# THE STRUCTURE OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS AND THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA'S ROLE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

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**Abstract**

The reason why I chose this topic, which illustrates the role of the Republic of North Macedonia in the fight against international terrorism, as well as the organization and structures of terrorist organizations, stems from the fact that no state can be immune to terrorism and combat terrorism alone without international cooperation with states and international organizations aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism.

Throughout the treatment of this topic, special focus will be given to the role of the Republic of North Macedonia in the fight against international terrorism, as well as the national strategy that is implemented, the strategic objectives of the document, predictions and challenges of terrorism, as well as the consequences for the state from citizens who are participants in various conflicts around the world. This study will also take into consideration the various definitions based on which international terrorism is defined, although there is no international consensus on it, but based on the data of international organizations, with special emphasis on the United Nations. Special importance will be given to the organization and structures of terrorist organizations worldwide, all based on the international approach to terrorism as a phenomenon.

*Keywords:* terrorism, international terrorism, international standards, organizational structures, national strategy, international cooperation, intergovernmental cooperation, and others.

## 1. Introduction

**International Standards**. Despite the international community's engagement, there is currently no comprehensive international convention defining terrorism. However, there are specific acts that partially regulate this issue to which every signing state is obligated to adhere to and respect. These documents and acts are primarily those developed and approved within the framework of the UN and its organs, documents that we will discuss in a separate section of this study.

**European Standards**. Efforts to harmonize attitudes and standardize approaches to terrorism and its combat have long been made within Europe. Work has been and is ongoing, but this work faces obstacles due to the lack of a precise definition of what constitutes terrorism and which acts should be included. Positions often find common ground, but also vary depending on national standards that serve as reference points for drafting national standards and thereby national strategies of European states in the fight against terrorism. We can freely state that even within European frameworks, there are no unified standards when it comes to combating terrorism as a global phenomenon. The overwhelming majority of European institutions and bodies strive to maintain a balance in the fight against terrorism, aware that the threat is universal and constant.

**Organization And Structure Of Terrorist Organizations**

World terrorist organizations fall into one of these three categories: National (religious-faith-based); International, and Liberation movements.
National terrorism is carried out by groups that typically organize their actions within the territory of a single state.

*1.1    Characteristics of Organization:*  Understanding the typical organizational structures of terrorist groups is important to understanding the nature of their operations. General characteristics of most terrorist groups include: they seek to instill fear in populations by promoting terror, they are militarily weaker than the governments they fight against, and they do not equate tactical success with mission success. Even if an act may not achieve immediate success and desired results, it can still be successful if it achieves its publicity objectives: they are often stationed in cities, they are always on the move and often have access to fake passports and safe houses in other countries, they operate clandestinely, although some large rebel organizations have public branches, security is the most significant factor influencing organizational structure.

*2.2 Organizational Structure:* One way to divide organizational levels is as follows: leader, operational cadre, active supporters, and passive supporters. This division applies to both hierarchical and network models.



*Figure 1:* Typical Levels of Organization[1]

**Leaders** ensure the direction and policy of the organization. They approve goals and objectives and provide comprehensive guidance for planned operations of the organization.[2]
**Operational cadres** are active members of the terrorist organization. This echelon not only plans and executes operations but also manages intelligence, finances, logistics, propaganda, and communication efforts.[3]
**Active supporters** of terrorist organizations are individuals, groups, or states that provide direct, tangible assistance to terrorist groups. Their support is critical to the operations and survival of these groups. Active support can include: **Direct Participation, Financial Support**, **Logistical Assistance, and State Sponsorship.**[4] Active supporters are a key factor in the spread and sustainability of terrorism, as they directly influence the ability of terrorist groups to operate and expand. Counterterrorism efforts aim to dismantle these networks of active support to weaken terrorist organizations.

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[1] https://www.semanticscholar.org
[2] https://www.leadstrat.com/the-role-of-leadership-in-organizational-success/#:~:text=Leadership%20and%20Strategic%20Direction&text=By%20providing%20a%20clear%20vision,belonging%20and%20commitment%20among%20employees.
[3] https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF
[4] https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/

**Passive supporters** of terrorist organizations are individuals, groups, or entities that do not directly engage in violent activities but still contribute to the sustainability and growth of these organizations. Their support can take several forms:

1. **Ideological Support**: Providing moral or political legitimacy to terrorist organizations by endorsing their causes or goals.
2. **Financial Support**: Donating money or resources, often unknowingly or indirectly, to fund the group's activities, operations, and recruitment.
3. **Logistical Support**: Offering safe havens, transportation, or other forms of assistance without actively participating in terrorist acts.
4. **Social Legitimization**: By supporting these groups in their communities or through public platforms, they help normalize or justify extremist ideologies.

While they may not be directly involved in acts of terror, passive supporters play a crucial role in enabling terrorist groups to thrive. They provide the resources, networks, and ideological backing that sustain these organizations. Combating terrorism involves addressing not only the active perpetrators but also the passive support structures. [5]

**Types of cells**, which are divided into well-organized terrorist groups, include: **Command cells**; **Operational cells**; **Counterintelligence cells**; **Support or auxiliary cells**.

Cell sizes typically range from three to ten people. As the organization grows, cells may be grouped into "teams," each containing two to three cells. Reporting cells gather information on potential targets and maintain internal security. Security and communication are fundamental conditions for the terrorist organization; accordingly, division is strictly enforced. Inter-cell connectivity is managed with "breaks" to protect the identities and locations of other members. In explaining the structure of terrorist organizations, division is mainly done in hierarchical and network models.
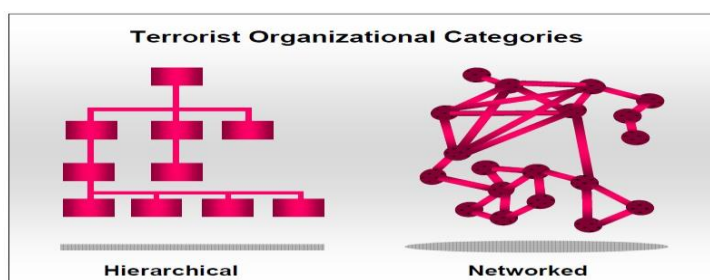


*Figure 2:* Organizational Structure Categories

Defining the exact model of a terrorist organization is somewhat difficult for reasons that the organizational model mainly depends on specific circumstances over a certain period. Large groups can be created from small groups, or conversely, small groups can be created from large groups[6].

Types of Network Structures Depending on how the elements are connected to each other, we distinguish these types of network structures: chain, star, and all-channel.

[5] https://ebooks.iospress.nl/volumearticle/25211; https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00396330500433399
[6] A Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century, 2-3, 15 august 2007, 2-3. Online:   www.fas.org

## 2. The Role Of The Republic Of North Macedonia In The Fight Against Terrorism

The National Strategy for the Fight against Terrorism presents a general framework for the actions of the Republic of North Macedonia in combating terrorism, summarizing suggestions for advancing existing measures and establishing new mechanisms for preventing terrorism. The Republic of North Macedonia clearly defines its commitment to fighting terrorism at national, regional, and global levels, aiming to protect democratic values defined by the constitution, enabling its citizens to live in a free, secure, and democratic state.

*2.1     National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for the Fight against Terrorism:*
The National Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for the fight against terrorism reflects the objectives and general interests of the state in strengthening national security and supporting international security policies to combat terrorism. In pursuit of the outlined goals, the National Strategy follows the provisions of its plans and aims of the European defense and security policy, the national program for adopting the law in the European Union. The strategy aims to create conditions for eliminating terrorism, formulated through: identification of terrorist threat forms; establishment of mechanisms for implementing activities to eliminate terrorism; taking comprehensive measures to eliminate them; identification of preventive activities to protect against all types of terrorism incidents.

**Forms of terrorist threat:** radicalization, recruitment and encouragement activities are in function; terrorist military training and ideological training; financing terrorism; execution of terrorist attack.

**Threats from terrorism may be manifested by;** attack against objects and persons of national interest; attack by several large casualties; attack on objects and institutions that are important for the protection, security, and political and economic interests of the state, which would cause fear and insecurity to the population.

**Terrorism elimination measures are;** prevention; citizen and property security; refinement; processing and coordination.

**The goal of prevention** is to reduce the fragility of the internal and external interests of North Macedonia from terrorist threats, protecting citizens and state institutions, as well as eliminating the possibilities of terrorist attacks.

**Protection** involves taking measures and activities against the creation, spread, and action of terrorist structures, organizations, and networks, and at the same time timely identification of plans, preparations, organization, and implementation of terrorist acts in the territory of North Macedonia through: prevention of organizational and logistical activities for terrorist purposes; prevention of ideological and military terrorist training;  prevention of actions of individuals and terrorist groups, etc.

**Protection of citizens and property** means reducing the possibility of attack, including the improvement of border security, communication infrastructure and priority objectives through: protection of diplomatic representations, institutions, and subjects of North Macedonia abroad; protection of diplomatic representations of foreign states, institutions, and subjects in North Macedonia;  information of the citizens of North Macedonia for the level of security threats in the country and abroad, etc.

**Refinement** means implementing punitive measures for the persecution of individuals and organizations related to terrorism through: launching an investigation and issuing an international arrest warrant for the initiators, supporters, and perpetrators of terrorist acts at the national and international levels; freezing and confiscating financial and property resources of natural and legal persons related to terrorism, etc.

**Coordination** means the joint engagement of all relevant institutions in North Macedonia for the timely exchange of information at the national and international levels, aiming at detecting, assessing, and preventing possible terrorist threats.

- National cooperation between state authorities in the fight against terrorism will be realized through the formation of working groups with active participation of members of the National Security Agency, the Counterintelligence and Security Service and Military Counterintelligence at the Ministry of Defense of North Macedonia as competent bodies in the fight against terrorism, and other relevant institutions. The working group is obliged to hold a monthly meeting at least once a month, during which it will analyze, integrate, and assess all knowledge related to the terrorism sector, and inform the highest state authorities about it.
- Establishment of a national database,
- Permanent exchange of data and information related to the terrorism sector,
- Formation of joint operational teams to manage specific cases related to terrorist activities. International cooperation based on the strategy is realized through:
- Signing new bilateral cooperation agreements with other states to combat terrorism.
- Deepening cooperation with NATO, specifically with NOS (NATO Office of Security), ILU (Intelligence Liaison Unit), and TTIU (Terrorist Threat Intelligence Unit), the Committee against Terrorism of the United Nations Security Council, established by Resolution 1373 (2001), adopted immediately after the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001; Europol, Eurojust, SECI, INTERPOL.[7]

## 3. National Strategies to Combat Terrorism

Strategies simply belong to military operations, which accurately require certain political means. Strategy is a scheme for finding a way of action that will yield desired results, in other words, how government activities are designed to achieve desired outcomes, understood in the context of counterterrorism. The ways in which governments act must necessarily be sufficient to achieve the necessary results, but this is closely linked to the cost of such a strategy. The price of any strategy must be accepted if we have the desired benefit, and the risk must be minimal. Therefore, the national strategy sets the framework that coordinates the goals of individual strategies. It must provide clarity as a defender of the entire nation against terrorism, as well as the positioning of the state in foreign policies.

Politics defines the goals of the strategy, because today the national survival threat, material benefits, the national defense system, or the integrity of the military forces are not a risk, but the individual security of citizens in the state. For this purpose, politics must determine the priorities of values. To organize, plan, and implement their attacks, terrorists need recruits and supporters, funds, weapons, unrestricted travel opportunities, other forms of material support (communication tools, hiding places), and access to vulnerable targets. Therefore, for the fight against terrorism to be effective, a comprehensive and strategic approach is required, based on and supported by a wide range of policies and measures.

Strategic approaches to the fight against terrorism often involve multiple objectives, addressing various chronological stages according to the occurrence of terrorism. In many countries, a strategic approach against terrorism is integrated into national security policy. Some countries and other organizations have developed a specific document, which is available to the public, describing their respective strategy for the fight against terrorism. These strategic documents

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[7] National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2023-2027, Skopje: Government of the Republic of North Macedonia

often use similar terminology, but with variations in terms of current understanding.[8] These objectives in general can be categorized as follows:

- Preventing men and women from becoming terrorists;
- Providing opportunities for withdrawal and ensuring support for individuals on the path to violent extremism and radicalization or those involved in it;
- Denying support, resources, and means to organize, plan, and carry out attacks for suspected terrorists;
- Preparation and defense against terrorist acts, to reduce the vulnerability of potential targets, especially critical infrastructure;
- Tracking suspects as terrorists, aiming to capture and bring them to justice; and
- Responding to terrorist attacks through proportional measures to mitigate their impact and to assist victims.

States have the obligation to ensure protection from terrorist acts, which requires them to place special emphasis on preventing terrorism. This is reflected in their international legal obligations and political commitments.

*4.1 Changing security policies* National and international laws shape the legal framework for cooperation and the conduct of activities against terrorism. Security is the most important element of social life, which also determines the quality of social life, which mainly depends on the level, intensity, and forms of social conflict development.

*4.2 The idea of unifying common policies against terrorism:* Immediately after the terrorist attack in the United States, the Council of Europe in 2004 harmonized the need for strong coordination in the fight against terrorism, hence, the coordinating role was given to the Council of Permanent Representatives, and the coordinator was appointed for the fight against terrorism. According to the guidelines of the European Commission, the coordinator's duty is not to control and coordinate Europol activities, but to monitor the degree of harmonization of Member States with the measures approved in the Council. The unification of common policies against terrorism has contributed greatly to the documents of the United Nations and Security Council resolutions. In this context, Article 103 of the UN Charter emphasizes and obliges Member States to give priority to United Nations resolutions over other international agreements. But because Security Council resolutions are not directly applicable to Member States, there is a need for these resolutions to become part of national legislation so that they can be applied for individual cases. They are implemented in the jurisdiction of UN member states with special instruments, such as joint positions, decrees, etc.
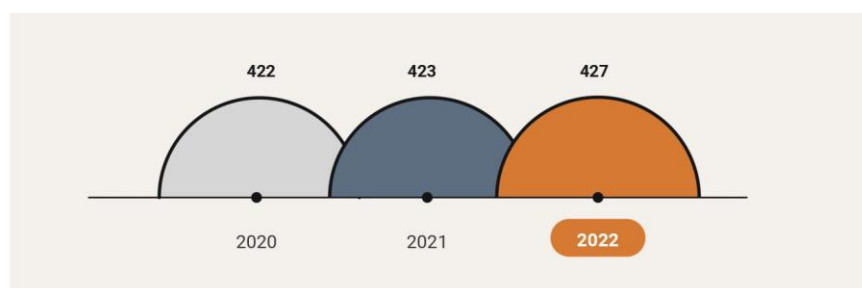


*Figure 7:* Number of convictions and acquittals for terrorist offences in 2020, 2021 and 2022, as reported to Eurojust[9]

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[8] For example, Serbia until 2015 did not have a national strategy for the fight against terrorism within the framework of the state, but the fight against terrorism is included in the documents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, etc.
[9] Terrorism situation and trend report 2023, European Union

*Statistical data from the Republic of North Macedonia on the fight against terrorism:*

According to the Concept of National Defense and Security, North Macedonia is aware that the new environment offers many opportunities but also new challenges, risks, and threats. Therefore, these new challenges, risks, and threats require new responses, which are only possible through cooperation and assistance from all states in the region, Europe, and the world. The preventive measures taken to combat terrorism include:
- Participation in peacekeeping and anti-terrorism missions (Iraq and Afghanistan).
- Conducting coordinated meetings and exchanging security-related information with partner services of neighboring and other states.
- Regional cooperation in security and surveillance within the framework of the Adriatic Agreement and the mini-Balkans security initiative, where North Macedonia is a leader.
- Measures to detect and prevent illegal arms trafficking and the use of sophisticated tools are often employed in terrorist activities.
- Measures for adequate training of personnel for action and ensuring operability and compatibility.

## 4. Conclusion

Significant opportunities for North Macedonia include:
- Active participation in spreading peace and stability to enhance overall security in the region and Europe, with a permanent increase in capabilities and capacities for crisis prevention and management in the region.
- Inclusion in all social, economic, political, global, and international flows is guided by international institutions.
- Full participation and integration into Euro-Atlantic security structures to expand stability and security, expressed through activities and preparations for NATO and EU membership, while continuing cooperation with OSCE and the UN.

Regarding prevention and countering terrorism, North Macedonia's institutions implement the following activities:
- Following the assassination attempt on President Kiro Gligorov on November 3, 1995, the Assembly of North Macedonia adopted a declaration based on Article 68, paragraph 2 of the Constitution condemning terrorism.
- On February 3, 1998, the Assembly of North Macedonia adopted a declaration against terrorism based on Article 68, paragraph 2 of the Constitution.
- On September 17, 2001, the Assembly of North Macedonia adopted a declaration condemning the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11.

North Macedonia is designated as the coordinator of the project to combat financial and computer crime, as one of the operational tasks to promote regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

The government of North Macedonia joined the global coalition against terrorism, making airports in Skopje and Ohrid available for direct investigation to verify the existence of so-called "black" bank accounts used by terrorists to finance their activities.

On June 25, 2002, the government of North Macedonia adopted conclusions on forming a coordinating body for combating international terrorism.

A representative of the Ministry of Justice of North Macedonia is a member of the multidisciplinary group for international action against terrorism in the EU.

North Macedonia is a signatory to the most important conventions of the UN and the EU for combating terrorism.

A working group of experts prepared a text and approved a special law against terrorism.

According to international documents on the fight against terrorism, the criminal legislation within the Criminal Code of North Macedonia sanctions terrorism and related acts as criminal offenses.

To strengthen the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism, the government of North Macedonia concluded that it is necessary to amend the Criminal Code and the law on criminal procedure, and Article 17 of the Constitution of North Macedonia, to create prerequisites for the use of contemporary investigative techniques for more effective detection and prosecution of perpetrators of criminal offenses.

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