Inter-Religious Communication, Religious Radicalization and Security Issues

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Abstract

The object of the research in this study is the inter-religious communication, religious radicalism and their impact on security issues. The study undertakes to answer the question of how inter-religious communication and religious radicalization impacts on security. The study is of interest at the national, regional and global level. The lack of communication and inter-religious dialogue as well as the religious radicalization, have often led to inter-religious and inter-ethnic hatred, crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorist acts, becoming thus a serious threat to regional and global security. The Srebrenica massacre, the former Afghanistan under the regime the Taliban, today's ISIS, and also today's trends of the radicalism of Balkan Islam prove this perfectly. The study argues that the Albanian efforts to establish their own national state were never religious reasons. They were not only set up out of the religion framework, but they also stripped off religious divisions from their political raiment. Whereas the religious radicalization shifted the religious affiliation as a priority compared to the national affiliation. But for the Albanians, religion is not the defining feature of their national identity. Defining religion as a priority before the nation, the radicalization of religious beliefs, can become a danger for our national identity, and not being able to secure it, can turn it into an existential threat for our national security. This study applies the methods and instruments of the basic scientific researches, quantitative and qualitative, like the methods of analysis and synthesis, comparative analysis, historical, legal, comparison and confrontation ones, as well as the case studies. In the end, this study concludes that the curb of religious inter-religious communication weakens religious tolerance, and creates space for the radicalization of religious beliefs. Not being able to secure the religious beliefs can turn it into a risk and a threat for our national identity and the very foundations of the Albanian state themselves. This requires the state not to be just a neutral guarantor for the freedom of religious beliefs, but to act as a promoter of these freedoms and pass from passive neutralism into active secularism.

Keywords: inter-religious communication, religious tolerance, religious radicalization, national security, religious exclusivity

1. Introduction

Communication among Religious Faiths, Main Streams

Rivalry and non-acceptance of the dialogue and communication between religious faiths, as well as their relationship with the state, society and the individual has had a great influence in the development itself and the progress of the human society. It was exactly when instead of the conflict, there was communication and dialogue between the religious faiths, at a time when the religious was separated from the state and there was the start of the secularization era and the time when pluralism and religious tolerance became part of the society, which in turn led society into the path of development and progress.

From the way people view other religions in rapport with their religion and the level of acceptance of communication with them, we may distinguish three main streams: the stream of non-communication and that of excluding other religious faiths, otherwise referred to as religious exclusivity; the stream of involvement of other religious faiths or religious inclusivity and the stream of accepting the legitimacy of religious faiths or pluralism. People who belong to the stream of religious exclusiveness, thus, of the exclusion of other religious faiths, see their religious faith as the only true religion. According to them, other religions are not real. They are rivals of their faiths and are only Satan's shape[1]**.**

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[1] *Dr. Xhavit Shala (2016), "State, Religious Faith and Security Issues", Lambert Academic Publishing, p.124.*

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A characteristic of their behavior is non-communication, exclusion, intolerance and violence. The representatives of the religious exclusiveness often find the drive for a wrong interpretation that they make to the passages they got from holy books, like in the[1], as well as in the Koran.[2] The spirit of exclusivity exists often even inside a religion, supposing they pretend the truthfulness of a version, compared to another version of the same religion[3]. Even the representatives of the religious inclusiveness stream, otherwise including other religious faiths, view their religion as the only true religion. Different from the exclusivity, they do not regard other religions as wrong and do not interrupt their communication with them, but, according to them, they are not complete and partly developed. Only when at a time it became dominant in the society the acceptance stream of the legitimacy of the religious faiths or pluralism, of the acceptance of the indispensability of communication between religious faiths, then Europe was safe from religious fanatics and entered the path of modernization. According to the representatives of this stream, religions are all legitimate, valuable and true, when they are seen from the inside of their special culture. All the religious traditions merit respect. Regarding religious pluralism we may use even the term religious diversity. The exclusivity (expectance) and religious pluralism are two contradicting streams in the way how they see the religious world in rapport with their religion.

2. Crisis of Communication between Religious Faiths, Radicalization and Security Issues

If there is freedom given to the supporters of the religious exclusivity, not only they may stop the inter-religious dialogue, but they may also increase hatred and violence against religion and members of other religious communities, threatening the security of a country.[4] Lack of inter-religious communication and dialogue in the last decades is accompanied with a radicalization of the religious faiths, which on its own side often led to inter-religious and inter-ethnic hatred, in crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorist acts, becoming therefore a serious threat for the national, regional and global security. The massacre of the Muslim people in Srebrenica in July 1995[5], previous Afghanistan under the Taliban regime, and the 11 September, 2001 attacks against USA, terroristic act of Brejvic[6] in Norway[7], today's ISIS genocide against the Jazzed people[8], as well as the today's tendency for the radicalization of the Balkan Islam[9] prove this well.

It is still even more dangerous when the religious exclusivity is turned into a dominant ideology and state politics. In this case we are dealing with a theocratic state, known mainly in the Middle Ages, but that in the last decades is reappearing again. The turn of the religious exclusivity in the state politics is accompanied with consequences for the inner politics of these states. Such states, not allowing other religious faiths, make constant and systematic offence to the human rights and freedoms. They become shelter, radicals and trainers of the militants of the same religion from other countries. In the foreign politics, these states become a concern for the regional countries, putting forth and serving as exports for the terrorism covered by religion, threatening in this way, the regional security and beyond. In order to illustrate this, it is enough to mention the Afghanistan case till the year 2001. Taliban's victory was a typical case, where not only religious Islam exclusivity was turned into a state politics, but also inside Islam itself, the exclusivity belonged to the Sunnis version.

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[1] In the Bible, apart from the love and peace messages there are found other messages regarding repressive measures against those who do not accept faith. For example, in the Bible, Matthew, 12:30, it says: "Those who are not with me, are against me, and who does not get together, separates".

[2] In Koran, the people are divided into two groups, in Muslims and non-Muslims. The Muslims form an Islamic community and include the territories of the «Dar al –Islam» (Islamic place), a place where the Islamic law acts. The non-Muslim group, are inhabitant of the «Dar al – Harb» (place of wars). They must obey the Islamic law, and in order to keep their religious faith and protect property, they must pay the tax.

[3] [Iran, even though it was an Islamic State itself, it created reserves and attracted the attention of Taliban actions, because of the exclusiveness of the Sunni-Pashtu faith of Taliban]

[4] For more see: Xhavit Shala- «Albanians at a Crossroad», 42- 56, Tirana, May 2004. Published by the Albanian Center of Studies for National Security

[5] VOA 25.03.2016: The leader of this massacre Radovan Karaxhiç, was sentenced for for persecution, extermination, deportation, forcible transfer and killings – but was freed from charges of genocide related to a campaign to get rid of Bosnians and Croats from the villages conquered by the Serbian forces during the war of the years 1992- 1995.

[6] BBC 23 June 2011, Anders Behring Breivic, a Christian fundamentalist, kills 85 people, mainly young males and females in the Utoya village in Norway. [In the script of 1518 pages, called "European Declaration of Independence: 2083", published on internet, Anders Brejvic openly expresses his hatred against the Muslims. He also mentions the idea of their extinction and the division of Islamic states].

[7] Ardian Vehbiu, ResPublika 30 July 2011: Breivic saw himself as a crucifier, a mission for which he fought even sacrificing himself to defend the Christian Europe from the Muslims threat.

[8] VOA 30.10.2014: Victimization of women from ISIS.

[9] Dr. Xhavit Shala, "State, Religious Faith and Security Issues", Lambert Academic Publishing, p.40.

Religious exclusivity of Taliban had consequences for the internal security of Afghanistan. After they took power in 1996, they excluded democracy, established the holy law, and limited a lot the human rights, especially for women. In Afghanistan, Bin Laden, found the right grounds, and in 1998 he made the unification under his command, of the terrorist groups that acted at that time and created the Liberalization Front for the Holy Countries[1], which later became known as Al-Qaeda. The Taliban power grew the concerns for security in the Central Asia Republics. These Republics were afraid of the possibility that Afghanistan made to export religious terrorism and destabilize their fragile governments.[2] Taliban Religious exclusivity became a threat even for the global security. In Afghanistan on September 11, 2001, there was created and prepared a terrorist attack in the USA.[3]

Religious exclusivity is a state politics and in the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, otherwise known as ISIS, ISIL, or even DAESH. It is "responsible for the genocide against the people in the areas it controls, against the Jazzed, Christians and even Shiite Muslims. Their self-declared mission is genocide like an ideology, as well as their actions from whatever they declare, what they believe in, what they do."[4] It is already turned into a world centre for radicalization, recruitment, training of the desperate citizens from different countries of the world, despite their religious faith, as well as their use in terrorist acts.

ISISI, within a period of less than two years became the main threat for the security in Europe and for the whole actual system of international security. On March 22 this state, through declared state of war, hit Brussels, the capital of the Western civilization values, the main center of the economical power for the European Council and the center for NATO, challenging consequently the strongest and biggest organization for military defense in the world. The main actors of the today's international system in the USA, EU, Russia, Islamic Countries Organization, etc, are hesitating to call ISIS a state, at a time when different from other states, this irresponsible state lacks international recognition. This is done so, in order to cover their already present failure confront such threat. To accept that ISIS is a state, which has declared war and done armed attacks against these actors, one must answer ISIS through conventional war, thus even with a ground intervention which up to now, the main actors in the international system are afraid to do so. Today there are three military coalitions that fight ISIS from the air. Despite air strikes from the three military coalitions lead respectively from USA, Russia and Saudi Arabia, ISIS has only lost 20% of the territory of its state. The three coalitions one by one but also in coordination of their actions, at least in the air, are not being able to win over ISIS. But as Clausewitz says, victory will come "when the center of the enemy's gravity, the main point for its power, will be captured or destroyed"[5] and this is achieved through ground intervention. Only in this way, this may change permanently and irrevocably for a long period the form of the regime on that terrain.

3. Inter-religious Communication and Dialogue of the Albanians is a Treasure of Our Culture and European Democratic Values, but Already in Risk

Inter-religious communication and dialogue of the Albanians is a value for which West is expecting us to transmit it into our common European family where we are aiming at integrating. This value is one of the most valuable treasures of our national inheritance and culture, created by our nation in years, through manifestation, development and transmitted among generations of a religious tolerance, capable for an ancient and civilized European nation.

As a consequence of the Ottoman conquer and empire, the Albanians entered in the modern history separated into three different religious faiths. Thus, religious consciousness of the Albanian believers was dominated by three religious institutions, belonging to three foreign cultures and schools. These clerical institutions depended on three universal centers. Two of these centers, the Sultanate of Khalifa and the Fareon Patricana have just not supported continually the idea of an Albanian National State. However, different from the Balkan "practice", the Albanian people did not divide themselves into as many nationalities as religions. The Albanian nationality consciousness was never dominated by that religious one. In the Albanian population it did not dominated the feeling of nationality. Among the believers of different religious communities

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[1] Part from the confession of the accused, Ahmet Ibrahim Al Nagar, given in front of Egyptian justice, «Albania» newspaper, dated 2 December 2001, pg. 5. [Arrested on 25.6.1998, in "El Hagri" Institution, Elbasan and sent to Egypt].

[2] Alexander del Valle, Genesis and the actuality of pro-Islamic strategy of USA.

[3] [From «Afghan school» there came a major part of figures that became leaders in the terrorist circles, starting from Osama Bin Laden, Ajman Zavahiri – actual leader of Al Qaeda; Al Zarkavi, leader of terrorist acts in Iraq etc.]

[4] VOA, 17.3.2016, Declaration of the USA State Secretary, John Kerry.

[5] Michael Sheehan, "Evolution of modern war" in "Strategy in the Contemporary World", Oxford University Press, 2007, pg.64

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in the country, there were preserved spiritual, economical, social and even family ties. Under such conditions, the National Albanian Movement, different from other Balkan countries could not use the religious hatred against the conqueror as a motif for all the people to be engaged into a war. Unification of the Albanians in the independence way would have been a reality out of religion, on religion itself and only dependant onto the nationality principle. Even the Albanian religious authorities are engaged not less in the case of the Albanian National Movement by pen or weapon. However, they have never fought in the name of their religion. They are engaged in this war not only for religious motifs, but also for national ideals. This may be summed up in the famous saying of Pashko Vasa that "Albanians religion is being Albanian". Thus, for Albanians war is a national issue, which was common for all the Balkan national movements and had its own characteristics. It never had a religious motif. It got raised not only out of religion, but it was also led against the identification of the religious belongingness of different elements of the Albanian people with those national ones, as well as it got rid of the religious separation from the political cover. This is one of the most precious gifts that the Renaissance people gave to Albania and the Albanian people. The values of such a choice, even though obligatory at that time are extraordinary today in the modern times. It presently makes the foundations of the religious harmony and tolerance of Albanians.

Therefore, the foundations of the national identity of the Albanians not in the religion but rather in the language, tradition, culture[1] and beyond, acceptance in an Islamic religion generally popular and soften by Bectashism[2]; adaption toward intolerant streams in Islam, as it is the Wahabism[3]; the obligatory cooling of the new generation of Albanians against religion during communist regime; not being able to turn the economical and social conflicts into a religious ones, as well as the tradition of the Albanian political forces that historically did not aim at creating people to be elected on religious grounds[4], are some of the factors that have stopped our religious communication, harmony and tolerance and have preserved the traditional religious faiths of Albanians from fanatics, extremism or religious fundamentalism. These are at the same time even the European democratic values.

But the treasures of the culture of a nation are always in risk if you do not take care of them, if the factors identifying them are not at risk and even if one does not invest to neutralize the effect of these factors. Even the inter-religious communication and tolerance, as treasures of our national culture, even though they are created and have resisted in years, must be secured[5], thus treated as property in risk[6] from radicalism.

4. Inter-religious Communication and Dialogue, Passive Neutrality and Acting Secularism

Albanian state, immediately after the declaration of independence, even though fragile, valued inter-religious communication, dialogue and harmony and in general, the religious issues, as very important for the national security. In 1923, Visarion Xhuvani, who later became the Archbishop of the Albanian Orthodox Church, expresses that: "We all know how the importance of religious issues has been and is confused in here. We all know how much it cost to the state. May God not allow them to be a weapon of enemy even for the future"[7]. Starting from these specific circumstances, the other patriot and citizen, Mehdi Frashëri, ordered that "Government must be a little bit more into the religion…"[8]

Since that time, the Albanian patriots have tried to spread the feelings of the religious faiths, despite the number they were treated, represent and feel themselves equal. This has been and remains one of the piles of inter-religious dialogue, communication and tolerance for the Albanians.

Sanction since the creation of the independent Albanian state with such principles as a state secularism, the religious freedom of faith and its change, equal treatment of religious faiths, definition in details of the way of nomination of the primaries of religious faiths, of financing of such communities, have all been measures to encourage dialogue of inter-

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[1] *Veton Surroi, "Religion and Civilization", "Korrieri" Newspaper, 14 November 2003.*

[2] *Mehdi Frasheri, "The ancient History of Albania and Albanians", p. 44 -45*

[3] *Prof. Dr. Arbër Xhaferri in «Religion, Politics, Albanians», published in "Religion and Civilization in a new millennium – Case of Albania", pg. 68*

[4] *Prof. Dr. Artan Fuga - "Albanians Behavior Today against Religion". 20 April 2004 / TN / QSHDNJ*

[5] *Classification of the assigned problems in the category of security issues for "securing" these problems, which means justification of measures to confront. For more see the representatives of the Copenhagen Buzan School, Waever, de Wilde, 1998: 23.*

[6] *For more see Xhavit Shala, "Religious Issues in the Albanian land and our national Security". Seminar held in the Scientific Conference entitled "Preservation of national and religious values of Albanians", held in Skopje, on 3 September 2010.*

[7] *AQSH, Fond. 246, D- 68, Fl. 471, 1923*

[8] *AQSH, Fond. 246, D- 68, Fl. 637, 1923*

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religious communication. They have influenced the consolidation of the religious tolerance of our people and consequently, have influenced in the enforcement and security of the Albanian state itself.

For this specification the religious faith of Albanians, the problems it may raise and be present inside the religious community, may not only belong to them, but also to all the Albanian people. We are and have the right to be worried all due to the risks that none of the traditional religious community of Albanians is immunized.

Among the main factors that have influenced in risking the inter-religious communication and tolerance in our country are: importing in an uncontrollable way through NGO-s of the religious spectrum of a series of religious streams[1], which threaten the rights of Albanians to exercise their religious traditions; crises and political, social, economical, financial instability that our country has suffered during transition (1991, 1992, January-March 1997, September 1998), accompanied by lack of legal state and severe threats of order and security; lack of finance from the state and hope of aid coming from abroad; delays and full non-return of the properties of religious communities; lack of a law for religious communities; convenient geographical position of Albania between the East and West; lack for a long time of the efficient state structures[2] to undertake the management of legal rapport and common obligations of the state with religious communities[3], participation of hundreds of Albanian citizens in the conflict in Syria; facilitation of radicalization and recruitment of believers through social webs; the increasing intolerant pressure in Islam like Wahabbis-Selephism, etc.

Wahabbis-Selephism represents not only intolerant streams in Islam, but also are a risk for the Albanian democracy, state of law, people's rights and for our national security itself. Today, it is not illegal to be Wahabbis, but it's a personal choice. But from the moment that they organize themselves and try to radicalize and impose others, they become a risk to be secured. Whabbis is a risk for the democracy in general, because they want to impose their own rules, by not accepting the rules of the games in a democratic order. They do not know and respect the state institutions. They are streams in Islam that do not accept a democratic order. For them, state must be based on holy laws. But Albania, Kosova and the Albanians in Macedonia are declared to support Western, Euro-Atlantic democracy, where the rights and freedoms of people are respected. By doing so, the Wahabbis-Selephists come against and have nothing in common neither with the Albanian Muslims, nor with the Albanians as a nation. We have nothing in common with them and if we are to refer to the history, we will find that Albanians have had a severe war with them. It is enough to mention Ibrahim Pasha from Egypt, who about 185 years ago, fought and won over the Wahabbis extremists that were risking the Islamic faith. Islamic Community in the Albanian space have been defined and under their "constitution" they are faithful to the traditional Albanian Islam, therefore belonging to the judicial school of Hanef. On the contrary, the today's Wahabbis are targeting the Albanian traditional Islam. They exclude not only other religious faiths, like Christianity, but also exclude the Islamic faith that the Albanians practice. For them, it is unacceptable the symbols and national holidays, which do not coincide with those religious ones. According to them, religion is a priority and then the nation itself. But for the Albanians religion is not the defining feature for their national identity. By defining religion as a priority in front of the nation, the Wahabbis damage our national identity. The thinning of the action space of the Wahabbis-selefism would be a valuable contribution, not only for the traditional Albanian Muslimanism, but also for the Albanians geopolitics in the region, for their Euro-Atlantic integrity and our national security. The Muslim communities in Albania, Kosova, Macedonia and Montenegro, today face a serious threat and they will know to define themselves their physiognomy in the future, but treating this matter properly is something that touches the Albanian society and their geopolitical position in the region. Therefore, these risks must be secured not only from the religious communities, but also from all the Albanian society. The seriousness of such issue seeks efficient action not only from the Islamic Communities, but also from the society and law enforcement agencies in Albania, Kosova, as well as a special attention from the Albanian political factors in Macedonia and Montenegro.

We all must contribute to neutralize the risk of extremist penetration and the radicalization of our religious communities. It is a pity that in the previous years of pluralism, every state material support to religious was omitted. Such omission toward religion in reality should not be part of a democratic government program. Albanian law enforcement personnel did not

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[1] Dr. Xhavit Shala, "State, Religious Faith and Security Issues", Lambert Academic Publishing, Pg.38, 122

[2] [In Albania in 1992, there existed only the Cult State Commission. By decision of the Ministers Council of the Republic of Albania, No.459, dated 23.9.1999, "For the creation of a State Committee for Cults", for the first time the tasks of such structured are assigned. This structure has continually come to be reduced with personnel. In many other states, especially in the ex-communist East, such structures are at a ministry level.

[3] [On October 2008, after 18 years of democracy and after ten years of constitutional obligation, it was signed the agreement between the Albanian government and the traditional religious communities in the country].

involve themselves like their patriotic predecessors, in the creation of that indispensible legal infrastructure to defend from risks the Albanian religious faiths. In order to do so, the Albanian law enforcement agents must engage themselves so that the state passes from the passive neutrality position[1] of these years, into that acting secularism, because religious harmony as great as it is, it is also fragile. It is enough for the first serious breakdown and radicalization of one of the faiths for the whole to be broken down, our great writer, Ismail Kadare[2] says.

The state is obliged to guarantee the freedom of faith not to be declarative. It must undertake all the necessary measures to guarantee an effective happiness of the religious faith freedom. In order to achieve the later the state must protect the religious faiths from the interference which aim at creating deformations, extremist views, their radicalization or whatever other occurrence of aggressiveness admit the believers. This is what acting secularism means.

That does not threaten the secularism of the centuries, which are holy for a democratic state. That in turn does not threaten the right of the human faith as a private life right which is protected in all the international documents that concern the human rights. On the contrary, being laic of active, the state undertakes the role of the guarantor for the realization of the facts of religious freedom.

Albanians must engage to start a de-realization process in order to correct for the lost time, a process which must include a wide social, political, legal, educational and economical program package, compiled especially to stop the unsatisfied and radical individuals to be included in terrorist activities. In order to do so, Albania[3] and Kosova[4] must strictly apply their approved strategies against violent extremism and radicalism, a strategy which must be taken into consideration even from the Albanian political factors in Macedonia and Montenegro.

5. Conclusions

After this study and research on inter-religious communication, religious radicalism and their influence in security issues we may come to these conclusions:

➢ Lack of inter-religious communication and dialogue in the last decades is accompanied with a radicalism of religious faiths which on its side has often led to inter-religious and inter-ethnical hatred, in crimes against humanity, genocides and terroristic acts, becoming therefore a serious threat for the national, regional and global security

➢ The state must therefore pass from passive neutrality position toward the acting secularism. That does not threaten the secularism of the century, which is often holy for a democratic state. On the contrary, being laic or active, the state can undertake to guarantee and realize the fact of the freedom of religion

➢ Inter-religious communication and dialogue among Albanians are the values of our national culture which have been created and resisted through centuries. Such values are risked from radicalism and as such they must be secured.

6. Recommendations

- We would recommend based on the above-mentioned facts:

- Coordination of the entire Albanian factor and the compilation of common politics to neutralize the risk for deportation of extremism and the radicalization of our religious communities.

- Engagement to start a de-radicalism process, a process in order to correct for the lost time, a process which must include a wide social, political, legal, educational and economical program package, compiled especially to stop the unsatisfied and radical individuals to be included in terrorist activities.

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[1] For more see, Dr. Xhavit Shala, «National Security and integration challenges», pg. 107. Tirana, May 2003. Published by the Albanian Center for National Security Studies

[2] Ismail Kadare, Speech in International Conference «Religion and a new millennium – Albanian Case", held in Tirana, 13-14 November 2003.

[3] Decision of the Ministers Council of the Republic of Albania, No. 930, dated 18.11.2015 "For the approval of the National Strategy for the fight against the violent Extremism and action plan"

[4] Prishtina, 16 September /ATSH/ - Kosova Government approved today the strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalism that leads to in terrorism for the period of 2015-2020

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- Widening and improvement of the Albanian legal framework for defining a penal case of any forms of violet extremism, as well as the recruitment of the foreign terrorist fighters.

- Enforcement of the capacities and expertise of the law-enforcement officials, in order to prevent violent extremism.

- Becoming an incent for the state institutions to be engaged into local communities, religious and other actors representatives, for the purpose of identifying groups in need, which are or may become a target of the violent extremism.

- Identification and understanding of the social concerns of the local communities, in order to treat properly the fundamental causes for violet radicalism and extremism.

- Compilation of the specific programs and politics adapted to prevent the spreading of violence and extremism, as well as at the same time, to increase the awareness of the society on such phenomena.

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