GREASE
Religion, Diversity and Radicalisation

Country Report

Bosnia and Herzegovina

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This Country Report offers a detailed assessment of religious diversity and violent religious radicalisation in the above-named state. It is part of a series covering 23 countries (listed below) on four continents. More basic information about religious affiliation and state-religion relations in these states is available in our Country Profiles series. This report was produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, secularism and religiously inspired radicalisation.

Countries covered in this series:
Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

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The EU-Funded GREASE project looks to Asia for insights on governing religious diversity and preventing radicalisation.

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

While exploring religious governance models in other parts of the world, GREASE also attempts to unravel the European paradox of religious radicalisation despite growing secularisation. We consider the claim that migrant integration in Europe has failed because second generation youth have become marginalised and radicalised, with some turning to jihadist terrorism networks. The researchers aim to deliver innovative academic thinking on secularisation and radicalisation while offering insights for governance of religious diversity.

The project is being coordinated by Professor Anna Triandafyllidou from The European University Institute (EUI) in Italy. Other consortium members include Professor Tariq Modood from The University of Bristol (UK); Dr. H. A. Hellyer from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) (UK); Dr. Mila Mancheva from The Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Dr. Egdunas Racius from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania); Mr. Terry Martin from the research communications agency SPIA (Germany); Professor Mehdi Lahlou from Mohammed V University of Rabat (Morocco); Professor Haldun Gulalp of The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Turkey); Professor Pradana Boy of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia); Professor Zawawi Ibrahim of The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (Malaysia); Professor Gurpreet Mahajan of Jawaharlal Nehru University (India); and Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). GREASE is scheduled for completion in 2022.

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GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

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1. Introduction

State religion relations and religious diversity governance in present day Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are reconceptualised in the context of country's deeply divided post-war society where the identification of religious identities with ethnic ones has traditionally been very close. With respect to the historical context, different religious groups (Catholics, Orthodox Christians or Muslims) have dominated the religious and political landscape in different historical periods. The strife of the present state of BiH is to guarantee equal rights of all religious communities, proclaiming freedom of religion, prohibiting discrimination on religious grounds, establishing autonomy of religious groups and clear separation with the state.

This report is structured in four chapters. The first chapter outlines the ethno-confessional structure of the population of BiH and the attendant socio-economic characteristics. The second chapter traces the dynamics of state-religion relations and the governance of religious diversity. Chapter three aims to discuss the genesis and nature of religiously-inspired radicalisation in BiH and how is this phenomenon manifested following the violent war of 1992-1995 and in the context of global processes of radicalisation. Finally, chapter four aims to trace how the challenges of religiously-inspired radicalisation in the country are addressed by state institutions and what is the role of the Islamic community represented by the Islamic Council.

2. Current composition of population, economic and cultural factors

Bosnia and Herzegovina was established as a sovereign state with the Dayton Agreement from December 1995 that ended the Bosnian war (1992-1995). The agreement was signed by BiH, Croatia and Yugoslavia and witnessed by the European Union (EU), France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US). The agreement stipulated that the independent state of BiH is composed of two parts, the largely Serb-populated Republika Srpska (RS) and the Croat-Bosniak Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation of BiH). The district of Brčko is a self-governing administrative unit in north-eastern BiH. Annex 4 to the Dayton Agreement includes the Constitution of the new state, determined by "Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs, as constituent peoples (along with "Others"), and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (OSCE, 1995).[1]

The first census in BiH after the end of the war took place in 2013, organised by the Central Census Bureau of BiH and supported by the EU.[2] According to the results of the census, the population of BiH amounts to 3,531,159 persons, 2,219,220 in the Federation of BiH, 1,228,423 in RS and 83,516 in the Brčko District. The annual population growth has fallen from 0.66 % in 1988 to -3.72 % in 1993; it rose to 0.23 % in 1999 but in 2018

[1] This specific formulation has been problematic and often challenged as discriminatory especially towards the "Others" as defined by the Constitution. Notably, in the case *Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina* (ECtHR, 2009), Dervo Sejdić (of Roma ethnicity) and Jakob Finci (of Jewish ethnicity) contested before the European Court of Human Rights the constitutional arrangements on the Presidency of BiH. The plaintiffs claimed that according to the Constitution, the tripartite presidency of the country is open only to the constituent peoples, which made them ineligible to run, in a violation to the European Convention of Human Rights. The court ruled in the favour of Sejdić and Finci but still, no actions have been taken by BiH to address the decision.

[2] The results, however, were released only in 2016, because of a dispute between the statistical agencies of Federation of BiH and RS. RS opposed the inclusion in the census of the "non-permanent Bosnian residents – those who were absent for 12 months prior to or after the census" (Toe, 2016). The methodology used by the Bosnian statistical agency was deemed "in line with international recommendations" according to Eurostat (Agense France-Presse, 2016).

dropped again to -0.82%. (The World Bank, 2019). The distribution by ethnic/national affiliation is as follows:

Table 1: Population of BiH by ethnic/national affiliation, Census Results 2013[3]

Area→ Ethnicity↓	Federation BiH	RS	Brčko	TOTAL BiH (numbers)	Total BiH (%)
Bosniak	1 562 372	171 839	17 411	**1 769 592**	**50.11 %**
Croat	497 883	29 645	8 859	**544 780**	**15.43 %**
Serb	56 550	1 001 299	14 023	**1 086 733**	**30.78 %**
Other	79 838	15 324	695	**96 539**	**2.73 %**
Not declared	18 344	8 189	213	**27 055**	**0.77 %**
No answer	4 233	2 127	49	**6 460**	**0.18 %**
TOTAL BiH				**3 531 159**	

Source: Agency for Statistics of BiH, 2016

Data from 1991 from the Republic of BiH (the predecessor of today's state) allows the following comparison:

Table 2: Comparison of BiH population 1991 and 2013 by ethnic affiliation

Census→ Ethnicity↓	1991, Republic of BiH	2013, BiH
Bosniak	1 902 956 (43.5 %)	1 769 592 (50.1 %)
Croat	760 852 (17.4 %)	544 780 (15.4 %)
Serb	1 366 104 (31.2 %)	1 086 733 (30.8 %)
Others	347 121 (7.9%)	130 054 (3.7 %)
TOTAL	**4 377 033**	**3 531 159**

Source: Statistika.ba, 2016

Three conclusions become evident: i) in the years during and after the war, BiH has lost around 20 % of its population; ii) there is a significant decrease in the number of those who self-identify as "Other"; iii) although the number of those who identify as Bosniak

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[3] The formulation "ethnicity/national affiliation" here should be noted, as it fails to take into account that a person of Croat ethnicity could identify their national affiliation as Bosnian. In fact, this was detected by some participants in the census, like Mirjana Tesanovic. The 49-year-old lawyer from Banka Luka chose to describe herself not as a "Serb" but as a "Bosnian", which denotes an affiliation to a given state and was considered extraordinary (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2013).

decreases slightly in absolute numbers, their share from the overall population increases.

Population composition in terms of religious affiliation shows that Islam is the predominant religion in BiH (50.70 %), followed by Orthodox Christianity (30.75 %) and Catholicism (15.2%).

Table 3: Population of BiH by religion, Census Results 2013

Area→ Religion↓	Federation BiH	RS	Brčko	TOTAL BiH (numbers)	Total BiH (%)
Islamic	1 581 868	172 742	35 844	**1 790 454**	**50.7 %**
Catholic	490 450	28 883	17 000	**536 333**	**15.1 %**
Orthodox	57 120	999 802	28 838	**1 085 760**	**30.75 %**
Agnostic	9 425	1 288	103	**10 816**	**0.33 %**
Atheist	21 508	6 014	331	**27 853**	**0.82 %**
Not declared	23 672	8 392	636	**32 700**	**0.94 %**
Other	30 885	9 103	667	**40 655**	**1.16 %**
No answer	4 292	2 199	97	**6 588**	**0.20 %**
TOTAL BiH				**3 531 159**	

Source: Agency for Statistics of BiH, 2016

The majority of Orthodox Christians (92%) live in RS, while the majority of Muslims (88 %) live in the Federation. When we look at data combining religious affiliation and ethnicity, the compact ethno-religious identities become clearly delineated: Muslim Bosniaks, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats.

Table 4: Population of BiH according to ethnicity and religious affiliation[4]

Area	Ethnicity → Religion↓	Bosniak	Croat	Serb
Federation of BiH				
	Islamic	**1 533 650**	1 313	60
	Catholic	1 106	**484 173**	232
	Orthodox	992	245	**51 965**
Republika Srpska				
	Islamic	**169 144**	53	32

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[4] This table summarises the results only for the three main ethnicities and the three main religions.

	Catholic	148	**26 662**	236
	Orthodox	175	888	**992 743**
Brčko District				
	Islamic	**35 044**	9	-
	Catholic	24	**16 856**	14
	Orthodox	15	39	**28 564**
Bosnia and Herzegovina total				
	Islamic	**1 737 838**	1 375	92
	Catholic	1 278	**527 651**	482
	Orthodox	1 182	1 172	**1 073 272**

Source: Agency for Statistics of BiH, 2016

Unfortunately, the census data does not show the percentage of Shi'a and Sunni Muslims and of those self-identified Muslims who have indicated neither Sunni nor Shi'a. According to a 2012 PEW survey, 38 % of the survey participants self-identify as Sunni, 54 % - as "Just a Muslim", 7 % provide the answer "Nothing/DK/Refused" and 0 % self-identify as Shi'a or something else (Pew Research Center, 2012). Around three-quarters of the surveyed Muslims believe that there is only one interpretation of Islam (Ibid., p. 85). A break-down of religious affiliation among Bosnian Muslims would have been relevant in view of the presence in BiH of a Salafi community. There is also evidence of the revival of Sufi orders in the country, which have been traditionally influential and contributed significantly to the spread of Islam in Bosnian towns during Ottoman times (Zhelyazkova, 2001, p. 23).

As for the levels of religiosity in the country, a survey published in 2018 shows that 54 % of the people in BiH consider religion to be very important, 33 % pray daily and 24 % attend religious services weekly (Pew Research Center, 2018, p. 64). The percentage of the people stating that religion is very important for them is considerably higher than that in Albania (15%), Bulgaria (19%) and Serbia (34 %), but comes close to the numbers in Romania (53%) and Greece (56%) (Ibid.). Attacks on religious officials and sites still occur – from the end of 2016 to the end of 2017 were reported seven attacks on property of members of the Islamic Community, three attacks against cemeteries of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and one against property of the Catholic Church (US Department of State, 2019).

BiH does not have a large immigrant community, although the number of issued visas has been increasing steadily after 2013. The number of those with temporary residence has risen almost twice compared to 2008 and the number of those with permanent residence – almost three times.

Table 5 Total number of visas issued from 2008 to 2017 and of individuals with temporary residence (TR) and permanent residence (PR)

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Visas	10139	9284	9623	11126	11482	12107	16351	16970	22862	28751
TR	5 971	7 512	8 131	7 661	8 838	9 953	11022	12633	11519	11372
PR	215	359	315	308	401	713	763	808	799	750

Source: Ministry of Security of BiH, 2018

In 2017, 14,573 (or half of all visas) were issued to Saudi Arabia nationals. Nationals from Lebanon follow with 5,090 issued visas and people from Columbia with 985 issued visas. The countries with the most nationals receiving temporary residence are Turkey (2,577), Serbia (2,210) and Croatia (1,005). The situation is a bit different when it comes to permanent residence received by 129 Chinese nationals, 101 Croats and 75 Montenegrins. In 2017, 97 % of all individuals (667) being granted BiH citizenship are nationals of Serbia and Croatia. When it comes to emigration, around 2 million people originating from BiH reside abroad, the highest number – in Croatia, followed by Serbia and Germany.

3. State-organised religion relations

Historical Background

The polity of BiH has been multi-religious since the 12th century. The dominant religious groups of today have undergone complex historical genesis leading to close identification of religious identities with ethnic ones – Muslims commonly identify as Bosniaks, Orthodox Christians as Serbs and Catholics as Croats. Different religious groups dominated the religious and political landscape in different historical periods. Changes in dominions, regimes and political structures often affected and predetermined the relations among the main religious groups and between them and the state.

The post-12th c. Bosnian religious set-up has been described as unique – dominated by either the dualistic sect of Pataria/Bogomils, Catholicism or Orthodox Christianity (Zhelyazkova, 2001, p. 6). With the Ottoman conquest, Islam advanced and gained in prominence with respect to other religions. The Bogomils' role for the Ottoman invasion and the Islamisation of the population has been the subject of academic discussion – not least because it resurfaced in subsequent nationalist narratives about Bosnian Muslims once betraying Christianity by converting to Islam. Ascribing Islamisation to the existence of this or other sects would be an oversimplification, but it certainly contributed to religious fragmentation and a rift between the population and the Catholic Church.

Compared to other Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire, in BiH conversion to Islam happened earlier (15-16th c.), but as elsewhere, the reasons were mostly economic such as tax relief (Ibid., p. 13). The indigenous Muslims were joined by Muslim settlers from Asia Minor, North Africa and other Ottoman provinces (Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia), who also left their cultural mark in the country. However, it is argued that in BiH, the Muslim settlers were quickly integrated, assimilated even, by the local

population, which was undergoing an intense Islamisation (Ibid, p. 14). Towards the end of the 17th c., the number of Christians had diminished significantly (due to conversions, blood tax[5]), whilst the strife between the Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism continued. Up until the 19th c. the Orthodox clergy was loosely organised and mostly illiterate; the situation slightly improved with the Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire – churches were built and rebuilt and schools were opened (including dedicated schools for clergy) (Eldarov in Zhelyazkova, 2001, p. 69). Catholicism had a similar fate, to a great extent marked by disputes between the Catholic Church and the influential Franciscans. The period of Ottoman domination saw also the arrival of many Jews from Spain who settled permanently in the country. In late 18th c. and the beginning of the 19th c. the Muslim population in BiH decreases in numbers too, particularly due to epidemics and the frequent wars led by the Ottomans. The 19th c. was also the time when Serbs and Croats began searching for evidence that BiH Muslims were mostly of Croatian (Catholic) and Serbian (Orthodox) origin.

Croatian claims in particular intensified with the advent of the Austro-Hungarian regime (1878-1919). During that time, Catholicism was informally privileged while Islam was separated from the state with Sharia courts being modernised and integrated into the Habsburg legal system. A priority of the Orthodox Church was to preserve the autonomy of the church-school communities and ensure the participation of laity in the management of church institutions (Eldarov in Zhelyazkova, 2001, p. 79). Both the Catholic and the Orthodox communities benefited from favourable political conditions and significant state subsidies (Ibid., p.83). The Muslim community became capsulated and started actively searching for an identity.

Formally, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941) promoted equal footing of all religious communities but informally, the one to be favoured was Orthodox Christianity. The interwar period witnessed the consolidation of the national identities of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, while the Bosnian Muslim community remained untouched by these processes and largely undetermined (Bougarel, 2017). For this community, the period was marked by the rise of Islamic revivalists – hostile to religious traditions and Sufi orders and calling for reasserting "the immutability and specificity of Islam" (Ibid, p. 48).

During World War II (1939-1945), the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia and BiH turned into a theatre of embittered conflicts and infighting driven by radical ideologies. The fascist Ustasha movement, a Nazi ally led by Ante Pavelić and inspired by the nationalist Ante Starčević, aspired for a large Croatian state including BiH and viewed Bosnian Muslims as Croats who had converted to Islam. The Ustasha clashed with the Chetniks, who, commanded by Draža Mihailović, fought for Yugoslavia's restoration but under Serb-domination and possibly cleansed of non-Serbs. Memories, fears, resentment and ideologies related to the Ustasha and the Chetniks resurfaced during the 1990s wars. Back in 1941, the Young Muslims movement was founded in BiH – its supporters shared some ideas with the revivalists and developed an interest in pan-Islamism. According to Bougarel (2017, p. 66), "this political pan-Islamism resulted from a politicisation of Islam following contact with fascist and communist ideologies". Alija Izetbegović, the future President of the Republic of BiH, was a member of the Young Muslims and remained influenced by its ideas, even after the movement was dissolved in late 1940s.

Like other communist countries, Socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1990) promoted a policy of subordination of religious institutions to the state and encouraged atheism. The period

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[55] The practice called *devshirme* involved the taking by military officers of Christian boys from the provinces of the Ottoman Empire to be raised to serve the state.

was marked by attempts on the part of the federal state to address ethno-religious divisions by engineering the areligious nation of Yugoslavs. This policy however did not make big advances in BiH, as according to the 1991 census only 6 % of its population identified as Yugoslavs and more than 90 % with one of the three major ethno-religious groups (Bosniaks, 43.5; Serbs, 31.2 % and Croats, 17.4 %) (Alibašić, A., 2017, pp. 21). The Muslim nation was officially recognised in 1968, which exacerbated a pre-existing doubt among Muslim politicians and intellectuals – on one hand, they were afraid that Yugoslavism was suppressing the Muslim national identity but on the other hand, they were aware that the federal structures of Yugoslavia were protecting them from the Serbian and Croatian aspirations (Bougarel, 2017, p. 87). In the 1960s, a pan-Islamist current appeared again amidst the Islamic community. It was exemplified by the Islamic Declaration written by Alija Izetbegović, who called for the establishment of a new "Islamic order" and stated that coexistence between the Islamic faith and non-Islamic institutions is impossible (Ibid., p. 95).

The rise of what the Serb press and nationalist politicians were viewing as Islamic fundamentalism coincided with the death of Tito – essentially, the figure holding the federation together. The state was further weakened by the rising and aggressive Serb nationalism, which culminated in the 1989 Gazimestan speech, delivered by Slobodan Milošević at the celebrations of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Pole. Centuries after this historic event, the Serbian leader controversially warned that the Serbs might be facing battles again – even armed ones – which many saw as a precursor to the wars that followed shortly after. The 1980s brought the revival of the institutions of all major religions in the federation (and to this, BiH was no exception), which resulted in large and frequent gatherings at shrines, religious sites, stadiums and streets (Perica, 2004, p. 7).

The interweaving of ethno-religious identities, national identities, the crumbling personality cult to Tito, growing desires for independence and the manipulation of history for political purposes fueled nationalist agendas that would soon create deep rifts between Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, who have, until that time, co-existed peacefully.

The Bosnian war (1992-1995) and the associated grave acts of violence deepened the ethno-religious divisions within Bosnian society and posed the challenge of accommodating religious freedom and inter-religious balance in post-war Bosnia. As the war was fought over ethno-religious lines and symbols, the post-war reconstruction of BiH involved reconceptualisation of the relationship of the state to its various religious communities, as well as between the communities themselves. However, this process was made difficult by frequent institutional gridlock, inherent in the post-Dayton institutional system, and the difficult implementation locally of decisions taken at federal level. According to Bougarel (2017), in the 1990s, the Party of Democratic Action founded by Izetbegović, tried to infuse pan-Islamism into the nascent Muslim nationalism, hence to substitute communism with Islam as a political ideology. This, however, was not successful and brought disenchantment with both politics and religion. Despite the death of Izetbegović, Milošević and Tudjman, the divisions created during the war remain and the religious institutions revived after the fall of communism continue to be involved, often controversially, in political and public life.

It has to be pointed out that post-war Bosnian society experienced encounters and interactions with the wider Muslim world which led to fragmentation of the Islamic scene and the emergence of numerous faith-based organisations. While some FBO provide ideological alternatives to the centralised Islamic Community of BiH, other just address needs not addressed by the latter. Such examples include the Young Muslims,

the Organization for Culture, Education and Sports and IslamBosna, all relying on self–sustaining funds and have gained a strong foothold in the society. The niche is being taken by the Sufi orders, with traditional standing in the region, which attained renewed popularity in the past years.

Religion and law in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina

The state of BiH proclaims freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination on religious grounds (Art. II/3(i) and 4 of the Constitution of BiH and Part II, Art. 2 of the Constitution of FBiH). Freedom of religion is established in collective and individual terms by the Constitution of FBiH (Part II, Art. 2) and in collective terms in the Constitution of RS (Art. 28). Moreover, as per the Dayton Agreement the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is an integral part of the BiH Constitution (Art. II/2), setting further guarantees for religious freedom in the country. The Constitution of BiH also stipulates that "(n)o person shall be deprived of Bosnia and Herzegovina or Entity citizenship on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status" (Art. 7, (b)). The constitutions of the two constituent entities reiterate the principle of religious freedom for their citizens, but the constitution of RS connects a particular church, the Orthodox Church, to a particular ethnic group, namely the Serb people (Art. 28).

BiH promotes a model of separation of state and religion including the principle of equality of all religious communities. State-religion relations are regulated by the Law on Freedom of Religion and the Legal Status of Religious Communities and Churches (or the Law), drafted by the Interreligious Council of BiH comprising representatives of the traditional religious communities – the Islamic Community, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the Jewish community. Article 1 of the Law recognises the multiconfessional character of BiH and proclaims the equal rights of all religious communities. The Law reiterates the principle of freedom of religion and belief (Para II). It also prohibits churches and religious communities from disseminating hatred against other religious communities or preventing the manifestation of their religious belief (Para II, Art. 4/2).

The Law establishes the autonomy of religious communities which have the right to self-administration according to their own laws and doctrines and to appoint their own personnel (Art. 11, 1-3). At the same time, the Law proclaims a clear separation between the religious communities and the state (Art. 14), forbidding any interference on the part of the state in religious affairs (Art. 14, 2) and stipulating that religious laws and doctrines have no civil-legal effect (Art. 11, 1). In terms of religious diversity governance, the state is not allowed to accord state church or state religion status to any religious community (Art. 14, 1) and no church may obtain any special privileges from the state (Art. 14, 3). The state may provide material assistance, but this should be done without discrimination on any grounds (Art. 14, 4).

When it comes to legalising of religious communities the Law delineates three types of religious organisations which are subject to different registration procedures. Four historically based churches and religious communities are designated as legal personalities by the Law – the Islamic Community in BiH, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the Jewish Community of BiH. The second type includes those religious communities, registered before the enactment of the 2004 Law (Art. 8, 2). The third type involves newly formed churches and religious communities that need to register according to Art. 18, 4 of the Law. A unified register of religious communities is entrusted with the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees is

mandated to ensure exercise of religious freedoms in conformity with the Constitution, the relevant international conventions and the Law (Art. 17, 1; 3).

While rendering of privileges to particular religious communities is forbidden by the Law, the situation on the ground is different. According to Alibašić, by allocating substantial powers locally, the BiH system of governance in practice allows local authorities to grant de facto privileges to the community that makes up the majority in their unit. Privileges take the form of funding, construction permits for religious sites, or, as in the case of RS, and a formal distinct status for the Serbian Orthodox Church (Alibašić, A., 2017, p. 27). A 2006 report criticises the Law for violating OSCE standards by requiring a high registration threshold (300 members) to apply for recognition for a new church or religious community (Institute on Religion and Public Policy, n.a.). Similarly to Alibašić, the authors claim that there non-discrimination principle is violated locally – for example, in Bosnian-controlled areas, there are many religious buildings built without official controls, while Christian ones await for formal approval for years (Ibid, n.a.).

Institutional structure for governing religion and religious diversity

The three constituent majorities are represented by the officially recognised institutions: the Islamic Community, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Bishops' Conference. The Jewish religious community is the fourth legal personality recognised as such by the Law on Freedom of Religion and the Legal Status of Religious Communities and Churches. They are all members of the Interreligious Council.

Islamic Community of BiH: The institution originates back to 1882 when Austro-Hungarian authorities established a separate entity in an attempt to established centralised hierarchy to help separate Bosnian Muslims from the Ottoman structures. Presently, the Islamic Community of BiH is the single official community of Muslims in BiH. Muslim communities in the region of Sanjak, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, as well as organized communities of Bosniak Muslims in Western Europe, North America, and Australia are considered part of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kavazovic, H., et. Al., pp. 14-15). The organizational structure of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina includes the community's Assembly (the supreme representative and legislative body), the Rais ul-ulama, or Grand Mufti (supreme religious authority), the Council of Muftis (a body for religious issues), the Riyasat (the executive body responsible for professional and administrative issues), and the Constitutional Court (the supreme body that determines the alignment of the work of institutions as per the Constitution). In 2011, the community enumerated 1147 full–time imams and 1415 active congregations. It is also possible for *tariqahs* (Sufi orders) to join the community, provided they request such status (Alibašić, A., 2017, pp. 25). The Islamic Community is self-financed and its Council adopts the organisation's budget.

Serbian Orthodox Church: It is one of the autocephalous Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches. According to its constitution, SOC shall "maintain dogmatic and canonical unity with other Orthodox Churches" (Article 1) and "have the dignity of Patriarchate" (Article 2) (Serbian Orthodox Church, n.d.). It is independent and responsible for the management of its property and finances. There are five eparchies (dioceses): Metropolitanate of Dabar and Bosnia, Eparchy of Zahumlje and Herzegovina, Eparchy of Zvornik and Tuzla, Eparchy of Banja Luka and the Eparchy of Bihać and Petrovac. The bishops of the five eparchies are members of the Regional Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in BiH, presided by the Metropolitan of Dabar and Bosnia. In addition to complying with rights and duties arising out of ecclesiastical and canonical

regulations, diocesan bishops shall "preserve, maintain and defend the people of the Orthodox faith, countering any action which is contrary to Orthodox teaching and detrimental to the interests of the Serbian Orthodox Church" (Article 108, Ibid.).

Bishops' Conference, Catholics in Croatia: The Catholic Bishops' Conference is Bosnian Croats' official organisational and regional structure. The Holy See founded this permanent assembly in 1994. It is composed of the Assembly, the Permanent Council, councils, committees, the General Secretariat and offices. The General Secretariat is headquartered in Sarajevo, whilst bishops reside in Mostar, Banja Luka, and Sarajevo. A major mission of the Bishop's conference, reiterated in the beginning of 2019 at a joint conference with the Croatian Conference of Bishops, is the need to "ensure the survival of the Catholic Church and the Croatian nation in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Informativna Katolicka Agencija, 2019). This includes not only efforts to stimulate new jobs and economic development to make Croats stay in BiH, but also launching an initiative for the return of people who fled or were expelled in the last decades.

La Benevolencija, the Jewish Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina: This is the Bosnian affiliate of the World Jewish Congress and represents the Jewish community in the country (500-1,000 mostly Sephardic Jews). La Benevolencija has a long history in the country, as it was founded as early as in 1892. During the war in the 1990s, the organisation remained neutral and managed to provide significant humanitarian assistance. Today, it sees itself as actively mediating between different faiths in the country, as the Jewish community practices its religion freely (World Jewish Congress, 2018). It is presided by Jacob Finci, who together with the Bosnian Rima Dervo Sejdić appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that BiH's Constitution violates the European Convention on Human Rights (see footnote 1).

Interreligious Council: It was established in 1997 with the support of the World Conference of Religions for Peace by representatives of all major religions in BiH: Mustafa Cerić (Grand Mufti representing the Islamic Community), Nikolaj (Metropolitan of Dabar-Bosnia, representing the Serbian Orthodox Church), Vinko Puljić (Catholic Cardinal and Archbishop of Vrhbosna) and Jakob Finci of Jewish Community. The Council aims to serve as a forum for interreligious dialogue, promote religious tolerance and support projects for social reconciliation and building civil society. On its website, one can submit information about attacks on religious sites. Details about the attacks are included in an annual report on the protection of holy sites. The Interreligious Council cooperates with state institutions to investigate and prosecute such desecrations and attacks on the property and person of religious figures. In BiH, recognised religious communities can receive public funds from the state – mostly *ad hoc*, project-based and dedicated to the reconstruction of religious sites; since 2008, the Council has also been receiving financial support from the government (Kovač, p. 52).

Although the Interreligious council has been praised as an important development (especially at symbolic level), it has been repeatedly argued that it should be more active when it comes to peace-building and reconciliation (Clark, 2010, p. 7). It is reported that even if some dialogue at central level exists, it rarely happens at local level – local religious leaders often do not communicate with each other or do so only when needed (Ibid., p. 8). This hinders the restitution of trust and the overcoming of the fragmentation of the BiH society after the war. Perica (2014) goes further in his criticism of the council, calling it a discredited Dayton-system invention, not contributing to peace and reconciliation. Despite the occurrence of positive statements on the part of religious leaders and positive acts on the part of faith-based activists, the power of religion to inspire tolerance and peace is not sufficiently exploited – this would require severing

the still-existing link between organised religion, ethno-nationalism and political structures (Ibid).

4. Violent religiously inspired radicalisation challenges

State of play of religious radicalisation

In its 2016 progress report, the European Commission stated that BiH „has been seriously affected by the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and radicalisation" and that "pockets of radicalisation have been identified across the country, in particular in the Wahhabi community" (European Commission, 2016, p.21). This observation has been reconfirmed in the 2018 report, which recommended the implementation of prevention of radicalisation and de-radicalisation programmes (European Commission, 2018a, p. 21).

Religiously inspired radicalisation in BiH is linked to and largely reflected in two phenomena: the arrival of Arab-African *mujahideen* in BiH during the Bosnian war and the departure of men, women and children from BiH for Syria and Iraq after 2012. Whilst connecting lines between these two groups are not necessarily straightforward, they are not difficult to draw either.

The mujahideen in the Bosnian war

The Bosnian war caused deep ethno-religious rifts and brought destruction, state disintegration and gross violations of human rights. Alongside the main belligerents,[6] fought the so-called foreign fighters – the Croatian Defence Council supported by Croatia; the mercenaries and volunteers from Orthodox countries like Serbia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece who joined the Bosnian Serb army; and the group of mostly Afghan and Arab *mujahideen* who fought alongside the army of BiH. The origins of the *mujahideen* (or the 'Islamic Holy Warriors') are to be found in the Soviet–Afghan War (1979-1989). These young, unexperienced but zealous men travelled from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Yemen to save Afghanistan from the Soviets (Kohlmann, 2004, p.3). After the war, many *mujahideen* were in search of a new home (Ibid., p. 16)[7] and a new battlefield to defend Islam, which they found in Bosnia.

The number of *mujahideen* who entered Bosnia is estimated to be around 3,000-4,000 (Radio Free Europe, 2007), even up to 5,000 (Kohlmann, 2004, xii). This move had three crucial consequences. Firstly, the country, strategically close to both Europe and the Middle East, opened opportunities for "espionage, fundraising, and terrorist activities by Al-Qaida" (Ibid., p. 11). Secondly, it facilitated communication between the *mujahideen* and Muslims in Western Europe – this brought new recruits and the possibility to translate books about *jihad* in Western languages (Ibid., p. 12). Thirdly, it exposed Muslims in the country – mostly followers of the moderate and predominant *Hanafi* teaching of Islam – to Salafism.

At the beginning, arriving *mujahideen* were only fighting together with the Bosniaks, but after 1993, they formally joined the Third Corps of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia

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[6] The main warring parties are the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatian Defense Council (HVO) and the Army of Republika Srpska (RVS).

[7] Following the Soviet-Afghan war, there were concerted efforts on the part of the Pakistani government to end the Afghan *jihad* – as their offices were all closed, the *mujahideen* had to be either deported to their home countries, remain in Afghanistan or go someplace else.

and Herzegovina under the name El-Mujahedin Unit (Radio Free Europe, 2007). Several judgements of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia describe crimes committed by the unit. Commander Rasim Delic[8] was notified that soldiers from the El-Mujahedin "had a propensity to commit crimes, and particularly crimes against captured enemy combatants and civilians". The unit committed torture, beatings, abuse and indiscriminate killings of enemy combatants and civilians near Livade and the Kamenica Camp (Communications Service of ICTY, n.a.). Similarly, Enver Hadzihasanovic[9] was convicted for not preventing the crimes of his subordinates – *mujahideen* beat and abused civilians in Travnik and committed a murder in the Orasac camp. Among the key *jihadists* thought to have fought in Bosnia are two of the perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks,[10] the alleged mastermind of 9/11 Khalid Sheikh Muhammed and Abdelkader Mokhtari, commander of the El Mujahedin. It is worth noting that while the Arab-Afghan *mujahideen* were the main group, they were joined by Western radicalised fighters as well.

Article III of the Dayton agreement set as a requirement that all foreign forces (including freedom fighters) should leave the territory of BiH within thirty days from the agreement's signing (OSCE, 1995). Despite this provision, a few hundred freedom fighters who fought for Army of the Republic of BiH stayed in the country, and a few dozen were still there as of 2007 (Radio Free Europe, 2007). According to Kohlmann (2004, p. 163), they were largely helped by the government of Alija Izetbegović, which supplied them with BiH passports, birth certificates and official paperwork. For the most part, these individuals preserved their radical views and planted across the country the seeds of Salafism[11], which was unknown to BiH until that time (Becirević, 2018, p.6).

Postwar years and Salafism in BiH

Salafi interpretations of Islam entered Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war years (1992–95) with foreign missionaries and funds flooding the country in the context of absent state controls. Initially, Salafism in BiH was concentrated in smaller settlements in North BiH – Bihać, Maglaj, Ošve, and Gorna Maoča – but since then, it has infiltrated Muslim communities in urban Zenica and Sarajevo. Ošve and Gorna Maoča have especially high concentration of Salafis. Gorna Maoča is very isolated and hostile to outsiders, following strictly rules based on Sharia law and there are reports that Ošve used to house a training camp for jihadists (Oehaja, 2016, p. 81-82).

Face-to-face proselytism of Salafism, and in some cases recruitment for the militant strand of Salafism, has been supported by various institutions. After the Bosnian war, in the country operated several Al-Qaeda [12] -linked charities like Osama bin Laden's Benevolence International Foundation, Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, the Global Relief Fund, al-Furqan, Taibah International, and al-Masjed al-Aqsa Charity Foundation (Counter-Extremism Project, 2017). Education funded by Islamic charities has been instrumental for the spread of Wahhabism in BiH – in 2002 alone, there were around 300 students studying Islamic studies in Muslim states and one third of them were

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[8] Delic served as Commander of the Main Staff of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia because of this failure to punish or prevent serious crimes carried out by his subordinates.
[9] From 1992-1993, he was the commander of the 3rd Corps of the Army of the Republic of BIH.
[10] Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar
[11] Footnote to be provided
[12] Al Qaeda is described as a Salafi militant organization (by whom?).

studying in Saudi Arabia (Directorate-General, 2013, p. 13). Saudi Arabia's role in BiH should be highlighted – the funds provided by the kingdom through charities were used for building Islamic schools, social programmes and projects for reconstruction – especially of the mosques destroyed during the war (Morrison in Ibid., p. 13). However, this meant that many mosques were rebuilt following the Saudi-favoured Wahhabi style.

The spread of Salafism was strengthened by the appearance of *para-jamaats* – or 'illegal' or 'parallel' mosques – which in some cases served as places for regional recruitment (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p. 14). They operate outside the auspices of the IC, which means that it has no control over the discussions and teachings taking place there. Husein Bilal Bosnić, one of the leaders of the Salafi movement in BiH and a key recruiter of *jihadists* for the Syrian war, has preached radical Islam numerous times from different *para-jamaats.* Using his house as a spiritual centre, he was also offering *ruqua* – a form of exorcism to cast out an evil jinn, which reportedly often sent his 'patients' abroad to fight (Ibid., p. 63).[13]

Of course, association with Salafism does not equal violent extremism. The "*non-violent conservative practisers*" of Salafi Islam should be distinguished from those who are open to using force and follow the *takfiri* ideology (Kursani in Oehaja, 2016). However, it should also be noted that according to some researchers, the lines between Salafis and the so-called Salafi-*jihadists* in BiH are more blurred, as the Salafism that arrived in BiH appears to be more rigid than the one in Western Europe and Saudi Arabia (Becirević, 2016, p. 36). Alibašić and Begović (2017, p. 29) also assert that after 9/11, the majority of Salafi associations gradually started complying with the Islamic Community's rules and only an isolated extremist fraction engaged in fighting abroad and running its own prayer houses. Researchers identify three branches within Salafism: "(i) purists who put focus on non-violent methods of propagation, purification and education, (ii) a political branch, whose followers advocate the application of the Salafi creed in the political arena, and (iii) jihadist branch whose followers take a militant position arguing that the current context calls for violence and revolution" (Wiktorowicz, 2006, p. 207-239). Jusić (2017, p. 47-49) offers a similar useful distinction between the following fractions within Salafism, valid for BiH as well: (i) followers of *taqlidiyun* – traditionally conservative and apolitical, they are critical of both Bosniaks' Islamic traditions and militant Salafism; (ii) followers of the *Sahwa* movement – constituting the majority of Salafis in BiH, they are supportive of gradual Islamisation through reforms and oppose violent methods; (iii) *jihadists* – despite being a militant wing of Salafism, they tend to support 'legitimate *jihad*' or the duty to defend themselves and other Muslims when attacked; (iv) *takfirists* – more extreme than *jihadists*, they combine Salafist religious conservatism with *takfir*, thus declaring even other Muslims infidels or non-believers. *Takfirists* have been associated with Al-Qaeda and later on, with Al-Nusra and the Islamic State (IS). This categorisation needs to be always kept in mind when discussing religiously-attributed radicalisation among the Salafi community in BiH. In the mid-2010s, Bosnian security officials began referring to militant Salafis as "takfirists" and "Kharijites" to distinguish them from Salafis/Wahhabis (Becirević, 2016, p. 36).

It was indeed in the 2010s when violent manifestations of militant Salafism occurred. In 2010, Haris Causevic carried out a bomb attack in the town of Bugojno, killing a police officer and injuring several people. Causevic and his accomplices belong to a local

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[13] Bosnić was arrested and later jailed for terrorist activities and recruitment for such purposes.

Wahhabi [14] community. In 2011, Mevlid Jašarević from Gorna Maoča fired with a Kalashnikov rifle on the US embassy in Sarajevo, wounding a police officer. Five years later, BiH authorities apprehended a person thought to have assisted Jašarević and to have fought later on for the IS[15] and the Al-Nusra front. In 2015, the alleged Wahhabist Nerdin Ibrić attacked a police station in Zvornik in RS, killing one and injuring two. While his motives remains unclear (he died in the attack), two possible co-conspirators were arrested, one of whom has fought in Syria. Just a few days after the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, suspected Salafi and IS supporter Enes Omeragić shot two and injured five near a betting shop in the Sarajevo suburb Rajlovac. In late 2015, 11 were arrested at the suspicion that they were planning a bomb attack in downtown Sarajevo on New Year's Eve.

Although online and social media radicalisation in BiH occupies a secondary place with respect to face-to-face radicalisation and recruitment, it is present and expanding. WhatsApp, Viber and Telegram are used quite often for recruitment, whilst another leader of the Salafis, Nusret Immamovic, [16] proselytised radical Islam and incited violence through online videos. In the end of 2016, IS began publishing its online magazine *Rumiyah* into Bosnian. In one of the issues, IS stated that it has not forgotten the region and threatened its enemies – 'infidel' Serbs and Croats and the moderate Muslims (Trad, 2017).

The start of the war in Syria brought intensification of radicalisation efforts by the militant Salafi fraction in BiH, which led to recruitment of foreign fighters in the Middle East.

Foreign fighters from BiH in Syria and Iraq

Between 2012 and 2015, 188 men, 61 women, and 81 children travelled to Syria and Iraq from BiH and the Bosnian diaspora; by January 2016, 47 men and 8 women had returned, 50 men and one woman had been killed, and 91 men and 52 women were believed to remain in Syria and Iraq (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p. 11). According to other sources, as of early 2017, the number of Bosnian foreign fighters in Syria is between 220 and 330, thus forming "the largest contingent of foreign fighters from the Western Balkans and the second-highest number of foreign fighters per capita out of any European country after Belgium"(Counter-Extremism Project, 2017). Since 2016, the intensified efforts of the BiH authorities contributed to an almost complete halt in departures.

Departures following radicalisation occurred mostly from well-known Salafi settlements, although some recruits came from big cities, like Sarajevo, Zenica and Tuzla. Financially, logistically and ideologically, recruitment was facilitated by the methods discussed above – a "network of small businesses, community centers, and charities" and "pop-up" mosques and *para-jamaats* (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p. 12-13). Prior to arriving in the conflict zone, foreign fighters give away their cell phones and identity documents, pass trainings and are consequently sent to combat units – at least two BiH soldiers have been members of a unit responsible for ritual executions of foreign hostages, prisoners, and convicts (Ibid., p. 46). Clearly, therefore, the greatest threat for

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[14] Most of the sources discussing radicalisation in BiH seem to be using Salafism and Wahhabism interchangeably. The exact relation between the two movements is widely discussed by scholars, but there is no agreement on the matter.

[15] The Islamic State (also referred to as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS or ISIL) is described as a Salafi-Jihadist militant organisation.

[16] Nusret Imamovic is high on the list of most wanted terrorists' lists and is believed to currently reside in Libya.

the security and further radicalisation in BiH are the returnees and the individuals whose departure to Syria and Iraq was thwarted. The risk they pose is increased by concerns for intensified radicalisation in Bosnian prisons. There is also evidence that IS has been instructing returning fighters and those who stayed back to 'fulfil their duties' by committing an attack in their home country.

Before turning to some specific factors that drove radicalisation and the phenomenon of foreign fighters in BiH, we need to consider the large number of women and children in the Bosnian contingent in Syria and Iraq. Women constitute 36 % of the entire Bosnian group, which is twice as much as the European average (Ibid., p. 12). This is important in view of reports that IS has been encouraging women supporters to participate in terrorist plots, as well as the actual increase of women's involvement in such plots in 2017 (Metodieva, 2018, p. 11). The biggest threats to Bosnian children in IS territories are to their physical survival and well-being. However, their life in conflict and exposure to violent extremism increases their vulnerability to radicalisation and affects their psychological and emotional state.

Factors for religiously inspired radicalisation

The following leading factors for radicalisation and yielding to recruitment were identified. Most of them are interlinked and commonly identified as factors for radicalisation in other EU countries.

War legacies and political failures
We should acknowledge that in BiH, due to the arrival of Arab-Afghan *mujahideen* in the 1990s, there is a certain legacy or tradition of the "foreign fighter" phenomenon. The memories of the holy warriors (or first-hand experience thereof) who travel to foreign countries to defend Islam and instigate others to follow are fresh and vivid. This creates preconditions for successful recruitment among young men, especially combined with the inability of the newly formed state to achieve political stability, reconciliation in society and rapprochement among ethno-religious groups. However, it should also be noted that during and after the war between a significant portion of the local Muslim population and the *mujahideen* there were tensions, as the former regarded the latter as unpredictable and responsible for violence the regular Bosnian army would not engage in. The coming to terms with what occurred during the war, as well as immediately before and after it, should probably be placed within a larger and much delayed discussion about political Islam and the legacy of pan-Islamism in Bosnia (Bougarel, 2017, p. 4).

Socioeconomic factors
The Salafi communities in northern BiH are largely marginalised and poor. Even outside these communities, the polarisation between the different ethno-religious groups is not negligible and certain animosities that appeared during the war still drive young men to engage in hate crimes or violent acts. The easy spread of Salafist ideas is also explained by the dire economic situation in the Western Balkans (WB) – a situation borne out of the armed conflict, transition to market economy and fuelled by the global economic crisis (Petrović, 2016). Young people have been especially affected and youth unemployment in BiH is high. In 2018, the percentage fell to 38.8 % but the decrease is partly due to continuing emigration; almost 25 % of youth are not engaged in either education or training (World Bank Group, 2019). Lack of economic opportunity could make young Muslims more open to the options offered by affluent foreign charities and education and religious institutions. Thus, they might become exposed to different

versions of Islam and even to proselytising and recruitment, if these are occurring under the guise of such institutions.

Here, another argument made after the war is worth mentioning, which concerns the impact of a certain urban-rural conflict on the hostilities that erupted in the 1990s in Yugoslavia. The country's urban-centred system resulted in economic, political and social exclusion of certain parts of the rural population, which created a sense of *ressentiment* against their compatriots living in towns (Allcock, 2002). Differences between rural and urban are still difficult to overcome – especially for those villages which were mostly or completely destroyed during the war. Persisting grievances related to exclusion sharpen problems like lack of trust and lack of coordination between central and local levels.

Ideology and religiosity
Among experts on BiH radicalisation, there is no consensus about the intensity or importance of this factor. According to some *imams* from the Bosnian IC, many radicalised young men "were extreme before they became religious" and religion only provided them with grounds and explanation for their extreme behaviour (Becirević, 2018, p. 24). Others warn that especially in relation to *jihad,* one should distinguish between intensity of belief and depth of knowledge and in fact, many Bosnian extremists consider themselves religious (Ibid.). There seems to be an agreement, however, that the simple 'solutions' to complex problems offered by Salafism and the extreme stances taught by its proselytes are especially attractive to previously non-religious people.

Family environment and personal history
On one hand, some radicalised Salafi in BiH come from dysfunctional or violent families. Abuse and/or lack of support and encouragement from the family drove them to seek guidance and comfort in other family-like and close-knit communities, headed by spiritual leaders. On the other hand, there are families who are actively encouraging the radicalisation process, which is exacerbated by the big significance attributed by Salafism to the family unit. In one case, the father's encouragement prompted his hesitant son to carry out a suicide attack (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p. 54). Furthermore, being raised in a family of this sort, limits one's possibilities to communicate, study or practice religion outside of one's immediate environment.

Researchers report cases where people become more vulnerable to persuasion and extremist narratives after a period of drug or alcohol addiction or as a consequence of unaddressed medical health issues. For example, after Bilal Bosnić performed on her the ritual *ruqua,* 29-year-old Elvira Balić-Karalić left her husband and two children to marry a Said Huseinović, whom she accompanied to Syria in 2013 – subsequently her husband was killed and she became an active recruiter for the Islamic State (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p. 64).

Criminal offenses
Data shows that around 26% of the men who travelled to Syria and Iraq had previous criminal record for "theft, armed robbery, extortion, child abuse, rape, domestic violence, assault and battery, counterfeiting, fraud, tax evasion, illegal possession and distribution of narcotics and/or arms, human trafficking, membership in organized criminal groups, and terrorism" (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p. 40). We could assume that some of the *mujahideen,* who stayed in BiH after the war and later engaged in

radicalisation or recruitment, might have participated or evidenced crimes as those described in the cases of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

Other risks of religiously-inspired radicalisation

The freedom fighters referred to in the Dayton agreement were not only *mujahideen*, as volunteers from all over Europe joined Serb and Croat forces as well. Upon their return, some of these volunteers, already radicalised, formed or joined "new right-wing militias that would over time morph into potent political forces" like the Greek Golden Dawn (Ibrahim and Karcic, 2019). Alarmingly, the idea of the Bosnian war as the clash between Islam and Christianity has been inspiring far-right extremists around the world, such as the Norwegian Anders Breivik and the perpetrators of the 2014 Pennsylvania State Police barracks attack in the US and the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand (Hussain, 2019).

Within BiH itself, far-right radicalisation also needs mentioning, as it usually carries a certain religious component. Formed in 2009, the Bosnian National Pride Movement calls for the creation of the socialist and nationalist state of Bosna of the Bosniak nation. The movement rejects the attachment of the Bosniak identity to a single religion and states that the Bosniak nation includes only those belonging to the European genetic and cultural heritage (BPNP, n.d.). There are also reports of Serb and Croat groups being driven by ethnic nationalism and Orthodox and Catholic extremism, who often identify themselves as followers of the Serbian *Chetniks* and the Croatian *Ustasha,* active during the Second World War (Becirevic, 2018, p. 12-13). The Serb organisations and groups, working on an "extremist Orthodox agenda", are increasingly supported by Russia, whilst the Croatian formations are often backed by "radical elements of the Catholic Church and some political elites" (Ibid.). It is not uncommon that these groups display certain Neo-Nazi characteristics, engage in violent acts and call for separation of the territories inhabited by their respective ethno-religious groups from BiH.

In sum, the threat of religiously-inspired radicalisation in BiH is mostly limited to what Alibašić and Begović (2017, p. 29) refer to as the "militant extremist fringe" of Salafism in the country, and moderate Islam remains predominant. However, the relatively contained scope of militant Salafism's expansion is not to be underestimated – it is the depth of belief and the readiness of its followers to engage in violent extremism that should be studied and tackled. The problem of unofficial *para-jamaats* and the institutions serving clandestine foreign agendas is yet to be resolved and the risk of returning and remaining extremists to be mitigated.

5. Policies and practices addressing religious radicalisation

Bosnian authorities have been implementing a number of counter- and de-radicalisation policies, strategies and measures, aided by international partners. Still, these efforts often produce limited results due to the unreformed public administration, the fragmented policy making system and the insufficient law enforcement capabilities.

Domestic efforts and measures

Criminal prosecution

As at 2016, BiH security agencies identified 3,000 Salafis as potentially militant (Bacirević, 2016, p. 39). In the same year, eight new prosecutors focusing on terrorism cases were appointed to the BiH's Prosecutor Office and "provisions in the state criminal code criminalising acts of joining foreign para-military and para-police forces ('foreign fighters') started to be used in criminal proceedings"(European Commission, 2016, p. 21). Consequently, 23 returned foreign fighters were convicted for terrorism-related offences, but sentences were described as "lenient and frequently based on plea bargains" (European Commission, 2018a, p. 25). Prompted by the increase of departures to Syria and Iraq, the agencies dealing with terrorism cases – the State Investigations and Protection Agency, the Federal Police Directorate, and the RS police – engaged more investigators to deal with these cases (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p. 79). In early 2019, it was announced that a special body under the Foreign Ministry will be responsible for returning Bosnian fighters and that a reception centre in Mostar will accommodate them (Lakic, 2019).

Specialised operations also tried to foil recruitment and departures to IS-controlled territories. As part of operation *Damascus* in 2015, 11 people planning a New Year's terrorist attack in Sarajevo were detailed, followed by six more in early January 2016. A big raid was conducted in 2014 in Gorna Maoča and 16 people, including Bilal Bosnić, were arrested and unauthorized military equipment and weapons were found. However, the detained were released shortly after, except for Bosnić, who received a seven-year prison sentence. Following the attack in Zvornik, RS single-handedly launched the Operation *Ruben* and around 30 people were taken into custody, but the operation was criticised by Bosnian representatives and described as a repression against the Bosniaks.

Last but not least Charities and NGOs like the Benevolence International Foundation and the Global Relief Fund had their offices in BiH raided and closed in the aftermath of 9/11 and investigations by American security agencies. However, as noted above, new, albeit smaller ones, have appeared in their place.

Legislation and strategies

By amending its criminal code in June 2014, BiH became the first country in the WB to criminalise the departure of foreign fighters to conflict zones. In 2015, it adopted the 2015-2020 Strategy for Preventing and Combatting Terrorism. The strategy was welcomed by foreign partners as the first comprehensive document of this type in the Balkan region (Refworld, 2016). The strategy builds upon the 2014 law and "discourages BiH citizens from participating in foreign paramilitary groups by imposing both imprisonment and monetary fines" (Ibid.). As of 2018, it is accompanied by a framework action plan and a body to oversee its implementation.

A Counter Terrorism Task Force led by the State Prosecutor's Office has existed for several years, but it has not been very successful in its main purpose – to improve coordination between BiH security and police agencies. Its meetings have been poorly attended and only since the beginning of 2018, joint meetings were renewed (European Commission, 2019, p. 25). The improvement of the legislative and strategic framework are believed to have largely led to the mitigation of the foreign fighters' phenomenon. However, significant progress is often hampered by inefficient administration, understaffing and especially interagency and interpersonal discords.

Efforts by the Islamic Community and the Interreligious Council

Taken the diverse Islamic scene in BiH the Islamic Council of BiH tried to reinforce its position and authority respective to the various faith based organisations and the institutional and ideological alternatives that they represent. On 30 December 2013 a Platform of Cooperation of the Islamic Community with Islamic faith-based organizations, operating in BiH was adopted. The Platform affirmed the Islamic Community's place as exclusive authority in in governing all aspects of life of the community including worship, fatwas, Islamic education, etc. The Islamic Community was also affirmed as guarantee of the authenticity in the interpretation of Islamic doctrine and practice (Alibašić, A. 2017, p. 30). In addition, the Community has been persistent in its attempts to discontinue the activities of *para-jamaats.* In 2016, its leader, the Reis Kavazovic called upon members of the *para-jamaats* to join the Community or face legal consequences. In what is heralded as a big success, approximately 90% of the known *para-jamaats* did so, thus giving the Islamic Community the authority to supervise their activities and appoint their *imams* (US Department of State, 2017). The problems the Community is facing however, are not limited to the remaining *para-jamaats.* For the most part, its *imams* are not accustomed or prepared to deal with radicalisation and violent extremism or its consequences – for instance, with the social re-integration of returnees. Therefore, the Ilmiyyah Association of the Islamic Community has recently organised eight seminars for *imams* focusing on their duties, religious radicalisation and violent extremism (Preljević, 2017, p. 13). As to rehabilitation programmes, the Community's leadership has expressed readiness for participation, but will do so only upon invitation by the state (Ibid.). The relations between the Islamic Community and BiH have not been always smooth. When criticised for not opposing *para-jamaats* before 2015, the former explained that whilst it identified potentially dangerous assemblies, it was up to the state authorities to take the necessary measures and close them (Ibid., p. 12).

The Islamic Community sustained its efforts to promote interreligious dialogue undertaking visits of senior religious leaders to sites of suffering, holding open-door days of religious communities, and sponsoring various projects centring on women and youth. In 2018, the Community hosted a conference of the Network of Believers, gathering around 100 women from different ethnicities and professions in BiH.

International efforts and measures

It has to be stressed from the beginning that radicalisation, recruitment and violent extremism often develop against intensive and frequent communication with radicalised Muslims in Western Europe (especially Austria and Germany). Therefore, the need for international cooperation to counter radicalisation and recruitment is tangible and BiH is trying to cater to this need.

The first coordinator for violent extremism prevention was appointed a couple of years ago. He[17] operates at state-level, under the auspices of the Ministry of Security and is responsible not only for domestic efforts, but also for the country's participation in international programmes. Partnering with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other international organisations, BiH sought to "strengthen resiliencies within identified at-risk communities, developed the capacity of religious leaders and civil society actors to counter expressions of intolerance, and piloted comprehensive

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[17] As at the end of 2018, this Coordinator was Samir Rizvo.

community-led intervention procedures at the local and municipal level" (US Department of State, 2018).

In April 2017, an EU Senior Mission on counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism took place in Sarajevo and issued several recommendations. They concern the implementation of the strategic framework with respect to appropriate sentences and re-integration of foreign fighters, border control and terrorism financing – recommendations that BiH has started to implement, but "more sustained efforts are needed" (European Commission, 2018a, p.25). The mission further recommended expanded cooperation with Eurojust and Europol. In 2016, BiH signed an Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation with Europol.

In October 2017, the International Organization for Migration launched a US government-funded project, "Institutional Strengthening: Establishing a Formal Referral Mechanism for Preventing Violent Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Turčalo and Veljan, 2018, p. 20). Consequently, the efforts directed at creating it were continued by the Ministry of Security of BiH. To assist these efforts, in the summer of 2019, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe published a guidebook on referral mechanisms for preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism (P/CVERLT). The guide, which presents some basic elements to be always included in any such mechanism, aims to assist local policy-makers and front-line workers and ensure human rights compliance of all undertaken measures (OSCE, 2019).

From 2016 to 2018, three Bosnian institutions – the Directorate for Coordination of Police Bodies, the State Investigation and Protection Agency and the Ministry of Security – were working with partners from nine other WB and EU states on a project called *FIRST LINE Practitioners Dealing with Radicalization Issues – Awareness Raising and Encouraging Capacity Building in the Western Balkan Region*. Among the specific project objectives were to assist institutions in the WB in recognising their own potential and increasing their capabilities (Republic of Slovenia, n.d.).

In October 2018, BiH signed and expressed commitment to implement the Joint EU-Western Balkans Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism. Its five main objectives are: robust framework for countering terrorism and violent extremism; effective prevention and countering of violent extremism, effective information exchange and operational cooperation, building capacity to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, and strengthening the protection of citizens and infrastructure (European Commission, 2018b). One of the prevention measures envisions the establishment of a WB network of practitioners for preventing and countering violent extremism, similar to the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network.

BiH is also a beneficiary to the EU-supported Western Balkan Counter-Terrorism Initiative, launched in 2015. One of the sub-policies of the initiative, as part of which numerous activities (conferences, reports, meetings, and projects) are implemented, is called *Prevention of Violent Extremism among Youth in Local Communities*. At the end of 2018, under this sub-policy Sarajevo hosted the conference *Providing support to youth in local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina,* which focused on the role of first-line responders for preventing violent extremism.

As a whole, BiH's criminal code and related legal framework are consistent with United Nations (UN) and EU counterterrorism standards. BiH is a member of the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Regional Cooperation Council for Southeast Europe, and the Council of Europe. Its status for EU membership is *Applicant/Potential Candidate.*

BiH is a member of the Global Coalition against Daesh, formed in 2014. The coalition's mission goes beyond the military defeat of IS and includes efforts to counter the terrorist organisation's propaganda, stabilise liberated areas and discontinue terrorist financial flows (Global Coalition, n.d.). Bihac, Bijeljina, Centar (Sarajevo), Doboj, Jablanica, Prijedor, Srebrenik, and Tuzla are members of the 2015-launched Strong Cities Network. It is a first-of-its-kind global network of mayors, municipal councilors, policy makers and practitioners working to increase community resilience to violent extremism (Strong Cities, 2019).

BiH is trying to make concerted efforts, both at the domestic and the international levels, to counter radicalisation. However, progress is slow, mostly due to administrative inefficiency, lack of funding and intra- and inter-agency discords.

6. Concluding Remarks

After the war of 1992-1995 which was fought over ethno-religious lines and symbols, the reconstruction of post-war Bosnian society involved reconceptualisation of the relationship of the state with its various communities. Most of all state institutions aimed to guarantee equal standing and rights of all religious communities and non-interference on the part of the state in religious matters as important aspect of the efforts to overcome post-war animosities. While the country introduced comprehensive legal framework in line with international standards of religious freedom the task of promoting equality among the constituent religious groups is not always easy to implement especially at the local level. More in-depth inter-religious dialogue is needed and more efforts should be devoted to putting words into action. Organised religion leaders should work together to disassociate themselves from ethno-nationalism and political agendas.

One may argue that one of the outcomes of the Bosnian war was that it contributed to the genesis of religiously inspired radicalisation in BiH. It was during the war that moderate Bosnian Muslims were introduced to Salafi interpretations of Islam as foreign missionaries and funds started entering the country. While the Salafi scene in BiH is diverse with most of the actors presently leaning towards the Islamic Council, it is the extremist fringe espousing anti-systemic ideology that poses radicalisation threat in BiH. Radicalisation and in some cases, recruitment for engaging in violent extremism has been influenced by a myriad of factors: socioeconomic, political, those stemming from personal history and background and previous criminality. These, combined with intense propaganda from IS and communication with radicalised Muslims from Western Europe, saw men, women, and children leave for Syria and Iraq. Despite the containment of the threat, the depth of belief and the readiness to engage in violent extremism should not be underestimated. Determined to work towards countering radicalisation and recruitment, BIH has taken relevant steps in this direction. Disagreements and mistrust within and between state institutions and the three constituent peoples often hold back progress. Special attention should be paid on radicalisation prevention and rehabilitation.

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