance between representatives of various religious organizations. One result of the conference was the creation of the Interfaith Council of Kyrgyzstan, the first independent body that aims to preserve and strengthen the existing interfaith dialogue and harmony in the country.

4.2.4 Educators and mentors

Schools are particularly susceptible to being affected by the influence of VERLT because they are hubs of social interaction for young people who are building their personal and social identities. Schools should be forums in which values are questioned and openly discussed, in which critical thinking and the exchange of different ideas and perspectives are encouraged. Multicultural and civic education needs to be enhanced so as to promote tolerance, social cohesion, mutual respect among religions, and other values that underlie prevention efforts.

Educators have an important role to play in preventing VERLT not only because of their ability to influence students' worldviews and systems of values, but also because they may be able to identify those who are vulnerable to the appeal of VERLT and need support. Training teachers to understand the risks of VERLT and approach the situation in a measured and constructive way is a

wise investment. They can also support P/CVERLT efforts by fostering respect for diversity and promoting non-violent social norms.[52]

Whole-of-society initiatives should also enlist the help of other types of mentors who can influence young people's choices. For instance, *aqsaqals* (highly respected elderly people whom people approach for advice) could play a useful role.

4.2.5 Academics and researchers

The effectiveness of P/CVERLT policies is inextricably linked to the quality of research and analysis underpinning their development and guiding the implementation of programmatic efforts. Therefore, the integration of experienced researchers, think tanks, and academic institutions in both P/CVERLT policy-making and programme implementation processes is of strategic importance. Evidence-based P/CVERLT research that relies on rigorous techniques and objective assessment methodologies is more likely to accurately identify root causes and dynamics of terrorist radicalization.

Adequate research capabilities may not always be available, however, and thus government actors should consider making training and capacity building for researchers one of their core P/CVERLT lines of efforts. Research quality is also dependent on access to information. By enabling researchers to access relevant and reliable data more frequently and systematically, policymakers and government authorities would contribute to more accurate assessments and better policies. Another step to developing a strategic approach to P/CVERLT would be setting up policy forums to discuss policy priorities, disseminate research findings, and facilitate regular exchanges between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

4.2.6. ICT and social media companies and experts

VEOs have recognized and exploited the power and unrivalled outreach opportunities that social media platforms provide. Violent extremists are adept at using the Internet to inspire, recruit, and mobilize support; wage psychological warfare; incite and coordinate attacks; conduct trainings; and raise funds. The Internet has been particularly effective in radicalizing thousands of individuals globally because it can offer "friendship, acceptance, or a sense of purpose" to

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52 It is important to point out that not all educators have a positive influence on students. Educators and education institutions that reinforce exclusionary world views and tolerate violence of any kind would not be suitable P/CVERLT partners. See UNESCO, *Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policy-makers* (Paris: UNESCO, 2017).

socially ostracized individuals who are vulnerable to recruitment.[53] Its attraction for VEOs comes from its low cost, high reach, and 24/7 availability. It is also difficult to control, given legislative and technical limitations over censorship.[54]

In light of the extensive strategic and tactical use that violent extremists make of the Internet and social media, the ICT sector has a key role to play both in disrupting the abusive use of ICT platforms and in supporting P/CVERLT initiatives. Most of the main global social media platforms have stepped up their efforts in recent years to curb online abuse and hate speech, resulting in the removal of extensive amounts of online content promoting violent extremism. These efforts, however, must be carefully navigated within the parameters of laws protecting freedom of speech.

A proactive approach to countering terrorist use of the Internet is the promotion of ideas and narratives that provide an alternative to the violence and intolerance propagated by VEOs. ICT companies have the technological capacities and resources to develop, in partnership with CSOs and ICT-savvy youth, tailored communication strategies and campaigns that challenge violent extremist narratives and promote a culture of tolerance, dialogue, and non-discrimination. Other efforts may focus on empowering victims to engage in P/CVERLT work by providing them with online forums in which to share their stories.[55]

Partnership between these ICT actors and government is vital to ensuring success in preventing the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes. Governments often take measures to counter online extremism such as blocking or deleting websites and resources, restricting access to illegal content, blocking domain names, seizing local servers, and prosecuting people who take certain actions online (e.g., "liking" a VEO's website or Facebook page). These measures, however, can be counterproductive in terms of national security, because they may curtail the free flow of information, lead to violations of privacy, and restrict freedom of expression, all of which ultimately create distrust between a state and its citizens. The right to privacy, freedom of expression, freedom of the media, and free access to information should apply both offline and online,

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53 Robin L. Thompson, "Radicalization and the Use of Social Media", *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011): pp. 167–90.

54 See Séraphin Alava, Divina Frau-Meigs, and Ghayda Hassan, *Youth and Violent Extremism on Social Media: Mapping the Research* (Paris: UNESCO 2017); Alejandro Beutel et al., "Field Principles for Countering and Displacing Extremist Narratives", *Journal of Terrorism Research* 7, no. 3 (September 2016); International Center for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), *Developing Effective Counter-Narrative Frameworks for Countering Violent Extremism Meeting Note* (The Hague: ICCT, September 2014); Institute for Strategic Dialogue, in cooperation with the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), *Counter Narratives and Alternative Narratives*, RAN Issue Paper 01/10/2015 (RAN, Amsterdam, 2015); Henry Tuck and Tanya Silverman, *The Counter-Narrative Handbook* (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue 2016); UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, *The Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes* (Vienna: UNODC), 2012; and Bibi T. van Ginkel, *Responding to Cyber Jihad: Towards an Effective Counter Narrative*, ICCT Research Paper (The Hague: ICCT, March 2015).

55 UNGA, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

and law enforcement activities should always be conducted in compliance with international human rights standards.

Training students in developing counter-narratives and alternative messages in Tajikistan

A May 2017 workshop organized by the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe offered university students from across Tajikistan training on developing counter-narrative messages. The workshop quickly revealed that students were attuned to online messages and had easy access, through alternative servers and virtual private networks (VPNs), to materials that were forbidden by law. Instead of prohibiting, bringing down, or blocking content — measures not always feasible and that could generate even more interest in the taboo material — it may be more beneficial to raise awareness and develop critical thinking through the education system so that young users of the Internet can themselves decipher right from wrong

The workshop also showed the ingenuity of young people in developing alternative messages about subjects such as national unity, love of homeland, and empathy as a means to counter the appeal of violent extremism. Participants agreed that co-operation between law enforcement agencies, young people, and media representatives would be hugely beneficial for developing credible PVE campaigns.

In addition to raising these human rights concerns, suppressing or filtering online content is both technically challenging and ineffective, because terrorist groups immediately move to new forums or websites. Strictly enforced regulation by governments can push extremist networks into darker corners of the web, where they are even harder to observe.

A better strategy is to partner with ICT practitioners to use social media as a tool to prevent VERLT and take advantage of the media, and the Internet in particular, to marginalize and counter terrorist discourses. Challenging the messages and legitimacy of VE allows users to assess the validity of terrorist content, especially when there is a clear and human rights compliant legal framework for terrorist crimes. Governments could also explore the opportunity to collaborate with

young people in developing alternative narratives of peace and social cohesion. Narratives and messages that are endorsed or voiced by young people (or by ulema) are likely to have more impact on their audiences than those that come from state authorities or international organizations.

Some countries have taken a proactive role in trying to counter hateful narratives with the help of civil society actors. In Uzbekistan, for example, there is ongoing co-operation between state bodies and civil societies, such as mahallas and religious organizations, in organizing both online and offline information campaigns. These campaigns include discussions with former extremisms, through television and newspapers, and media spots warning young people about the threat of recruitment by terrorists and violent extremist groups. More than 15,000 awareness-building events have been organized against violent extremism.

4.2.7 Media and journalists

Covering terrorism in the media is not business as usual. Terrorism, which seeks to spread panic and terror, is not only an act of violence but also an act of communication. In covering issues related to VERLT, the media can play both a positive and a negative role. The way that VERLT-related issues or incidents are reported in the media has a profound impact on community dynamics, public safety, and P/CVERLT efforts. Biased news reporting can polarize communities, promote intolerance and hatred, and reinforce or exacerbate factors that are conducive to terrorist radicalization. Responsible reporting, however, can support P/CVERLT efforts by educating the public about the reasons why terrorism emerges and what make individuals vulnerable to VEOs.

To be able to inform the public about VERLT while not endangering national security, professional journalists need a number of skills and capacities. These include adequate information, expert analysis, access to locations and people, knowledge about illegal groups operating in the region, and knowledge about international human rights commitments and related national laws. Reporting on a sensitive subject such as violent extremism requires heightened awareness of the laws on the right to privacy and presumption of innocence. Journalists should always conduct themselves ethically and with integrity and professionalism. They should also be given adequate protection and a guarantee of personal safety.

Reporters and media associations can use their technical expertise to train civil society actors on developing and disseminating impactful alternative narratives and counter-narratives, information campaigns, and culturally sensitive

Training journalists to cover VERLT in Uzbekistan

In 2018, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan organized a series of trainings and workshops to enhance the ability of journalists and other media professionals to counter VERLT. The project sought to raise public awareness of the role of the media in P/CVERLT and build the skills of representatives of Central Asian media to engage in the fight against terrorism, including in developing effective counter- and alternative narratives and campaigns.

A series of four trainings for media officials covered such topics as definitions of VERLT; national legislation on VERLT/terrorism; media coverage of violent extremist activities; the role of the media in shaping public opinion; classification of terrorist acts; religion and VERLT; and interviewing techniques.

The final training brought together 20 journalists, editors, special correspondents, directors, and bloggers from different national and regional outlets representing print media, television, radio, and websites from across the country. The training explored guidelines on how to cover the subject of VERLT, what social media tools could be used to counter and prevent VERLT, and what type of effective counter-messaging and alternative narratives against violent extremism could be developed through the media.

The participants produced a number of recommendations, several of which supported a whole-of-society approach to preventing VERLT. One recommendation, for instance, urged government to collaborate with the media, private sector, youth, and NGOs to develop and disseminate counter-narrative campaigns and materials (e.g., video clips, slogans, posters) through television, radio, the Internet, billboards, and so forth. Another suggestion called for both independent journalists and representatives of government media services to receive specific training in abiding by international standards of journalism and to learn skills necessary to be able to join the fight against VERLT in a responsible manner.

Training journalists in Kyrgyzstan to cover VERLT

The OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek has teamed up with the Kyrgyz State Committee of National Security and the Yiman Development Fund for Spiritual Culture under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic in order to organize various trainings for young journalists and students studying journalism around the country. Topics covered in these trainings have included understanding VERLT terminology; international and national legislation on extremism, radicalization, and terrorism; how media channels are being used for recruitment and for dissemination of extremist content; journalistic ethics; and skills such as presenting information in an objective manner.

One workshop held in April 2018 featured the participation of local experts from the Interior Ministry of the Kyrgyz Republic and sought to help students of journalism and journalists improve their knowledge of, and skills in covering, security issues related to VERLT, as well as reporting on intercommunal relations. Two years earlier, in April 2016, some 60 journalists completed a series of training courses in Osh and Bishkek on challenges related to reporting on religious beliefs and violent extremism. They reviewed the history of the world's main religions, the principles and foundations of Islam, human rights in Islam, concepts of peace and war in Islam, and the ways in which religious beliefs can be manipulated and misused.

The OSCE Programme Office, the Kyrgyz State Committee of National Security, and the Yiman Development Fund for Spiritual Culture had also joined forces in October 2015 to conduct a two-day training for media representatives and journalists working in the south of Kyrgyzstan on their role in covering VERLT issues. The training was designed to enhance their knowledge and skills and improve interactions between national security agencies and the media in preventing threats from violent extremists.

Co-operation between the media and civil society in countering threats to the free flow of information and in promoting transparency and accountability was the focus of a two-day

regional media conference held in March 2016. The conference was organized by the OSCE Academy, in co-operation with the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, Internews–Kyrgyzstan, and the Soros Foundation in Kyrgyzstan. More than 100 media representatives, members of civil society, and civil servants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan participated in the conference, together with experts and trainers from the United Kingdom, Mongolia, and Romania. The latest trends in methods to counter violent extremist and terrorist propaganda and new forms of information flow and Internet security were addressed during the event.

P/CVERLT materials.[56] They can also provide space for, and amplify, positive community-led messaging. Capacity-building efforts for media practitioners could not only build knowledge of core P/CVERLT principles and terminology, but also provide practical guidance on how to avoid indirectly promoting violent extremist imagery and messaging in reporting, how to recognize and avoid using sensationalistic or provocative language, and how to avoid stigmatizing particular ethnic or religious communities.

There is much convergence of interest between the media and the government when it comes to covering issues related to VERLT. Both entities are interested in informing the public, and both have the responsibility to keep the public safe and calm and not let terrorists manipulate information. Yet, both also have to understand the interests, dilemmas, and limitations of the other in order to find areas of win-win co-operation. While media organizations may seek to be free of government control, they should behave responsibly and ethically in order not to jeopardize national security. For their part, governments may seek to control information, but they need to partner with the media in order to reach out to the public in order to inform, warn, and protect it.

4.2.8 Former violent extremists

There are both opportunities and risks associated with involving "formers" (i.e., individuals who have disengaged from involvement in VERLT) in P/CVERLT efforts.[57] Due to their first-hand experience with the process of

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56 Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Karin Deutsch Karlekar, and Rafia Barakat, *Mightier Than the Sword? The Role of the Media in Addressing Violence and Terrorism in South Asia* (New York: Global Center on Counterterrorism Cooperation, 2013).

57 OSCE, *Community-Policing Approach*.

terrorist radicalization — and possibly also with recruitment and mobilization — they may have a good understanding of the process and useful insights on how to prevent it. Their status as individuals who have either supported or engaged in terrorism-related activities may give them more credibility with at-risk audiences and potentially make them more legitimate and effective communicators when speaking out against violent extremism. They can connect at a deep and personal level. By sharing their stories and experience, they may help deglamourize violent extremist narratives and show that it is possible to abandon the path of violence and build a new life. "Formers" can therefore play a useful role in a wide range of P/CVERLT efforts, from raising awareness and communicating credible counter-narratives to supporting CSO programmes focusing on disengaging or rehabilitating and reintegrating convicted violent extremists.

Nevertheless, few of those who withdraw from violent extremist environments are willing and able to partake in P/CVERLT efforts, and when they do, they usually require thorough training, support, and supervision. Also, withdrawing from violent extremism is not a linear or permanent process, and relapsing is a constant risk. One of the main problems associated with enlisting "formers" to support de-radicalization and disengagement programmes has been that, at times, despite renouncing violence, they have continued to hold views that promote intolerance, thus undermining others' rehabilitation efforts.[58] Ultimately, "formers" may be best suited for supplementary roles in P/CVERLT efforts after undergoing thorough training and regular screenings and risk assessments.[59]

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58 Georgia Holmer and Adrian Shtuni, *Returning Foreign Fighters and the Reintegration Imperative*, USIP Special Report no. 402 (Washington, DC: USIP, 2017).

59 "Dos and Don'ts of Involving Formers in PVE/CVE Work," Ex Post Paper (RAN, Bordeaux, France, 2017). https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/dos_and_donts_involving_formers_in_pve_cve_work_bordeaux_27_06_2017_en.pdf.

5. Advantages of and challenges to whole-of-society approaches to P/CVERLT

5.1 Advantages of a whole-of-society approach

There is broad international consensus that the counter-terrorism efforts adopted in the past decades have not been able to undermine the appeal of extremist ideologies and prevent the spread of violent extremism. As underscored in the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and various strategic policy documents by key international organizations working on security issues, traditional counter-terrorism tools often target the symptoms but not the drivers of violent extremism. Governments have the responsibility to ensure security and respect for human rights, as well as to uphold the rule of law and implement policies that counter discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. These are important components of any strategy to counter the violent extremist threat.[60] Nevertheless, some grievances exploited by violent extremist groups lie beyond the reach of governments. Civil society actors, however, may be able to reach where governments cannot. They are often

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60   UNGA, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

well placed and credible actors with knowledge and experience in working with specific groups to help identify and address the grievances that make individuals more vulnerable to VERLT. As such, civil society actors, as well as other non-governmental actors such as the private sector, make ideal partners for governments in joint efforts to attain their common goals of countering and preventing VERLT.

Various OSCE policy documents in recent years, particularly Ministerial Declaration 4/15, have strongly encouraged participating States to work across sectors and proactively engage civil society and other community actors in P/CVERLT efforts.[61] The 2016 Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening OSCE Efforts to Prevent and Counter Terrorism noted:

We stress the importance of co-operation among OSCE participating States, including by involving, where appropriate, civil society, to prevent and counter terrorism. We also underscore the important role that civil society, in particular youth, families, women, victims of terrorism, religious, cultural and education leaders, as well as the media and the private sector can play in preventing VERLT, inter alia *by countering terrorist and violent extremism messaging and offering alternatives to these narratives, including on the internet, social and other media. We encourage political leaders and public figures including from civil society and religious leaders to speak out strongly and promptly against violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism.[62]*

A whole-of-society approach to preventing VERLT brings many advantages.[63] Within the context of Central Asia, these include the following:

- Governments and civil society organizations and other non-governmental actors **share common goals**, values, and interests when it comes to defeating violent extremism that leads to terrorism and ensuring stability. As such, the state can transfer part of its functions to society. Governments and

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61 See Strengthening Co-ordination and Coherence in the OSCE's Efforts to Address Transnational Threats (OSCE MC.DEC/9/11); The OSCE Role in Countering the Phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in the Context of the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2133 (MC.DOC/5/14); "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization" (MC.DOC/4/15); and "Strengthening OSCE Efforts to Prevent and Counter-Terrorism" (MC.DOC/1/16).

62 OSCE, Second Day of the Twenty-Third Meeting MC(23), Journal No. 2, Agenda item 7, 9 December 2016, Hamburg 2016 https://www.osce.org/cio/290351?download=true.

63 Global Solutions Exchange, "10 Reasons Why Civil Society Is an Ally and Not an Adversary in the Struggle against Violent Extremism" (Washington, DC: Global Solutions Exchange, 2017); Bibi T. van Ginkel, *Engaging Civil Society in Countering Violent Extremism: Experiences with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy* (The Hague: ICCT, 2012); David Cortright et al., *Friend Not Foe: Opening Spaces for Civil Society Engagement to Prevent Violent Extremism* (Notre Dame, IN: Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2011); and Observatory to Prevent Extremist Violence, "Barcelona Declaration: Plan of Action of the Euro-Mediterranean Civil Society to Prevent All Forms of Violent Extremism" (2017), https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Barcelona+Declaration:+Plan+of+Action+of+the+Euro-Mediterranean+Civil+Society+to+Prevent+All+Forms+of+Violent+Extremism&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8.

non-governmental actors can thus **share the responsibility** of designing, implementing, and monitoring multifaceted strategies to prevent VERLT.

- CSOs provide a **space for constructive engagement between the state and its citizens**. As such, CSOs can be vehicles for ensuring that dialogue involves all segments of society. Partnerships around P/CVERLT can allow for more **trust and understanding** to be fostered.

- The involvement of civil society widens **ownership**, thereby improving the effectiveness of P/CVERLT policies and strategies. As ownership widens, civil society assumes a share of the responsibility for preventing VERLT and is more likely to see strategies devised by governments as legitimate. Partnerships create **new interfaces** and enhance **communication** between all sectors of society.

- Consultations with and the involvement of non-governmental actors in P/CVERLT efforts also help create **feedback mechanisms** that enable governments to better understand the impact of policies while tapping into local knowledge of contexts, drivers, and evolving trends.

- CSOs have **capacity and experience** in working on programmes that not only foster peaceful and inclusive societies but also mitigate structural conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism. Government resources devoted to P/CVERLT could thus be used more efficiently if spent on programmes that not only are relevant to P/CVERLT but also focus on peacebuilding, good governance and rule of law, human rights, women's rights and gender issues, interfaith dialogue and conflict transformation, youth engagement, or crime and drug use prevention.

- Civil society actors and institutions tend to **have access to, legitimacy with, and influence among communities** for which they have shown concern for community well-being and safety. This makes them valuable allies, especially if —as is usually the case — they are also willing and able to be innovative, versatile, and prepared to take risks in order to address their communities' security concerns. Furthermore, civil society actors have experience in addressing typically overlooked but critical aspects of VERLT, such as the **gendered dimensions** of PVE and peacebuilding.

- CSOs have the **expertise, experience, awareness, and flexibility** that can help them recognize and tackle radicalization to violence in communities. They also have **extensive knowledge** of the local dynamics, trends, and drivers of violent extremism and can be effective **early-warning mechanisms** for detecting emerging threats. These assets can help

governments devise — in partnership with civil society — timely interventions and context-specific responses.

- Civil society often works with marginalized groups, promotes political participation, and **provides outlets for groups and individuals who want their grievances addressed**. These outlets can help diffuse tensions between government authorities and communities, challenge violent extremist narratives, and counter efforts by violent extremist groups to leverage community grievances for recruitment purposes.

- Civil society can be **connected** regionally and internationally to a larger community of civil society actors and practitioners who work across relevant disciplines. Being locally rooted yet more broadly connected positions civil society actors to exchange and refine good practices and seek creative solutions tested in different contexts to help governments design effective strategies.

Ultimately, the successful implementation of any P/CVERLT strategy and the impact of interventions by both government entities and non-governmental actors will be determined to a large extent by the effectiveness of sustainable partnerships built on trust, a shared vision, and a common purpose.

5.2 Challenges to adopting a whole-of-society approach

Although there are many advantages to forming partnerships as part of a whole-of-society strategy for preventing VERLT, there are also a number of challenges that must be overcome. Tackling these challenges requires tailoring an approach that fits each specific context.

5.2.1 Lack of trust and issues related to credibility and legitimacy

The possibility for genuine partnership between non-governmental actors — especially civil society actors — and governments depends on the circumstances and political realities in the each of the OSCE participating States. The role of civil society in preventing VERLT and the possibilities for partnering with government are limited in countries in which civil society structures are

weak or non-existent and where there is little political pluralism. A lack of political pluralism in itself can contribute to creating conditions conducive to radicalization to violence and recruitment into VEOs.

Lack of trust in an impediment to genuine partnership and co-operation on both sides. For civil society to play a meaningful advisory and partnership role, it needs to be given a sense of ownership of the problems and the processes for addressing those problems. In many cases, however, partnership with government is unbalanced and one-sided, because CSOs are not regarded by government actors as competent to address security issues. In Central Asia, civil society actors often find it difficult to challenge government authorities on P/CVERLT issues, mostly because of political and security concerns. In some countries, human rights defenders are even harassed or persecuted in the name of counter-terrorism.

In some OSCE participating States, limitations are placed on civil society activity in the form of laws and practices that restrict the registration and operation of NGOs. Such measures are counterproductive because they prevent civil society from contributing to prevention efforts.

CSOs are not blameless in regard to their poor reputation with some government agencies. CSOs are often seen by government agencies as highly commercialized actors that work for grants only, and this throws into doubt their legitimacy as genuine partners. Other doubts about their legitimacy are inspired the fact that some organizations have unclear goals, position themselves opportunistically, and sometimes pursue overtly political agendas.

5.2.2 Conceptual misunderstandings and differences in understandings of national security

Sometimes, civil society institutions are seen as obstacles to governments in the fight against terrorism. If they have contacts with potential violent extremists, those contacts are perceived within government as connections to terrorism, even though dialogue with individuals and groups involved in VERLT is not intended by the CSOs as a sign that they are affording any form of legitimacy to the perpetrators of violence.

Efforts by CSOs to investigate and discuss the causes of terrorism are sometimes mistaken for attempts to justify terrorism. This misperception undermines the possibility for serious debate on the prevention and root causes of VERLT. In many cases, it is difficult to engage in research due to the criminalization of contact with terrorist groups. In addition, research into root causes is often

restricted by or unwelcome to government actors, because it opens up sensitive issues around conducive factors such as social exclusion and weak governance.

The lack of widely accepted definitions of "terrorism" and "terrorist acts" presents significant problems for CSOs working on those issues. The legislation adopted in a number of OSCE participating States has very broad definitions of "terrorism" and "extremism", making it difficult for civil society to escape accusations of engaging with terrorists. Some terrorism-related offences target freedom of expression as well as freedom of association and put CSOs in danger of persecution.

Some other OSCE participating States have also adopted restrictive NGO legislation. Such legislation is not only unhelpful insofar as it limits the role of civil society in the prevention of VERLT, but it can also be a potential catalyst of violent extremism by outlawing otherwise legitimate forms of political expression and association.

5.2.3 Risks of involvement

Civil society actors involved in P/CVERLT work face a variety of risks. They may jeopardize their reputations for independence because of the close alignment with a perceived state security agenda; they may encounter threats to their personal security when they are working within some communities; and they may face potential legal liabilities for working with radicalized individuals or those convicted of terrorist crimes. Given these dangers, many CSOs organizations are reluctant to engage in this field.

## 5.2.4 Lack of mechanisms for co-ordination and co-operation

Many OSCE participating States lack effective mechanisms for coordinating the actors that would be involved in a whole-of-society approach to preventing VERLT. A platform or forum for the regular exchange of ideas, good practices, and information between governments and nongovernment actors seldom exists. Such platforms are essential if joint planning and joint research are to be conducted. Governments that adopt whole-of-society approaches could locate these platforms within the bodies in charge of implementing and coordinating the PVE National Action Plans.

Developing regional and national civil society networks are often encouraged as a way to strength P/CVERLT practice, but meaningful linkages can be rare.

Although civil society actors often meet one another during conferences, they tend to engage in joint projects or share information and learning a lot less frequently.

5.2.5 Lack of technical skills for partnership

Even where goodwill exists and commitments to a whole-of-society approach have been made, the creation of effective partnership is often hampered by a lack of awareness and operational skills among CSOs, as well as government entities, on how to set up and run partnerships. CSOs often do not know how to contribute their efforts to new and ongoing P/CVERLT efforts and concentrate instead on demonstrating their accountability to donors from whom they have received funding. Too few donors and international organizations support initiatives to create genuine dialogue between governments and civil society on P/CVERLT. Capacity building in this area is also neglected.
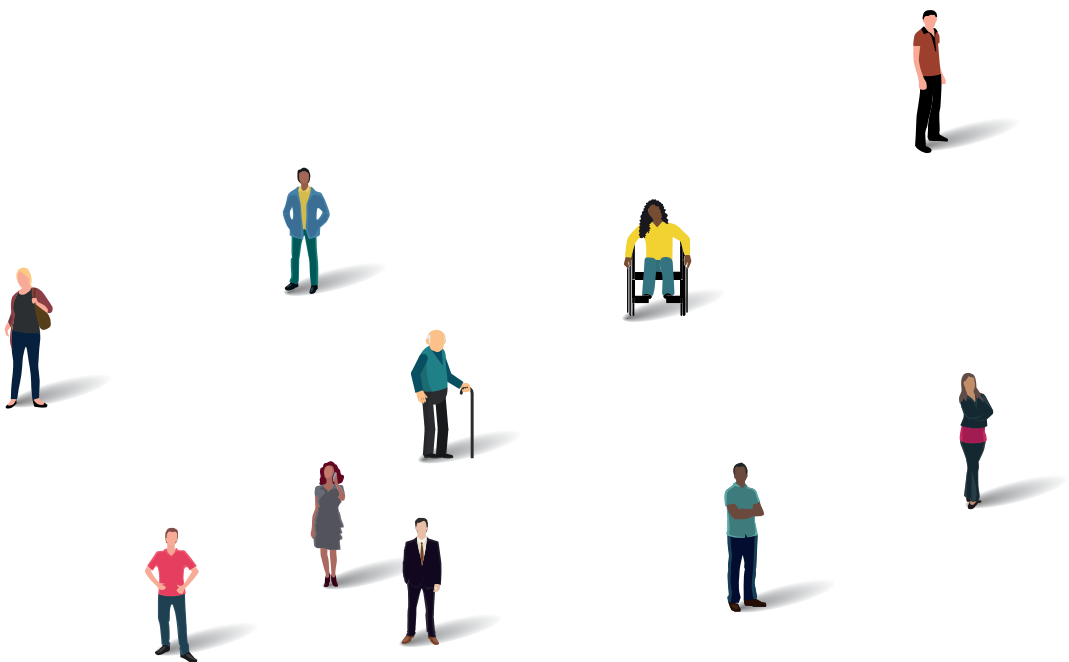
6. Areas of co-operation: Integrating a whole-of-society approach into a P/CVERLT strategy
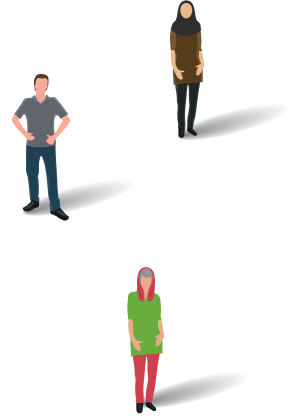
The process of developing, implementing, and monitoring P/CVERLT strategies and corresponding National Action Plans provides a unique opportunity for stimulating a whole-of-society response to violent extremism. Such a response requires creating partnerships with a wide array of stakeholders (e.g., national and subnational, law enforcement and non-law enforcement, civil society and government), and those partnerships must be based on principles of mutual trust, shared responsibility and ownership, and inclusivity.

An inclusive process is as important as the strategy itself. Given that there are often both time and resource constraints for the development of these policy documents, there may be a tendency to resort to what sometimes is referred to as a "cut-and-paste" mentality,[64] which involves recycling language from other documents that were drafted for different contexts that featured different levels

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64 Prevention Project, *Ensuring an Inclusive Approach to the Development and Implementation of National P/CVE Action Plans: The Role of Civil Society* (Prevention Project, New York, Roundtable, 18 December, 2017), https://organizingagainstve.org/ensuring-inclusive-approach-development-implementation-national-p-cve-action-plans-role-civil-society/.

of expertise and resources. The same time constraints may limit the level of engagement with civil society to superficial consultations after the draft strategy has been compiled. Such a hasty approach is unlikely to yield good results. A whole-of-society strategy needs to be customized to the society that will participate in it, and it needs to involve many different stakeholders in devising as well as implementing it.

Indeed, partnerships between government and non-governmental actors should be integrated into all stages of developing, implementing, and monitoring P/CVERLT strategies, including PVE National Action Plans. These stages include:

- Situation analysis, knowledge creation, and research;
- Drafting objectives and activities;
- Implementation of projects;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Strategic communication; and
- Advocacy and feedback mechanisms.

6.1 Situation analysis, knowledge creation, and research

In order for a PVE National Action Plan to be based on evidence, independent research is needed on trends. Civil society and governments can partner in developing new knowledge, conducting new research, and reaching new understandings on the drivers and manifestations of VERLT in society.

Governments may want to organize, together with donor assistance, local capacity building for quantitative and qualitative research regarding regional and demographic trends on violent extremist activity. Partnerships between civil society actors and governments make it possible to develop a more accurate analysis of root causes, grievances, and the push-and-pull factors of radicalization, with government and non-governmental actors contributing their own views and understandings, and progressively constructing a shared vision.

Governments and civil society actors such as academics can join forces in conducting studies and surveys on the impact of counter-terrorism measures and legislation, on conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, on root causes and trends of radicalization, and on topics where little or no previous research exists. Although national security committees have access to databases

of extremists (potential and current), independent researchers could provide new methodologies with which to analyse this data from sociological and psychological perspectives in order to provide targeted recommendations. In this regard, however, governments should also protect researchers from dangers associated with engaging in such activity, especially threats to the researchers' personal safety.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, the State Committee on Religious Affairs and the National Security Committee have collaborated with independent researchers in order to better understand trends and root causes of radicalization and extremism among some communities, including in prison settings.

6.2 Drafting objectives and activities

One prerequisite of an impactful P/CVERLT strategy is a substantive and inclusive approach that fully integrates independent civil society actors, especially those usually underrepresented in political processes, into the drafting process. The inclusion of independent CSOs at the strategy development stage not only expands the pool of expertise and makes the process more representative, but also creates an opportunity for meaningful engagement between government and locally rooted stakeholders.

With the help of international organizations, civil society organizations were involved in the drafting of the PVE National Action Plans in the Kyrgyz Republic and in Tajikistan. The Tajik National Action Plan specifies areas in which civil society groups are responsible for implementation. Funding is expected to come not from the government or civil society but to be provided by donors.

The Programme of the Kyrgyz Republic Government on Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2017-2022 was the joint product of a multistakeholder working group that brought together experts from the government with national CSOs. All stakeholders were not only actively involved in the drafting process but also have an important role to play in the implementation of the programme.

6.3 Implementation of projects

At their outset, partnerships should discover which members possess what kinds of prevention capacities and resources, and should ensure that any P/CVE roles and responsibilities identified in a National Action Plan align with these capabilities. Where capabilities for implementation are weak or non-existent, they need to be enhanced. Civil society groups, when given the space and resources to operate, can play an important role in local-level implementation, including by connecting national-level actors to municipal authorities.

To be effective, however, civil society and other non-governmental actors need to be fully involved from the start in the design of the interventions. Furthermore, the nature and intended impact of the projects they implement should be clear from the start, especially if those projects are intended to serve as pilot schemes whose results will inspire and inform subsequent larger initiatives. Otherwise, the danger exists that the results of a multitude of micro projects at the local level may be misinterpreted as being too modest to merit replication and may thus have little or no overall impact on mainstream P/CVERLT strategies and policies.

Resources for project implementation may come from donors via civil society organizations, but they should nonetheless be coordinated and correlated with P/CVERLT efforts and goals.

> **The Government of Kazakhstan has allocated 209 billion tenge for the implementation of the new phase of its Programme on Countering Religious Extremism and Terrorism for 2018-2022, the majority of those funds coming from the central budget but one-third from local budget funds in specific regions. Some of these funds are being allocated to NGOs to enable them to implement projects at the district and local levels.**

6.4 Monitoring and evaluation

Measuring and demonstrating programmatic effectiveness and impact are critical components of every P/CVERLT programme. These tasks need to be done not only to justify and attract funding, but also, and more importantly, to assess impact. In the case of P/CVERLT, this is particularly challenging for a number of reasons. Chief among them is that radicalization to violence is a complex psychosocial phenomenon resulting from the convergence of factors that are

both structural and deeply individual. In preventive initiatives, "measuring the negative", or assessing that VERLT was averted because of an individual's participation in a specific preventive programme, is extremely hard to do and generally yields inconclusive results.[65]

Another challenge is that civil society actors and grassroots organizations often do not have the institutional resources to develop or implement rigorous evaluation methodologies. Nevertheless, some current practices from the fields of peacebuilding and development may prove useful in setting up effective evaluation tools for P/CVERLT programming. Some of these practices include developing clear theories of change; collecting baseline data before the implementation of a programme; being context-sensitive; and integrating both quantitative and qualitative components into the evaluation process.[66]

While a number of PVE National Action Plans in the region have stipulated some general indicators to monitor and specified which agencies should conduct regular monitoring, a clear definition of "success" remains elusive. Monitoring is often viewed as a reporting mechanism which different ministries employ to document their efforts to the coordinating body, rather than as a means of measuring the impact of a programme. More capacity building support is needed to understand what monitoring and evaluation would entail in this field and how the impacts of PVE programmes can be measured. If they were given the resources and training, civil society actors could play a key role in providing a systematic and independent monitoring and feedback mechanism.

6.5 Strategic communication

In order for a whole-of-society approach to have a significant P/CVERLT impact, public security issues must be demystified. In particular, it is essential to recognize that public security issues are of concern to a wide variety of actors and should not be left to be discussed and addressed by security experts alone. Civil society and other non-governmental actors can help inform the public on threats posed by VERLT and measures taken to address them.

Few countries have communication strategies to let the public know about the content and modalities of their National Action Plans. In countries where

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65 Georgia Holmer, Peter Bauman, and Kateira Aryaeinejad, *Measuring Up: Evaluating the Impact of P/CVE Programs* (Washington, DC: USIP, August 2018).

66 UNDP and International Alert, *Improving the Impact of Preventing Violent Extremism Programming: A Toolkit for Design, Monitoring and Evaluation* (Oslo: UNDP; International Alert, March 2018), https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Global%20Policy%20Centres/OGC/PVE_ImprovingImpactProgrammingToolkit_2018.pdf.

governments have reached out to the public, the motivation for doing so has usually been to inform the public of its responsibilities in tackling VERLT, not to solicit public support. Governments and civil society, however, could join forces in order to develop platforms and networks to facilitate the dissemination of the National Action Plan's objectives, activities, and outcomes to the general public.

Governments should hold periodic press conferences for the media on the results of the work of State bodies in preventing VERLT. The Government would be able to share its concerns about VERLT with the public and civil society and encourage them to recognize the need to contribute to preventing and countering VERLT.

In 2017, following the adoption in November 2016, of the National Strategy and Action Plan on PVE/CVE, the Government in Tajikistan launched a communication campaign, to raise awareness about the provisions of the National Action Plan. Information was provided in Tajik, Russian, and English through the media and printed versions of the National Action Plan were disseminated to all local-level authorities. Since then, at periodic press briefings and other meetings, the Prosecution Office has reported on implementation progress. These briefings, however, tend to be one-sided affairs, with the Government reporting and representatives of the media listening. They could be turned into opportunities to encourage a sense of mutual accountability and allow true dialogue.

6.6 Advocacy and feedback mechanisms

Civil society actors could play a positive advisory role, relaying to government officials any doubts about the efficacy of P/CVERLT measures and offering concrete alternatives to counter-terrorism policies. To be able to provide such feedback, civil society needs to be given relevant, timely, and accurate information about the nature of VERLT threats. Sharing of information about P/CVERLT measures between government and civil society would also allow for an open and fact-based dialogue about those measures' relevance, impact, and cost-effectiveness.

Civil society actors could also explain why human rights can be a useful framework for developing effective P/CVERLT strategies rather than an impediment. They can educate official decision makers, police and law enforcement agencies and officers, and civil society on the importance of addressing terrorism and violent extremism in a way that respects human rights. At the same time, civil society actors could describe the nature and extent of complementarity among different legal frameworks, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and domestic criminal and civil law.

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7. Recommendations

The OSCE's conception of P/CVERLT envisions a comprehensive approach that goes beyond the traditional view of physical security and considers economic, environmental, political, and community security as important goals of human dignity and freedoms. Such an approach recognizes that many different root causes and grievances — be they political, economic, social, psychological, or otherwise — can collectively add up to violent extremist behaviour and possibly lead to terrorism. Thus, a comprehensive security approach to P/CVERLT calls for multidisciplinary solutions, where justice, human rights, development, education, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and rule of law intersect to prevent the turn to violent extremism. It also calls for the engagement of civil society actors, in support of states' efforts, to the contribution of multifaceted, comprehensive, and sustainable solutions.

This perspective on P/CVERLT aligns strongly with the kind of whole-of-society approach to P/CVERLT described in this guidebook. Understanding the value of a whole-of-society approach is the first step towards developing comprehensive strategies that bring together a wide array of actors to address the security threat posed by violent extremism. Instead of neglecting the unique strengths that civil society actors and other non-governmental actors can bring to a country's P/CVERLT efforts, a whole-of-society approach combines those strengths (which range from legitimacy to local knowledge, flexibility, and specialized expertise) with the assets that government actors can bring to bear. Through mutually respectful partnerships that engage these actors not just in implementing P/CVERLT plans but also in designing them, a whole-of-society campaign can prove far more effective than efforts undertaken by the actors individually and separately. This guidebook is designed to help advance these ideas and provide concrete suggestions and examples on how to establish productive partnerships that lead to impactful, community-based P/CVERLT programmes.

Awareness of the potential value of genuine partnerships between governments and non-governmental actors in P/CVERLT is not enough; practical steps must be taken to encourage and enable effective partnerships to be formed. There is no one-size-fits-all framework for engaging civil society in P/CVERLT programmes or designing civil society-led interventions; in every case, a programme or intervention must be customized to fit the local context. However, a number of common challenges and factors present themselves in most contexts. To address these, all actors involved in whole-of-society efforts to prevent VERLT should bear in mind eight guidelines for making co-operation easier to achieve and partnerships more productive.

Identify strengths and build capacity for partnership

- Creating effective partnerships for P/CVERLT requires recognizing what each partner brings to the partnership and ensuring that each partner has sufficient capacity to perform its role without interference and in line with the fundamental human rights of freedom of expression, assembly, and association;
- Government actors should recognize which components of P/CVERLT programming are best left to civil society actors and cede responsibility for those tasks to these stakeholders without governmental interference or manipulation;
- Non-governmental actors must be clear about their capacities, experiences, raison d'êtres, and professional goals;
- Government stakeholders should facilitate the involvement of civil society (and other non-governmental actors) in the full spectrum of P/CVERLT programming and policy development; and
- Front-line government officials should be trained in how to collaborate with non-governmental actors in P/CVERLT-relevant capacities.

Build trust and avoid instrumentalization

- Trustworthy relations between state and civil society need to be built and maintained;
- Building trust begins by sustained dialogue on P/CVERLT issues as an era of common concerns and shared responsibilities;
- Governments need to shed preconceptions and stereotypes about civil society and open up to the possibility of sharing burdens and receiving feedback, sometimes critical, about the direction of their work;
- Civil society actors need to prove their commitment to working on issues related to P/CVERLT in a highly professional fashion no matter what donor support they do or do not receive; and
- Governments must be careful not to instrumentalize CSOs to gain information, gather criminal intelligence, and detect threats within communities; such efforts would be counterproductive and might

undermine the credibility of civil society actors and community leaders in the eyes of their constituencies.[67]

Provide political and legal space

- Counter-terrorism legislation should not be so broad that it criminalizes efforts by CSOs to engage with individuals at-risk of terrorist radicalization or already radicalized; and
- Government actors should enable credible civil society actors and organizations to engage in prevention by assessing and removing legal, political, and logistical barriers to their operation, particularly by actively facilitating their work and ensuring their physical safety (especially when civil society actors work in spaces contested or populated by VEOs), protection from harassment and intimidation, data security, ability to organize, freedom of travel, and ability to participate in international conferences and workshops (including by streamlining visa processes).

Reach terminological consensus

- Governments should recognize that the use of vague definitions of terms such as "terrorism" and of "securitized" language and P/CVERLT terminology may be problematic for some civil society actors and jeopardize their local credibility and physical security;
- Governments may need to refine the language used in their national legislation and national strategies in order to clearly delineate what is understood by the terms "terrorism", "extremism", "violent extremism", and "radicalization"; and
- The contours of what is legal and what is not should be clearly communicated to all actors working on P/CVERLT initiatives.

Mitigate risks to personal security and safety

- Civil society actors should be supported by governments in avoiding or at least reducing the risks to their personal safety posed by engaging with current or potential supporters of violent extremism;
- Civil society actors should seek the advice and assistance of law enforcement entities in order to mitigate safety risks, where appropriate;[68] and
- Some P/CVERLT efforts should not be labelled as such if doing so threatens to make the effort counterproductive and to endanger the individuals involved.

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67 See OSCE, *The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe* (Vienna: OSCE Secretariat, July 2019), https://www.osce.org/secretariat/400241.

68 Georgia Holmer, *Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective*, Special Report no. 336 (Washington, DC: USIP, 2013).

Co-ordinate efforts

- Regular engagement between government actors and CSOs should be established through agreed-upon, flexible, and responsible multiagency co-ordination mechanisms such as:
  - Civil society advisory committees to incorporate input from different actors (including valuable early warning details and community concerns and grievances) into P/CVERLT strategy and policy and donor planning;
  - P/CVERLT-focused centres that support and foster international research, information exchange, and sharing of good practices;
  - Periodic roundtable discussions and other platforms for dialogue and trust-building exercises between government and civil society actors, including, when possible and as appropriate, law enforcement representatives; and
  - Institutional alliances with other governments, as well as with regional and global multilateral organizations and with CSOs in other countries, to facilitate dialogue and coordinate action around P/CVERLT issues, such as the joint crafting and implementation of strategies, action plans, and other cooperative projects;
- CSOs should create channels of co-ordination among themselves in order to organize joint efforts, add value, exchange experiences, and learn lessons; these channels can take the form of formal CSO networks, at the local, national, and regional levels, which are currently missing in Central Asia;[69] and
- To foster the development of local networks, non-governmental actors should consider:
  - Developing local coalitions of P/CVERLT-focused civil society actors and organizations that work directly with communities and families;
  - Including civil society actors from related disciplines such as conflict transformation; peacebuilding; good governance; development; political participation; interfaith and intercommunal dialogue; human rights, including women's rights; youth activities; and other fields relevant to P/CVERLT; and
  - Involving professionals from other sectors such as mental health, law, and social work as well as academics with practical expertise and foster meaningful and sustained exchange with civil society stakeholders and policymakers.

Obtain adequate and reliable funding

- Community-level initiatives should thus be organized around long-term, sustained, and adaptive strategies rather than treated as one-off projects;

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69 The active Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) created by the European Commission may be a model to follow. See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en.

- Funding timelines should be flexible to account for time-consuming processes such as building visibility and trust, conducting research and assessments, and carrying out monitoring and evaluation;
- Short-term failures should be tolerated if projects have long-term potential;
- Follow-up funding should be provided over the mid-term to long term to enable projects with demonstrated success to be sustained and scaled up;
- Core funding to support and sustain an organization should be provided in addition to project-based funding with the aim of empowering civil society actors to define their own priorities, focus on key missions, and grow structurally to assure sustainability in the longer term;
- Local donor representatives should be involved in all stages of P/CVERLT programming to ensure communication between donors and implementers; and
- The need for government buy-in for donor-supported P/CVERLT initiatives should be balanced against the priority to support interlocutors with the greatest credibility and influence in marginalized communities.

Provide capacity-building support
- Donors should demonstrate flexibility in supporting new types of actors that have less experience than established organizations but that may have potential to contribute to P/CVERLT efforts given their reach and legitimacy within local communities; the capacity of such organizations should be increased through technical support; and
- Government actors should enable credible civil society actors and organizations to engage in prevention by:
  - Assessing and removing legal, political, and logistical barriers to their operation;
  - Providing capacity-building support (including in translation, publication, and other facets of the process of disseminating the results of their work);
  - Promoting platforms for cross-fertilization with relevant disciplines such as development, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding;
  - Providing financing and non-financial incentives for collaboration;
  - Giving opportunities to less experienced organizations to become involved in P/CVERLT efforts and learn from other actors;
  - Providing P/CVERLT-specific training to stakeholders with valuable expertise in related fields but little experience in the prevention space; and
  - Engaging in joint projects and research with civil society organizations so that government and non-governmental actors can build mutual trust, learn from one another, and enhance the inclusivity and accountability of their projects.

Relevant OSCE and UN Instruments and Documents

The following UN and OSCE instruments (in each case listed here in descending chronological order) are relevant to whole-of-society approaches to P/CVERLT.

UN instruments
- Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (December 24, 2015), General Assembly, Seventieth Session, A/70/674.
- Security Council Resolution 2242 (October 2015).
- Security Council Resolution 1325 (October 31, 2000), on Women, Peace and Security.
- Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.

OSCE instruments
- Overview of OSCE Counterterrorism–Related Commitments (April 19, 2018).
- Consolidated Reference for OSCE Anti-terrorism Efforts (March 15, 2018).
- Resolution on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Radicalization and Violent Extremism that Lead to Terrorism (2018), OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Berlin Declaration.
- Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: Ideas, Recommendations, and Good Practices from the OSCE Region (September 28, 2017), report by Peter Neumann.
- Chairmanship's Perception Paper: Recommendations from the 2017 OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference on "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism" (July 4, 2017).
- Youth and the Prevention of Violent Extremism: Workshops in Western Europe, Black Sea Region (February 1, 2017), Recommendations for Policymakers.
- Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening OSCE Efforts to Prevent and Counter-Terrorism (December 9, 2016).
- Ministerial Council Decision 4/15 (December 4, 2015).
- Ministerial Council Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (December 4, 2015).
- Ministerial Council Declaration on Reinforcing OSCE Counter-Terrorism Efforts in the Wake of Recent Terrorist Attacks (December 4, 2015).
- OSCE Security Days on "Building Bridges: Promoting Dialogue to Prevent Radicalization and Violent Extremism Sends Powerful Message of Tolerance (May 22, 2015).

- Ministerial Council Declaration on the OSCE Role in Countering the Phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in the Context of the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014) (December 5, 2014).
- Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policy Approach (February 2014).
- Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: Report on Findings and Recommendations—Joint OSCE Secretariat-ODIHR Expert Roundtable, Vienna, 23–24 October 2012 (July 2013)
- Women and Terrorist Radicalization Final Report—OSCE Secretariat-OSCE-ODIHR Expert Roundtables; Preventing Women Terrorist Radicalization (Vienna 12 December 2011); The Role and Empowerment of Women in Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism (Vienna 12 and 13 March 2012) (February 2013).
- OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on Strengthening the Role of Civil Society in the OSCE Region (Istanbul Declaration 2013)
- Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening Co-ordination and Coherence in the OSCE's Efforts to Address Transnational Threats (December 7, 2011).
- Ministerial Council Decision 10/08 Further Promoting the OSCE's Action in Countering Terrorism (December 5, 2008).
- Ministerial Council Decision 5/07 on Public Private Partnerships in Countering Terrorism (November 30, 2007).
- "The Role of Civil Society in Preventing Terrorism" (report of an informal working-level meeting, Barcelona, 14-16 March 2007, organized by ODIHR in cooperation with the Fundació CIDOB).
- Ministerial Council Decision 14/05 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation (December 6, 2005).

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