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STATE ADMINISTRATION AND COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE AUTHORITIES – THEIR POSITION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

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-Abstract-

For decades, terrorism has posed a significant challenge to criminal law science, political theory, and security studies. As societies evolve, terrorism also transforms, modifying and adapting to new circumstances. Defining and understanding the concept of terrorism serves as a foundational element for the work of national security agencies. However, the legal frameworks and organizational structures of state administration bodies in the Republic of North Macedonia fail to comprehensively delineate the role and function of each agency individually. Although these agencies operate based on the collection, distribution, exchange, and preservation of information, the prevailing perception is that all are responsible for monitoring security threats. In reality, no single agency fully assumes accountability. This paper proposes a unified security service structure that integrates the functions of intelligence, counterintelligence, anti-terrorism, and counter-terrorism, supported by a robust strategic analysis division capable of consolidating all information relevant to the nation's security.

Key words: intelligence, counter-intelligence, fight against terrorism, state administration, North Macedonia

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper, as evident from its title, focuses on the state administration bodies, specifically counterintelligence bodies, and their position and role in the fight against terrorism. The primary idea for this paper is to present the responsibilities of these agencies in countering terrorism, thereby proving the primary hypothesis that the role of each agency is not clearly defined. In other words, while all these agencies have certain competencies and powers related to combating terrorism, this overlap creates a situation where no single agency is perceived as primarily accountable for addressing such threats. The proposed solution, as an outcome of this paper, is the creation of a unified agency—an entity that integrates segments of intelligence, counterintelligence, anti-terrorism, and counter-terrorism, with a robust strategic analytics division to consolidate all information pertinent to the country's national security. To this end, the paper is divided into several sections. It first addresses the historical development of counterintelligence agencies. Subsequently, each section explores one of the agencies in its specific role in combating terrorism. Finally, after perceiving their mandates and legal roles, recommendations are provided for reforming the system to enable a more effective and cohesive approach to countering terrorism.

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II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The disintegration of a social order such as the socialist self-government order in the countries of the former Yugoslavia and the establishment of new socio-political and economic relations in the emerged states appears to have triggered significant tectonic disruptions in their security systems. Unfortunately, it seems that even today, more than three decades after the collapse of Yugoslavia, the successor states are still undergoing a transition process, striving to build solid foundations upon which to establish internal and external relations.

In contrast to the current situation, there was a developed awareness among citizens in the past that their (former) state of Yugoslavia was inviolable. Furthermore, Yugoslavia established itself as a power that successfully navigated between the two major blocs at that time and managed, probably due to the necessary balance among the great powers, to become the most relevant and pivotal factor in the Non-Aligned Movement, serving as a buffer zone between the blocs.¹

In other words, the former state, without delving into its ideology, worked extensively through its propaganda mechanisms to convince its citizens of its power. This was particularly evident in its foreign policy that was portrayed as one of independence and non-belligerence, a policy that condemned foreign aggression, led the fight against imperialism, built a defence system for a nation of 20 million. Propaganda narratives often ranked the country as the fourth strongest power in Europe - not only in terms of its armament but also by the combat morale of its personnel and the entire population that was organized within the system of territorial and by civil defence system.

The balance that Yugoslavia maintained both externally and internally up until the 1990s was largely based on the cult of its leader, Josip Broz Tito². Indeed, even after his death in 1980, Yugoslavia upheld this system by relying on his legacy, defending itself from the intensified and pronounced unrest of nationalist movements, which ultimately fractured this seemingly perfect system from within. This division stoked mutual hatred among its citizens along national and religious lines, ultimately resulting in one of the bloodiest wars of the late 20th century.

This prelude is given to better understand the processes that began after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, which primarily involved the complete dismantling of the old system and then the building of new states. This dismantling and the construction of new states occurred simultaneously with the turbulence of war. The dismantling process unfolded across several dimensions, the first of which was abandoning and dismantling the socialist self-management system, along with its representatives, and establishing new socio-political and economic relations in the newly formed states. The new ideology that emerged was based on the concept of national states, emphasizing a nationalistic approach in the new system; a second aspect involved establishing new economic relations that aligned with the emerging trends in the Western world. This entire transformation process—specifically its first phase, known as the ‘cleansing of the past’—so thoroughly dismantled institutions that, in its destructive momentum, it not only eliminated the ideological past and the people who represented it but also destroyed the standards that such institutions needed for proper functioning. This particularly pertains to the transformation of institutions and the influence they came under from political parties. These political parties began to identify themselves with the states themselves, using state organs and institutions under the motto 'I am the state.' In a multi-party system, this approach has, to this day, prevented the creation of institutions that protect the national interests of all citizens.

¹ More on the Non-Aligned movement: André Munro, ‘Non-aligned Movement: international organization’ (Britannica, 12 September 2024) <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Non-Aligned-Movement>> accessed 17 October 2024.

² More on the ‘cult’: Vinka Klišmanić, ‘The Cult of Personality of Josip Broz Tito’ (2022) (5) 5, Pleter – Časopis Udruge studenata povijesti – ISIHA-e Split <<https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/442083>> accessed 17 October 2024.

Such an introduction aligns with the current structure of state administrative bodies, which, within their scope of authority, are responsible for performing various functions related to the security of the state and its citizens. Since Macedonia's independence, we have endured numerous challenging chapters to which a competent intelligence service could have either countered or, at the very least, mitigated the consequences of these inevitable processes. We have faced the struggle of protecting Macedonian conscripts and soldiers during their military service, the privatization of public assets - where many unworthy individuals seized what generations of Macedonian citizens had patiently built, then the oil crisis, the assassination attempt on President Kiro Gligorov, the 2001 conflict that resulted in constitutional changes, the post-conflict period marked by numerous incidents of varying severity. Finally, the events of Brodec, the 'Monster' case, the Kumanovo incidents, and the recent major wiretapping scandal, which initiated the process of changing power in Macedonia.

All of these events directly or indirectly affected the entire society, but the security services suffered the biggest blow and often got lost amidst the turmoil. Particularly, the rapid and ad hoc legislative solutions introduced to govern the security bodies, without a functional analysis of the sector's real needs, led to numerous gaps in the regulatory framework. The blows dealt to the services since Macedonia's independence have been countless.

The division of the former state security service into two parts, the opening of collaborator files, the disintegration of the collaborator network, the lack of appropriate regulations to support their work, outdated and inadequate material and technical resources, insufficient staffing, and scandals involving the misuse of communication surveillance equipment all placed the service in a wholly inferior position - not only in the eyes of Macedonian society but also in the perception of potential threats to the peace and stability of its citizens.

Therefore, as mentioned in the abstract and introduction, this paper focuses on several essential issues related to the intelligence and counterintelligence services, specifically the bodies playing a crucial role in the fight against terrorism. It does not argue that there is no adequate legal framework in the Republic of North Macedonia, nor that there are no competent authorities. On the contrary, it asserts that, in a way, all intelligence and counterintelligence bodies are responsible for monitoring security threats, i.e., terrorism threats. This implies that, fundamentally, no one fully assumes responsibility itself.

Namely, all the bodies discussed in the following text perform their functions based on the collection, distribution, exchange, and storage of information, and in carrying out their tasks, they also generate information of a confidential nature essential to national security. The responsibility for gathering such information lies with the Agency for National Security (as the successor to the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence), the Intelligence Agency, the Financial Intelligence Office, the Military Security and Intelligence Service, and the Directorate for Security of Classified Information.

The foundation for analysing the administrative bodies responsible for monitoring and handling counterintelligence, intelligence activities, and the fight against terrorism stems from several perspectives, primarily the fact that all these bodies, in their operations, use and create information that is classified. According to the Law on Classified Information, such information must be created with an appropriate level of confidentiality and distributed to end users through a previously prescribed process. It is undisputed that such information is a target for intelligence services and potential terrorist organizations that will continuously seek ways to obtain it for their predefined objectives and needs. Therefore, a key issue is how to secure the entire system for protecting such information, especially since the operational component - which is absolutely necessary - has not been fully developed. This relates specifically to determining who is responsible for filing appropriate reports and initiating judicial proceedings in the competent courts if a potential perpetrator of such a crime is identified.

III. DIRECTORATE FOR SECURITY OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

In 1996, the Ministry of Defence established the Reciprocal Security Service to protect information exchanged between the Republic of Macedonia and NATO. For the secure distribution of classified information within this service, a Central Registry was created, with corresponding sub-registries established in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

By a Government Decision in 2002, the National Security Authority of the Republic of Macedonia in NATO³ was established as an expert body of the Government. Later, with the enactment of the Law on Classified Information in 2004⁴ this National Security Authority became the Directorate for Security of Classified Information as an independent body of state administration. In accordance with the Law, in November 2004, the Regulation on Administrative Security of Classified Information,⁵ the Regulation on Physical Security of Classified Information⁶ and the Regulation on Security of Personnel Handling Classified Information,⁷ were adopted. In March 2005, the Regulation on Industrial Security of Classified Information⁸ and the Regulation on Information Security of Classified Information were also adopted.⁹

The 2004 Law on Classified Information¹⁰ remained in effect for a decade and a half, during which it was refined, i.e. through amendments and additions a comprehensive control over national classified information was established, and inspection oversight was introduced for all state bodies, as well as other individuals and legal entities, to ensure its consistent application. This 2004 Law on Classified Information was replaced in 2019.¹¹

In line with the functions of the Directorate for Security of Classified Information as specified by the Law on Classified Information, organizational units were formed to handle tasks related to administrative security of classified information, physical security of classified information, security of personnel users of classified information, industrial security of classified information and information security of classified information, as well as general, regulatory-legal matters and international cooperation.

Additional organizational units have also been established within the Directorate, outside of these sectors, in accordance with positive legal regulations for the organization and operation of state administration bodies.

IV. FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICE

The Financial Intelligence Office functions as a legal entity within the Ministry of Finance. Its primary responsibility is to collect, process, and provide data to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing.

Entities are required to take measures and actions to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing and to inform the Financial Intelligence Office accordingly. The data received from obligated entities or state bodies is processed by the Financial Intelligence Office, supplemented with data and information from other sources, both domestic and international, analysed, and then submitted in the form of a report or notice to the Ministry of Internal Affairs,

³ Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 21/2002.

⁴ Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 9/2004.

⁵ Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 82/2004.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 16/2005.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The initial version of this law was published in Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 9/2004, while amendments were published in Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 113/2007, 145/2010, 80/2012, 41/2014, 21/2018, 83/2018.

¹¹ Law on classified information from Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 275/2019.

the Financial Police Directorate and the Public Prosecutor's Office. In addition to these functions, the Financial Intelligence Office also oversees the implementation of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing measures by all entities, independently or in coordination with supervisory authorities. Terrorist financing encompasses actions defined as a criminal offense under the Criminal Code for the financing of terrorism.¹²

The Republic of North Macedonia cooperates with all European Union member states and the countries of Southeast Europe, both bilaterally and internationally. It is a member of the United Nations, OSCE and the Council of Europe. The country has signed bilateral cooperation agreements in the fight against terrorism with Turkey, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Romania. Additionally, the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia participates in international missions in Afghanistan and Iraq and is a member of the International Coalition Against Terrorism.

V. THE AGENCY FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

With the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, the question arose regarding the organization of the internal security system of the state and the quality of the work of the security and intelligence services, which was highlighted especially after the attempted assassination of President Kiro Gligorov in 1995. As a result of this crisis, the Macedonian intelligence community was reorganized into two new bodies: the Intelligence Agency, an independent body responsible for investigating external threats¹³, and the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence, a unit within the Ministry of Internal Affairs responsible for investigating internal threats.¹⁴

The Intelligence Agency will be discussed in the following section. The Administration for Security and Counterintelligence was an organ within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, established to carry out security and counterintelligence tasks.¹⁵ In this sense, security and counterintelligence referred to 'protection against espionage, terrorism, or other activities aimed at endangering or undermining the democratic institutions established by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia through violent means, as well as protection against serious forms of organized crime.' The Administration for Security and Counterintelligence was led by a director who acted independently in performing duties and was accountable to the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.

In carrying out its duties, the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence's employees could collect data, reports, and information from citizens, using public sources, including access to registers and data collections, as well as applying special measures and procedures for covert data collection in accordance with the law. State bodies, public enterprises, and other legal entities were required to enable the Administration to perform its duties without hindrance. According to Article 23 of the Law on Internal Affairs, the responsibilities included:

- counterintelligence activities;
- combating and protecting against terrorism;

¹² Law on the Prevention of Money Laundering and Other Proceeds of Crime and Financing of Terrorism, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no.130 from 03.09.2014, Article 2

¹³ The Macedonian Assembly adopted the Law on the Intelligence Agency in 1995 and it was published in Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 21/2005. Yet, the Agency did not start working until 1997.

¹⁴ Prior to this change, intelligence and counterintelligence functions were performed by the State Security Service within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

¹⁵ Article 3 paragraph 2 of the Law on Internal Affairs, prior to the adoption of the Law on Amendments to the Law on Internal Affairs of 2019 (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia 108/2019) by which the former UBK ceased to exist as such.

- protecting against other activities aimed at endangering or violently overthrowing democratic institutions established by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, and against serious forms of organized crime originating from or targeting the democratic institutions of the system established by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, which could endanger these institutions or affect state security

The activities undertaken by the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence aimed to identify internal threats and develop and apply countermeasures within a set of legal powers and authorities. The operational investigations carried out by the Administration aimed to assess and evaluate security assumptions and issues arising from the actions of intelligence services, terrorist organizations, and groups within the country's territory, creating conditions for effective and efficient opposition to such actions. Regarding the use of operational technical resources and methods, both offensive and defensive operational technical resources and methods were applied according to procedures and legal provisions. Within its competences, when necessary and at the request of the director of the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence, direct cooperation with the Bureau for Public Security was being achieved.

The Administration for Security and Counterintelligence was disbanded in 2019, replaced by the newly established National Security Agency. The dissolution of the Administration was necessary due to revelations (from 2015) regarding the illegal surveillance of a large number of citizens conducted by the Administration over previous years,¹⁶ which ultimately led to significant political turbulence and upheaval in the country - an issue that could warrant an entire independent study. Additionally, considering the revelations of illegal wiretapping and concerns about the rule of law, the European Union formed a group of experienced experts to address systemic rule-of-law issues related to the unlawful surveillance of communications uncovered in the spring of 2015. This Expert Group reviewed the situation in the Republic of Macedonia and issued a report, initially in English,¹⁷ but later translated into Macedonian¹⁸ by the media in this country. The report indicated that the cause of the scandals in the Republic of Macedonia was the concentration of power within the national security service - the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence - which operated outside its legal mandate on behalf of those in power to monitor high-ranking public officials, prosecutors, judges, and political opponents, thereby interfering with the independence of the judiciary and other national institutions. Additionally, the Expert Group found that, due to technical capabilities, the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence had a monopoly over the surveillance equipment used in intelligence and criminal investigations, allowing the Directorate to interfere with criminal investigations and indirectly undermine the independence of prosecutors. The report included several other findings regarding the Directorate. The Expert Group then made the following key recommendations: to reduce the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence's legal powers; to remove the Administration's intermediary role, preventing it from conducting communications surveillance for the police, Customs Administration, and Financial Police; to deny the Administration direct access to equipment that allows interception of communication signals, with proprietary switches relocated to the premises of telecommunications operators; and to strengthen parliamentary oversight of the bodies conducting communications surveillance.

¹⁶ More at: Andrew Gardner, 'Wire-tapping scandal hits Macedonia' (*Politico* 26 February 2014) < <https://www.politico.eu/article/wire-tapping-scandal-hits-macedonia/>> accessed 17 November 2024.

¹⁷ The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Recommendations of the Senior Experts' Group on systemic Rule of Law issues relating to the communications interception revealed in Spring 2015 < https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-12/20150619_recommendations_of_the_senior_experts_group.pdf> Accessed 17 November 2024

¹⁸ Translation of the report < <https://lokalno.mk/integralno-celiot-izveshtaj-na-rajnhard-pribe-za-kriminalot-korupcijata-i-prislushuvanieto-na-vlasta/>> Accessed 17 November 2024.

Following a change in Government in 2016 and the formation of a new Government in 2017, work began on new legislative solutions to reform the Directorate of Security and counterintelligence. Thus, the National Security Agency (NSA) was established as an autonomous state administrative body, and the Operational-Technical Agency (OTA) was created as an independent state body. While the NSA assumed most of the Administration's responsibilities, it can no longer directly control surveillance equipment or perform wiretaps. This function is handled by the OTA, an intermediary agency that facilitates technical connections between operators and authorized bodies without the ability to initiate or conduct recordings of monitored communications.

According to the founding law, the National Security Agency¹⁹ collects, processes, analyses, evaluates, exchanges, stores, and protects data and information to detect and prevent activities related to security laws and risks to the national security of the state, including:

- espionage,
- terrorism and its financing,
- violent extremism,
- all forms of serious and organized criminal activities aimed at the state,
- prevention of crimes against humanity and international law
- illicit production and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or their components, as well as materials and devices necessary for their production
- disruption of vital economic interests and the financial security of the state,
- disruption of security of high-ranking state officials and strategic sites of national importance,
- detection and prevention of other activities related to security threats and risks to the state's national security.

The Law also states that the National Security Agency conducts security checks in accordance with the founding law and other legislation. On issues of national security significance, the NSA reports to the President of the Republic of North Macedonia, the President of the Assembly, the Prime Minister, the Security and Intelligence Coordination Council, and other relevant entities depending on the issue.

The formation of the National Security Agency marks a significant step forward compared to the past, as it corrected fundamental anomalies in the Directorate's structure, both in terms of its competences and the process for selecting the NSA director, parliamentary oversight, and similar aspects.

VI. INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

The Intelligence Agency was established as a separate government body through the Law on the Intelligence Agency in April 1995²⁰. The 1995 Law was later replaced by the Law on the Intelligence Agency of 2021²¹.

The Agency's responsibilities include the collection of data and information relevant to the security and defence of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the country's economic, political, and other strategic interests. It is mandated to report its analyses and research on collected data and information to the President of the Republic of Macedonia, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, and other state bodies on matters within their jurisdiction. The Agency is built on the concept of intelligence as a long-term strategic process in protecting the national interests and priorities of the Republic of Macedonia. In alignment with contemporary

¹⁹ Law on the National Security Agency published in Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 108/2019.

²⁰ Law on the Intelligence Agency published in Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 19/1995.

²¹ Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 21/2021.

standards for preventing and addressing current security threats and risks, the Agency continuously develops appropriate mechanisms for prevention, forecasting, early warning, analysis, and risk assessment.

The Intelligence Agency expands its capabilities in environments where there are risks and threats to the country's vital and enduring national interests. It builds strategic partnerships that are in the national interest and supports international security policies.

Within the Agency, there is a Directorate for Intelligence on Terrorism and Other Forms of Asymmetric Threats.

VII. SECTOR – MILITARY SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

When the Intelligence Agency began operations in 1997, the intelligence segment of the Sector – Military Security and Intelligence Service was transferred to this security-intelligence agency, while the counterintelligence division remained under the Ministry of Defence. However, this structure did not yield satisfactory results, leading to the reintegration of military intelligence into the Ministry. In addition to its intelligence and counterintelligence divisions, the Sector – Military Security and Intelligence Service includes an administrative department responsible for analysis, logistics, and finance, as well as an investigative department tasked with addressing criminal activities. The Sector – Military Security and Intelligence Service is also authorized to monitor communications related to activities involving the armed forces and the state (such as armed attacks against the state or its security system)²². However, the law stipulates that the Sector – Military Security and Intelligence Service may operate only on the following radio frequencies (high frequencies – HF, very high frequencies – VHF, and ultra-high frequencies – UHF) specific exclusively for defence purposes.

Although the Macedonian Military Police is subordinate to the General Staff, it also provides support to the Sector – Military Security and Intelligence Service. The head of the Sector is appointed by the Minister of Defence and is accountable both to the Minister and to the President. As outlined in the 2001 Law on Defence, the scope of the Sector's activities includes:²³

- Collecting, documenting, and analysing intelligence data critical to national defence.
- Detecting and preventing subversive activities originating from foreign intelligence agencies or other international groups (such as terrorist organizations) that pose a threat to national defence.
- Protecting the armed forces and safeguarding classified defence information.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When observing terrorism in its current form, it is evident that it has become a significant threat to the security of all states. This assertion is supported by officially adopted counter-terrorism strategies, both as standalone documents issued by the highest political and military institutions of leading global powers and as fundamental components of numerous studies on security, defence, and the protection of societies. However, most of these state-level acts dedicate little to no attention to the social, economic, cultural, and other conditions that cause or intensify terrorist activities.

The essence of counter-terrorism efforts should not be to act *post festum*, after terrorist acts have occurred. It has become apparent that even the timely dismantling of specific individuals

²² Law on Interception of Communications, Articles 29 and 30, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 121/2006;

²³ Defense Law, Article 133, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 42/2011.

or groups planning such acts, or implementing a comprehensive set of counter-terrorism measures, is insufficient to deter those willing to sacrifice themselves for their cause. As long as the underlying idea fuelling terrorism remains un-neutralized, terrorism will persist.

Neutralizing an idea is not a straightforward task. Even theoretically, it represents a utopian projection that may lack grounding in the real world. Yet, this is precisely where the essence of intelligence services and their role in societal life lies. Neutralizing the idea is a complex process involving a series of measures and activities that require a thorough prior analysis of the socio-political, economic, educational, cultural, and religious dynamics within society and specific communities. These are the sources that nourish the idea, provide it with energy, and, like an intoxicant, detach community members from reality by promising them a better world. When another community perceives such visions as a threat to its values, it provides the foundation for disrupting societal balance which can later escalate into serious conflicts.

The level of security in a state is a reflection of the seriousness and effectiveness of its intelligence services. An effective service must not only identify and respond to concrete security risks to the state and its citizens but also monitor global developments and proactively position itself both domestically and internationally, always prioritizing the nation's and the state's interests. Furthermore, the service and its members must never lose sight of their duty to protect the Constitution and the laws of the state they serve. This protection must be conducted strictly within the framework of procedures established by law, ensuring that, in the process, they do not infringe on the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the state's citizens.

The current structure of our security services is fundamentally incapable of addressing the challenges posed by the phenomenon of global terrorism. This inadequacy is not due to a lack of skilled and qualified personnel but rather stems from the political misuse of these services for own purposes. This politicization marginalizes the services to the point of suppressing their investigative role instead of empowering them to play a proactive role in shaping key national decisions and strategies.

The security service must assume the highest coordinating role in the state. In collaboration with other state institutions, it should provide policymakers with clear directions, ensuring that rhetoric are adjusted and pre-emptive actions conducted to maintain societal harmony.

The primary function of the national security system should be to investigate societal dynamics and phenomena. This involves the security service working in cooperation with the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU), higher education institutions, investigative journalism, and other state bodies to identify potential threats to societal values and the contemporary way of life.

Analysing these phenomena with both long-term and short-term assessments of the development of these phenomena in the future, followed by actionable plans and measures to counter such trends at their inception, constitutes the core of the service's responsibilities. Immediate prevention and repression of direct perpetrators are secondary to this proactive approach.

These analyses should address two key segments: the first being internal societal relations between communities and social classes; and the second addresses the global developments and the nation's role, however limited, within that context.

A critical question arising from these investigations is whether the fight against global terrorism is part of the strategies of powerful states or if smaller states are equally involved. If smaller nations are part of this effort, what role do they play? The answer is as complex as the issue itself. In Macedonia's specific context, given its alignment within international relations, its role, though not offensive, places it firmly on the map of global terrorism. Macedonia is a potential ground for the development, preparation, transit, financing, and recruitment of terrorist activities, as well as a potential target. It is not a question of *if* but *when* such an event might occur.

It is evident that powerful nations dictate global trends, including how terrorism is addressed. While Macedonia should align its domestic policies with the global strategies of major powers,

the pressing question remains whether there is a "Plan B," who should devise it, and how it should be implemented. This question is crucial when evaluating the positioning of national institutions. The only relevant entity capable of defending societal values is a well-organized, competent security service elevated to a prominent role in political decision-making rather than being used as a tool for resolving crises post-factum. Therefore, Macedonia requires a unified security service integrating intelligence, counterintelligence, anti-terrorism, and counter-terrorism functions. This service should be supported by a robust strategic analytical division to consolidate all information relevant to national security.

This framework would prioritize the service's independence and professionalism. It should clearly and unequivocally define its mission as the protection of societal values, establishing a system focused on combating root causes rather than merely addressing consequences.

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