

## Countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism: the OSCE's unique regional blueprint<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Wuchte<sup>2</sup>

Mehdi Knani<sup>3</sup>

### Summary

*The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the largest regional security organization, with 57 participating States from Europe, Central Asia and North America. Mongolia is the latest to have joined the OSCE family in 2012. Yet, despite its size, the OSCE and its role in promoting peace, democracy and stability for over a billion people is not known very well. Perhaps even less appreciated is the extent to which the Organization contributes, in different ways, to preventing terrorism and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. The authors summarize the OSCE's multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach to countering terrorism, pertinent past and on-going activities, and they outline a way forward that focuses more and more on tailored capacity building.*

---

<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the OSCE Secretariat or any other OSCE executive structure or body.

<sup>2</sup> OSCE Head on Anti-Terrorism Issues

<sup>3</sup> Programme Manager on Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism

OSCE participating States have consistently condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, stressing that no circumstance or motive can justify terrorism. At the same time, they recognized as early as December 2001 that to mitigate the threat of terrorism to the maximum extent possible in the long run countries cannot limit themselves to military and law enforcement responses. Adopting the *OSCE Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism*, they highlighted the need to address “the various social, economic, political and other factors, including violent separatism and extremism, which engender conditions in which terrorist organizations are able to recruit and win support”.<sup>4</sup>

OSCE participating States further emphasized that the Organization’s comprehensive and co-operative approach to security provides comparative advantages in combating terrorism by identifying and addressing these factors through all relevant OSCE instruments and structures. This multi-dimensional approach underlines that alongside politico-military aspects of security, the protection and promotion of human rights as well as economic development and environmental sustainability are inextricable parts of security and stability. It also underlines that multi-stakeholder collaboration is required on all levels in order to meet modern security threats and challenges, across borders, but also within countries between governmental and non-governmental actors.

One could argue that most, if not all OSCE activities, contribute at least indirectly to the international efforts to prevent terrorism and address the conditions conducive to its spread, as outlined by the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Indeed, different OSCE executive structures – including the Secretariat, independent institutions and 16 field operations – are active in areas such as conflict prevention, fostering economic development and good governance, promoting the rule of law and full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, each operating within the confine of different mandates.

---

<sup>4</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council, *The Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism*, MC(9)/DEC/1, Annex, December 4, 2001, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/22645>>

## A new blueprint

In December 2012, OSCE participating States adopted a new blue print for the OSCE's contribution to the global efforts against terrorism in the coming years – the *OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight Against Terrorism*.<sup>5</sup> The Framework reaffirms the pursuit of activities to eliminate the conditions in which terrorists may win support and engage in recruitment. It also identifies “countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, following a multidimensional approach” as a strategic focus area.

The OSCE has initially tackled violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism – commonly referred to as VERLT– from four main thematic angles, which the Action against Terrorism Unit in the OSCE Transnational Threats Department seeks to build upon in an overall programme on countering VERLT. Promoting the rule of law and promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms is mainstreamed throughout all these efforts. Participating States have indeed undertaken, as a cornerstone OSCE counterterrorism commitment, to fully comply with their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, refugee law and humanitarian law.<sup>6</sup>

***Countering the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes:*** Recruitment for and incitement to terrorism were first tackled in the context of countering the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes. OSCE participating States adopted two decisions in this regard in 2004 and 2006,<sup>7</sup> which have served as the basis for a programme of expert workshops run since 2004 by our teams, allowing national and international experts to share information, review existing legal and policy frameworks, showcase good practices, forge closer working ties, and promote relevant human rights

<sup>5</sup> OSCE Permanent Council, *Decision No. 1063 on the OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight Against Terrorism*, December 7, 2012, <<http://www.osce.org/pc/98008>>

<sup>6</sup> OSCE Secretariat, *Overview of OSCE Counter-Terrorism Related Commitments*, update as of April 1, 2011, <<http://www.osce.org/atu/26365>>

<sup>7</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council, *Decision No.3/04 on Combating the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes*, December 7, 2004, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/42647>>; *Decision No.7/06 on Countering the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes*, December 5, 2006, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/23078>>

aspects. Recently, we organized a series of four online expert workshops on the use of the Internet as tactical facilitator by terrorists; terrorist use of social networking tools; right wing extremism/terrorist use of the Internet; and institutionalizing public-private partnerships to combat terrorist use of the Internet<sup>8</sup>. Besides the Action against Terrorism Unit, the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media addresses issues of Internet governance and pluralism, promoting full compliance with OSCE press freedom commitments.<sup>9</sup>

**Strengthening Criminal Justice Response:** Countering VERLT has been further addressed by the OSCE from a criminal justice response perspective, through its programmes of training and legislative training workshops, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), to assist OSCE participating States in meeting their commitments as regards to the international legal framework against terrorism, including the implementation of all United Nations Security Council resolutions related to the fight against terrorism, as well as cooperation in criminal matters related to terrorism.<sup>10</sup> The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) also provides key expertise on rule of law and human rights in countering terrorism, including: A manual on “Countering Terrorism, Protecting Human Rights”<sup>11</sup> and a related training module delivered to over 15 locations to counterterrorism practitioners; a practical training module under development in cooperation with the Transnational Threats Department/Strategic Police Matters Unit for law enforcement officers on human rights in counterterrorism investigations; technical assistance/advice, upon request, on the implementation of international

---

<sup>8</sup> A report on the four online expert workshops is available in English and Russian at <<http://www.osce.org/atu/102266>>

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, *Amsterdam Recommendations on the Freedom of the Media and the Internet*, June 14, 2003, <<http://www.osce.org/fom/41903>>; *Joint Declaration by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression*, December 21, 2005, <<http://www.osce.org/fom/27455>>

<sup>10</sup> *Overview of relevant OSCE Commitments*, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, *Countering Terrorism, Protecting Human Rights: A Manual* (2007), <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/29103>>

anti-terrorism instruments and the compliance of national anti-terrorism legislation with international standards.<sup>12</sup> Both the OSCE Secretariat and ODIHR are also mandated since 2004 to promote solidarity with victims of terrorism.<sup>13</sup>

**Promoting Tolerance and Non-Discrimination:** OSCE participating States firmly reject the identification of terrorism and violent extremism with any religion or belief, culture, ethnic group, nationality or race.<sup>14</sup> ODIHR provides assistance to participating States in the implementation of their commitments to fight intolerance and discrimination, as underlined in a number of Ministerial Council Decisions since 2003. ODIHR organizes awareness raising activities and capacity building activities for government officials and civil society on how to combat intolerance and discrimination and how to facilitate mutual respect and understanding, as well as on freedom of religion or belief. With the view to preventing intolerance and discrimination, before they are manifested, ODIHR implements educational projects to raise awareness of different forms of prejudices and hostility. For this purpose, ODIHR developed country-specific teaching materials on anti-Semitism with the Anne Frank House Amsterdam, and developed a guide, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and UNESCO, providing “Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Addressing Islamophobia through Education.”<sup>15</sup> Upon request of participating States, ODIHR provides reviews of anti-terrorism legislation, anti-discrimination and hate crime legislation, as well as of laws related to freedom of religion or belief, to help lawmakers ensure that legislation is in line with

---

<sup>12</sup> OSCE/ODIHR has developed an online legislation database intended as a resource for lawmakers in the OSCE region accessible at <<http://www.legislationonline.org>>

<sup>13</sup> OSCE Permanent Council, *Decision No. 618 on Solidarity with victims of terrorism*, July 1, 2004, <<http://www.osce.org/pc/35030>>

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, OSCE Ministerial Council, *Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism*, op. cit.; *OSCE Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism*, December 7, 2002, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/42536>>; *Decision No. 6/02 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination*, December 7, 2002, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/40521>>; *Decision No. 10/05 on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination: Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding*, December 6, 2005, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/17462>>

<sup>15</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, Council of Europe, UNESCO, *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Addressing Islamophobia through Education (2011)*, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/84495>>

OSCE commitments and other international human rights standards. Moreover, three Personal Representatives have been appointed by the successive OSCE Chairmanships since 2004 to promote greater tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination across the OSCE region; upon invitation from participating States, Personal Representatives visit and discuss tolerance and non-discrimination issues with government officials and civil society representatives. ODIHR maintains an online Tolerance and Non Discrimination Information System, providing easy access to OSCE/international reference materials as well as thematic and country information.<sup>16</sup>

**Promoting Public-Private Partnerships:** The importance of co-operation between state authorities, civil society, the media and the business community was highlighted by a specific OSCE Decision, which mandates the OSCE Secretariat to promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in its counter-terrorism related activities.<sup>17</sup> The Action against Terrorism Unit has organized a series of regional, sub-regional and national conferences, which have emphasized the role of PPPs in countering VERLT and facilitated government outreach and dialogue with non-governmental stakeholders to explore opportunities and modalities for partnership.

### The growth of VERLT as a strategic OSCE focus

Countering VERLT emerged distinctly on the OSCE's counterterrorism agenda with the adoption in 2007 of a Ministerial Statement in support to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy,<sup>18</sup> in which participating States explicitly called on the Organization to counter VERLT from a multi-dimensional perspective. The following year,

<sup>16</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, *Tolerance And Non Discrimination Information System*, <http://tandis.odihr.pl/>.

<sup>17</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council, *Decision No.5/07 on Public-Private Partnerships in Countering Terrorism*, November 30, 2007, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/29569>>

<sup>18</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council, *Ministerial Statement on Supporting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, November 30, 2007, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/29544>>.

another decision was adopted calling upon participating States to make use of the OSCE executive structures in countering violent VERLT in their respective countries.<sup>19</sup>

These decisions provided the basis and impetus for a renewed reflection on the role the Organization could play, which led to series of initiatives to try and carve a distinct OSCE contribution to countering VERLT. The Action against Terrorism Unit established an overall awareness-raising and capacity building programme with the inter-related objectives of:

- (1) Promoting a multi-dimensional understanding of VERLT, broader than intelligence or law-enforcement driven, to inform the formulation of context-specific preventive actions which complement criminal justice response to VERLT;
- (2) Addressing human-rights aspects and supporting the formulation and implementation of human-rights compliant policies and measures to counter VERLT; and
- (3) Encouraging multi-stakeholder collaboration, both in terms of whole-of-government approach and co-operation between public authorities and civil society, the media and the business community at national and local levels.

Taking this programme forward, we first organized a series of four VERLT-related regional and sub-regional conferences and workshops between 2008 and 2010 to facilitate the exchange of views, lessons learned and good practices about the threat of VERLT and measures to effectively counter it. In collaboration with other Secretariat Units and ODIHR, our participating States now seek to harness the OSCE's multi-dimensional expertise to tackle specific VERLT-related issues:

- In 2011 and 2012, The Action against Terrorism Unit and ODIHR jointly organized two expert roundtables on **women and VERLT**. The first roundtable focused preventing women terrorist radicalization (December 12, 2011, Vienna) and the second on the

---

<sup>19</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council, *Decision No.10/08 on Further Promoting the OSCE's Action against Terrorism*, MC.DEC/10/08, December 5, 2008, <http://www.osce.org/mc/35526>.

role and empowerment of women in countering VERLT (March 12-13, 2012). These roundtables brought together over 190 participants from civil society, academia, state authorities and intergovernmental organizations, with expertise in security, gender and human rights. They helped pioneer discussions at the multilateral level on the need to integrate a gender perspective in research, policy and practice in the field of countering VERLT in order to be effectiveness.<sup>20</sup> We are now planning a joint initiative in 2014 with the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) to further internationalize these discussions, with practitioners and policy officials from beyond the OSCE area, and to elaborate a good practices document.

- In 2012, The Action against Terrorism Unit and ODIHR organized another regional expert roundtable which focused on **youth engagement in countering VERLT** (October 23-24, 2012). Some 100 participants from state authorities, civil society and international organizations, including many youth representatives, met to discuss both the challenge of countering VERLT among youth and the role of youth in countering VERLT. Specifically, participants explored good practices and lessons learnt to counter youth VERLT through education, the Media, including Information and Communication Technologies, as well as the Arts and Sport.<sup>21</sup>
- Since 2012, we have also been developing with the Transnational Threats Department/Strategic Police Matters Unit and ODIHR a guidebook on **community policing** and the prevention of terrorism. This guidebook, which will be published by the end of 2013, provides guidance on central issues that can impact upon the success or failure of police efforts to harness a community policing approach to prevent terrorism and counter VERLT. It is primarily intended for policy makers and senior police professionals, but it may also be a useful resource for members of civil society with an interest in these issues, in particular community leaders. The

---

<sup>20</sup> A report on these two roundtables is available in Arabic, English and Russian at <<http://www.osce.org/atu/99919>>

<sup>21</sup> A report on this roundtable is available in English and Russian at <<http://www.osce.org/atu/103352>>

guidebook is intended to serve as a basis to develop and deliver training modules tailored to local contexts.

### **The way ahead**

Looking forward, the OSCE seeks to engage interested participating States in more systematic, tailored capacity-building projects, where possible in co-operation with relevant OSCE field operations. The OSCE Office in Tajikistan is already actively engaged since 2009 in the first ever OSCE VERLT field programme upon a request from Tajikistan. This programme consists of three stages, including a survey-based country-wide assessment of VERLT trends<sup>22</sup>; targeted capacity-building activities for government and civil society stakeholders; and support to the formulation of a national counter-radicalization policy.

The Action against Terrorism Unit is exploring the possibility for similar programmatic engagement with other participating States by organizing a series of national seminars on countering VERLT. Already six such seminars were organized since April 2012. Typically, these seminars offer an unprecedented discussion platform, bringing together representatives from different state authorities, both inside and outside the security sector, as well as local government structures, academia, the media, and civil society organizations. The aim of these seminars is to promote an exchange of views on the nature and severity of the threat of VERLT locally, the various factors contributing to it, and a joint reflection on the measures required, both by public authorities and from within civil society, to effectively counter it. Governmental and non-governmental experts and practitioners from abroad are invited to share their experiences, lessons learned and good practices. Participants are encouraged to identify recommendations for follow-up action and specific needs that the OSCE may help address through capacity-building projects.

---

<sup>22</sup> See, Michael Taarnby, *Islamist Radicalization in Tajikistan, an Assessment of Current Trends* (2012), based on a survey conducted by the Centre for Socio-Political Studies "Korshinos," which was supported and funded by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, with a contribution from the Government of Denmark.

*Regional and sub-regional organizations can be instrumental as force multipliers and delivery mechanisms for counter-terrorism assistance. This brief overview highlights the important and growing role of the OSCE, the largest regional security organization, in the field of preventing terrorism and countering VERT. By seeking close co-ordination with the United Nations and other regional organizations, the OSCE strives to make a difference drawing on its comparative advantages, namely a comprehensive and co-operative approach to security as well as a unique geographical reach and multi-dimensional expertise. The Action against Terrorism Unit is looking forward to develop further and diversify its collaboration with civil society organizations and academia throughout the OSCE area.*



Journal EXIT-Deutschland.  
Zeitschrift für Deradikalisierung  
und demokratische Kultur

ISSN: 2196-8136

Ausgabe: 2/2013