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## RADICAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE BALKAN

*ABSTRACT: The disintegration of Yugoslavia left ponderously operating small states behind. During the process of disintegration, radical movements of the Balkans were given a boost, which is – in addition to several influencing factors – one of the direct causes of the recent radicalization. Among the Balkan countries,<sup>1</sup> the most affected ones are Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, but radicalism also influences the society and administration of Albania, Macedonia and Serbia. The (mainly) Muslim communities' extremism posed a complex problem before the current wave of immigration, many operating groups in the Balkans built up close links with Middle-Eastern fundamentalist organizations (mostly with Al-Qaeda and ISIS), and organized criminal and terrorist acts in Europe as a forward base of the fundamentalist centers. A new global threat is the recruitment and travel of foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq, to the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations' training camps, besides the uncontrolled influx and the blending of possible fighters among the operating European groups also poses a huge risk. This process is significantly easier, as the foreign recruiters only have to keep in touch with the local centers' leaders, who can provide a constant supply of human force and equipment. Thereby, the radical Muslim communities' empowerment and isolation are not only a daily threat in Western Europe (especially Belgium and France), but also might lead to the destabilization and radicalization of the Balkans. The analysis shows examples of the Western Balkans' fundamentalism by countries, localizes villages and towns with fundamentalist majority, and outlines the influence of the centers' ideologies.*

*KEYWORDS: Balkan, terrorism, organized crime, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Al-Nusra Front, Wahhabism*

## MARKS OF THE YUGOSLAVIAN CRISIS – CURRENT STATE OF THE BALKANS

The current problems of the Balkans are preceded by the emerged local Muslim common ideology and the rules of its created society during the Balkan crisis. On the side of the Bosnian army, about 1,800 "Mujahedeen" – from the Muslim countries of the Middle East and Africa – fought together with the already powerful Muslim units<sup>2</sup> in the Balkan clashes. Individuals from the Middle East – mostly from Iran – were later backed with financial and material assistance, which reached the Balkans through Islamic humanitarian and aid

<sup>1</sup> Note: In the study, under the word "Balkan" we analyze Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro. It should be added that Kosovo's statehood is disputed, however, its separation from Serbia plays an important role in the analysis, therefore, we mention it as a separate unit.

<sup>2</sup> Scott, P. D. "Bosnia, Kosovo, and Now Libya: The Human Costs of Washington's On-Going Collusion with Terrorists". *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 9/31. 2011. <http://apjif.org/2011/9/31/Peter-Dale-Scott/3578/article.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

organizations, individual donations,<sup>3</sup> and through a variety of economic transactions.<sup>4</sup> The radical groups consolidated local connections, eased administration – which was favorable for the recruitment efforts – moreover, a concentration process began by which several Muslim-majority settlements began to strengthen. In the Balkans the high rate of Muslim ethnic’s life – torn by severe hostile attitude – is still not reassured, confrontation based on religious and social differences can be found in every state. Kosovo, where the clashes between Serbs and Albanians present an everyday threat, is a good illustration. The radical communities – typically in Bosnia – are gradually breaking away from the central administration and set up an individual administrative system in the purchased and governed areas and regions.

Taking advantage of the administrative system’s weaknesses, radical religious and political leaders can have direct control of over a number of settlements. In some places, villages also operate training camps and building a strong community among Muslims, which may facilitate the assimilation and blending-in of radical migrants as well.<sup>5</sup> Direct maritime connections and the widespread use of modern gadgets further facilitate contact with the Middle-Eastern countries.<sup>6</sup>

These cities are not only an excellent forward base, but serve as an emergency reserve, an active training camp and contact area of radical groups, which is highly important for the Middle-Eastern centers. Successful recruitment is taking place in communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, where about 300-330 people<sup>7</sup>, in Albania roughly 200 people<sup>8</sup> had intentions to travel to Syria and Iraq. Sources reported only 12 people from Macedonia.<sup>9</sup> The rhetoric of local terrorist organizations and loyal imams assists in the recruitment of fresh militants, but the spread of radical ideologies is also available in more direct forms such as in bookstores and online propaganda sites.<sup>10</sup>

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The majority of the combatants arriving in Syria from the Balkans have citizenship of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By reason of the mentioned effect of the Bosnian war, radicalized units

<sup>3</sup> O’Neill, B. “The Bosnian connection”, *The Guardian*. 6 July 2007. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2007/jul/06/thebosnianconnection>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Besenyő J. et al. *Az Iszlám Állam - Terrorizmus 2.0; Történet, ideológia, propaganda*. Budapest: Kossuth kiadó, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Besenyő J. “Can the „Arab Spring” present a real threat to Europe?”. *Strategic Impact* 50/1. 2014. 32–44. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/241476196/Can-the-Arab-Spring-present-a-real-threat-to-Europe>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Hill, P. and Wight, E. “ISIS set up stronghold in the heart of Europe as terrorists secretly buy land near an isolated village”. *Mirror*. 22 July 2015. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/isis-set-up-stronghold-heart-6094785>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>7</sup> McHugh, J. “ISIS In Europe? Islamist Extremists Buying Land In Bosnia Herzegovina: Amid Islamic State Terror Fears: Report”. *IB Times*. 21 Jan 2016. <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-europe-islamist-extremists-buying-land-bosnia-herzegovina-amid-islamic-state-2274284>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Freeman, C. “Inside Kacanik, Kosovo’s jihadist capital”. *The Telegraph*. 23 August 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/kosovo/11818659/Inside-Kacanik-Kosovos-jihadist-capital.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Shtuni, A. “Ethnic Albanian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria”. *Combating Terrorism Center*. 30 April 2015. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/ethnic-albanian-foreign-fighters-in-iraq-and-syria>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Bardos, G. N. “Jihad in the Balkans: The Next Generation”. *World Affairs Journal* Sep/Oct 2014. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/jihad-balkans-next-generation>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

who are supporting terrorist groups more or less actively (but in most cases with determined ideological background) can be found in several settlements. Forty percent of the Bosnian society is Muslim<sup>11</sup> with numerous Wahhabists and Salafists.

Wahhabism, which is widespread in the Middle East and in the Balkans, is one of the Islam's fundamental movements with the point of returning to the "conventional" validation of the "ancient" doctrines of Quran, to the most radical interpretations of Sunni Islam.<sup>12</sup> Although the birthplace and the center of the fundamental doctrines is Saudi Arabia, Wahhabist imams are present in a lot of regions of the Balkan. Wahhabist centers can be found in the Balkans, for example, in settlements called Serici, Zeljezno, Polje Pojska, Mehurici, Bocinja, Travnik, Gornja Maoca, Grmusa, Velika Kladusa, and Debeljak.<sup>13</sup> The radical Islamist organization called 'Poziv u Raj' (Invitation to Heaven)<sup>14</sup> – founded in 2010 – tries to get supporters from Bosnia and Herzegovina with intense online propaganda and using posters and billboards in Sarajevo as well as in other cities such as Bihac, Sanski Most, Maglaj, Zenica, Travnik, Tuzla and Tesanj.<sup>15</sup> According to information from the Balkan Insight, Wahhabist training camps are operating – among others – in villages Bocinja, Mehurici, Travnik, Gluha Bukovica, Pogo Relica and Osve.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most affected settlements is Gornja Maoca, since its lands are being bought by Muslims who are in connection with radical organizations. The village lives almost isolated and serves as an adequate nest for fanatics. In February 2010, Bosnian police seized weapons in the village within 'Operation Lights' and arrested a few radicals who had connection to Wahhabism.<sup>17</sup> Since 2014, the State Investigation and Protection Agency in Bosnia has been invigilating the village and within 'Operation Damask' several raids have been organized.<sup>18</sup> During these raids they captured numerous Wahhabists, supporting the Islamic State.<sup>19</sup> The combatants leaving Bosnia came mostly from Gornja Maoca or from the other center called Osve. Their primary recruiter was Nusret Sulejman Imamovic, the Sunni leader of the village who is currently fighting in Al-Nusra's Syrian units.<sup>20</sup> Besides,

<sup>11</sup> "CIA World Factbook: Bosnia and Herzegovina". CIA. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Choksy, C. E. B. and Choksy, J. K. "The Saudi Connection: Wahhabism and Global Jihad". *World Affairs Journal* May/June 2015. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/wahhabi.htm>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Michaletos, I. "An outlook of radical Islamism in Bosnia". *Radical Islam Monitor in Southeast Europe*. 21 March 2011. <http://www.rimse.gr/2011/03/an-outlook-of-radical-islamism-in.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Mantzikos, I. "An Outlook of Radical Islamism in Bosnia". *Modern Diplomacy*. 19 May 2013. [http://modern-diplomacy.eu/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=127:an-outlook-of-radical-islamism-in-bosnia](http://modern-diplomacy.eu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=127:an-outlook-of-radical-islamism-in-bosnia), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Michaletos, I. "An outlook of radical Islamism in Bosnia". 25 Sep 2010. <http://serbianna.com/analysis/archives/693>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Dzidic, D. "Bosnia's Wartime Legacy Fuels Radical Islam". *Balkan Insight*. 13 May 2015. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-s-wartime-legacy-fuels-radical-islam>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>17</sup> "Discussion/Proposal – Bosnia/CT – Pantaloone Jihad -- Wahhabi Loan Wolf Attacks US Embassy". *Wikileaks*. 2013. [https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/18/1844321\\_discussion-proposal-bosnia-ct-pantaloone-jihad-wahhabi-loan.html](https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/18/1844321_discussion-proposal-bosnia-ct-pantaloone-jihad-wahhabi-loan.html), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>18</sup> "Bosnia and Herzegovina: 8 Suspected IS Fighters Plead Not Guilty". *OCCRP*. 24 Aug 2015. <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/4323-bosnia-and-herzegovina-8-suspected-is-fighters-plead-not-guilty>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Teodorovic, M. and Synovitz, R. "Balkan Militants Join Syria's Rebel Cause". 8 June 2013. <http://www.rferl.org/content/syria-balkan-militants-join-rebel-cause/25011213.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>20</sup> "Designations of Foreign Terrorist Fighters". *US Department of State*. 2014. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/09/232067.htm>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

Husein Bilal Bosnicalso operated here, who was sentenced to seven years in prison in 2015 because of recruitment.<sup>21</sup>

The 23 year old Mevlid Jašarević also lived in that village – and was born in the Serb Novi Pazar and attacked the Embassy of The United States in Sarajevo with an AK-47 rifle on 28 October 2011.<sup>22</sup> Two partners of the perpetrator, Dino Pecenkovic and Munib Ahmetpahic were also residents of Maoca.<sup>23</sup> In 2012 Jašarevic was sentenced to eighteen years of prison.

The village of Osve is also strongly linked to radicalism and operates in affiliation with the Islamic State and Al-Nusra front. The followers of Wahhabist doctrines arrived to the village gradually, today the flag of the Islamic State and wall paintings are widely spread. The ones who go to Syria are recruited in Osve furthermore there is a training center, and as in Maoca, several mosques operate in the village. According to the Mirror news site approximately 12 people have been trained in Osve who are currently taking part in the fights in Syria. Dzevad Galijasevic, a terrorism expert says that Harun Mehicevic who is a Wahhabist orator has his own territories in the village.<sup>24</sup> In July 2013 the Bosnian national television reported that Emrah Fojniva who was an associate of Mevlid Jašarević in the attack against the Embassy of the United States lived in Osve.<sup>25</sup> The local Wahhabist community has been led by Izet Hadzic since 2011, the village had 300 inhabitants at that time but since then that number has decreased, mainly because the people went to training camps.<sup>26</sup>

It is possible to find Wahhabist bonds in several districts and suburbs of Sarajevo, too. On 22 December 2015 in Rajlovac – one of the suburbs of Sarajevo – authorities arrested fifteen people who – according to the evidence of the police – were planning a terror attack on New Year's Eve. According to the research of the Balkan Insight, among them, eleven people had direct connection with ISIS.<sup>27</sup>

In one of Sarajevo's districts, Sokolje, police made requisition in December 2015, as they had been informed that members of Wahhabist communities were storing weapons and were able to deliver them to Europe.<sup>28</sup> We can find links from Sokolje in the background of a bomb attack in Sarajevo in 2010 as well. Haris Causevic and Naser Palislamovic, residents of Sokolje attacked the police station in Bugojno with a bomb hidden in a car. After

<sup>21</sup> Spaic, I. "Bosnia: Salafist Leader Gets Seven Years for Recruiting Boys to Islamic State". Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. 6 Nov 2015. <https://www.occrp.org/en/blog/4579-bilal-bosnic-salafist-leader-gets-seven-years-for-recruiting-boys-to-islamic-state>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>22</sup> "Discussion/Proposal – Bosnia/CT – Pantaloone Jihad – Wahhabi Loan Wolf Attacks US Embassy".

<sup>23</sup> "Bosnian US embassy attack suspect linked by Facebook to former mujahidin leader". Wikileaks. 2013. [https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/75/751669\\_egypt-croatia-bosnia-serbia-bosnian-us-embassy-attack.html](https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/75/751669_egypt-croatia-bosnia-serbia-bosnian-us-embassy-attack.html), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Hill. and Wight. "ISIS set up stronghold in the heart of Europe as terrorists secretly buy land near an isolated village".

<sup>25</sup> Lanktree, G. "Isis in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Why are Islamic State extremists buying up land in Osve village?". IBT Times. 21 July 2015. <http://www.ibttimes.co.uk/isis-bosnia-herzegovina-why-are-islamic-state-extremists-buying-land-osve-village-511731> Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>26</sup> „Kupuju zemlju u maglaju: Ratnici Islamske države dolaze u BiH?” Dnevni Avaz. 25 May 2015. <http://www.avaz.ba/clanak/179549/kupuju-zemlju-u-maglaju-ratnici-islamske-drzave-dolaze-u-bih?url=clanak/179549/kupuju-zemlju-u-maglaju-ratnici-islamske-drzave-dolaze-u-bih>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Dzidic. "Bosnia's Wartime Legacy Fuels Radical Islam".

<sup>28</sup> McHugh. "ISIS In Europe? Islamist Extremists Buying Land In Bosnia Herzegovina: Amid Islamic State Terror Fears: Report".

committing the attack, Palislamovic went to his Wahhabist friends Emin Osmanagic, Nedzad Kesko and Haris Spago to look for shelter. Police captured all of the four perpetrators.<sup>29</sup>

King Fahd Mosque in Sarajevo gives home for the center of the recruitment, which building's operation is sponsored by Saudi Arabia.<sup>30</sup> The principal imam of the mosque is Sulejman Bugari, an Albanian religious leader from Kosovo, who has significant role in the spread of radicalism in the Balkans<sup>31</sup>, according to the evaluation of Stratfor as well.<sup>32</sup> Nezim Halilovic Mureris was an imam here who spread the radical ideas in the community similarly to Bugari.<sup>33</sup>

Alongside Gornje Maoca and Osve Wahhabist/Salafist mosques appeared in Tuzla and Maglaj as well and in accordance with this trend, the society of the towns experiences radicalization.<sup>34</sup> In Maglaj more actions were organized by radical groups, all of them were assumed by the Wahhabist community. Several members of the 7<sup>th</sup> Muslim Brigade – founded in 1993 – operated and lived here, for whom Bosnia and Herzegovina guaranteed citizenship<sup>35</sup> after taking part in the wars between 1992-95. In spite of the fact, that it was proven that they were connected to terrorist groups<sup>36</sup> and that during the Bosnian war they helped with implementing their actions on the Balkans.<sup>37</sup>

In January 2016 the Bosnian police arrested six people in Velika Kladusa, who were presumably trying to join the Islamic State. The raid took place after they captured 23 year-old Senad Kostac, resident of Velika Kladusa who travelled to Turkey through Montenegro in order to join a training camp and then take part in combat. Among the requisition flags of the Islamic State, handgrenades and other weapons were found. One month before the police action in the city they arrested one person, Mirel Karajic, within 'Operation Damask',<sup>38</sup>

<sup>29</sup> "BBC Monitoring Alert: Bosnia-Herzegovina". Wikileaks. 2010. [https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/81/819635\\_bbc-monitoring-alert-bosnia-herzegovina-.html](https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/81/819635_bbc-monitoring-alert-bosnia-herzegovina-.html), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Mayr, W. "The Prophet's Fifth Column: Islamists Gain Ground in Sarajevo". Spiegel Online. 25 Feb 2009. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/the-prophet-s-fifth-column-islamists-gain-ground-in-sarajevo-a-609660.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Bardos, G. N. "Jihad in the Balkans: The Next Generation".

<sup>32</sup> "Balkan Training Camps Pose a New Attack Threat". Stratfor. 2 April 2005. <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/balkan-training-camps-pose-new-attack-threat>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>33</sup> "Bosnia: Wahhabism threatens traditional bosnian Islam". Wikileaks. 2007. [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07SARAJEVO650\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07SARAJEVO650_a.html), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Borge, J. "Isis targets vulnerable Bosnia for recruitment and attack". The Guardian. 25 June 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/25/isis-targets-vulnerable-bosnia-for-recruitment-and-attack>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>35</sup> "Overview of 20 members of the 7th Muslim Brigade "El-Mujahid" of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina who received Bosnia & Herzegovinan citizenship". Radical Islam Monitor in Southeast Europe. 28 Dec 2011. <http://www.rimse.gr/2011/12/overview-of-20-members-of-7th-muslim.html> Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Schindler, J. R. *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, al-Qa'ida, and the rise of global jihad*. St. Paul: Zenith Imprint, 2007. <https://goo.gl/A4HHr1>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>37</sup> "Re: USE ME - Re: FOR COMMENT - BALKANS - Special Report: Militancy in the Former Yugoslavia". Wikileaks. 2013. [https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/18/1819657\\_re-use-me-re-for-comment-balkans-special-report-militancy-in.html](https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/18/1819657_re-use-me-re-for-comment-balkans-special-report-militancy-in.html) Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Dragoljovic, M. "Radical islamist from BiH still jeopardise stability". 22 Jan 2016. <http://www.balkaneu.com/radical-islamist-bih-jeopardise-stability/>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

who has been trained in a territory governed by ISIS, wanted to take part in the New Years' terror attack in Bosnia and also took part in recruitment.<sup>39</sup>

There is an open question, what kind of further steps should be granted in the EU application procedure of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the current stated security situation, the high level of radicalism and the emerging threats, which could be connected to local terror cells.

## SERBIA

In Serbia remarkable conflicts are noticeable behind the ethnic fault lines. There are deep antagonisms between the Bosnian and Albanian Muslims. Many young people, Bosnian and Kosovo Albanians, continue their studies in the Middle East (mostly in Saudi Arabia), and they often arrive home with the aim to spread their thoughts gained abroad as representors of radical ideologies of Wahhabism. As I mentioned before, Muslim mercenaries had already appeared in the Bosnian war on the side of UCK between 1992 and 1995. Later many of them stayed in the Balkans. Although the majority does not represent a current security threat, the radical, fundamentalist group's propaganda deeply concerns the Serbian Muslim communities.

Serbian Muslims form a relative – in some places absolute – majority in two parts of the country. In province Sandzak bordering Montenegro (to be more specific in Tuti, Novi Pazar, Sjenica and Prijepolje) Bosnian Muslims are a majority comparing to representatives of other religious and ethnic groups. The leader of the Muslim communities in province Sandzak is Mufti Muammer Zukorlić,<sup>40</sup> who not only has important role in the religious life but also takes part in politics. Since 2007, the mufti has shown direct resistance against the members of Wahhabist and other radical communities who already have tried to take over the lead of the local mosque several times, up to this point unsuccessfully.<sup>41</sup> Muammer Zukorlić emphasizes to make relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina tighter and to hold the moderate Muslim population together. In Serbia, the center of the Muslim community is in Novi Pazar, just as the groups of the followers of Wahhabist doctrines so the radicalization in the town has been noticeable since the 1990's.<sup>42</sup>

Al-Qaeda has an influence on the spread of local Wahhabist doctrines as well as ISIS, they control the permanent recruitment and grant base for planning violent attacks toward West-Europe. Mevlid Jasarevic, who attacked the Embassy of the U.S. in Sarajevo with a rifle, was a member of the local Wahhabist community, and came from Novi Pazar. The man had gotten into a conflict with western interests before, the outcome of which was that together with Fatmir Muratovic<sup>43</sup> they were arrested in 2010 by the Serbian police, after

<sup>39</sup> Toe, R. "Bosnia Arrests Six ISIS Suspects, Seizes Weapons". Balkan Insight. 12 Jan 2016. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnian-police-arrests-6-islamists-connected-with-is-01-11-2016>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>40</sup> "Muamer Zukorlić". Al Jazeera Balkans. 19 April 2012. <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/muamer-zukorlic>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Dedic, M. "Wahhabis in Sandzak Collaborate With Secret Service in Belgrade, At Whose Behest They Cause Incidents". Wikileaks. 3 Nov 2011. <https://search.wikileaks.org/gifiles/emailid/749544> Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Michaletos, I. "Balkan jihadists in Syria". 3 Oct 2013. <http://serbianna.com/analysis/archives/2362>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Also a radical member of the Wahhabist community.



they had attacked Ambassador Mary Warlick with a knife.<sup>44</sup> The number of members of the Wahhabist group in Novi Pazar has been continuously rising since 1999, and the situation is getting worse because of the flow of the fundamentalists, trained in recruitment and mediation. On the migration route through the Balkans they help the locals accountable deliver the recruited men to training camps in Syria and Iraq. Radicals of Novi Pazar have influence on the everyday life of the town, in spring 2002 for example, they encouraged local university students not to acknowledge or follow Christian traditions and after they distracted the concert of Balkanija referring to its devil side.<sup>45</sup>

In the town of Raška next to Novi Pazar Wahhabists already accomplished terror attacks in 2007. Police arrested fifteen people because of the preparation of terror attacks against the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade. According to sources, the arrested ones had close relations with radical Bosnian „mentors” and centers built in Bosnia.<sup>46</sup>

In 2007 during a similar police raid in Tmava they arrested twenty Wahhabists (for example Mirsad Prenti, Fuad Hodi, Vahid Vejselovi and Senad Vejselovi) who took part in the preparations of the terror attacks in Bosnia as well. Moreover, Tmava police eliminated a big amount of weapon supply and a military camp under the control of the Wahhabists.<sup>47</sup> According to the research of Balkanalysis, they found supplies from Kosovo which leads the experts to the conclusion that the Albanians in Kosovo (among others) might support the Serb fundamentalists in exchange for the kindle of antiserbism.<sup>48</sup>

The Albanian Muslims who are living in the southern parts of the country became a majority near Presevo, Bujanovac and Medveda. Ninety percent of the population is Muslim in the mentioned region.<sup>49</sup> In the southern part of the country, two Muslim communities are operating currently, Council of the Islamic Community/CIC and the Islamic Community of Presevo, Medvedja, and Bujanovac/ICPMB. Their members cannot be mentioned as radicals.<sup>50</sup> It signifies a problem to the Serbian government that the Albanian Muslim population is supported and supports the community in Kosovo, both in the aspect of political pressure<sup>51</sup> and – as we could see in the case of weapons in Tmava – by financial and material means. According to police data, the radical Wahhabist doctrines do not present a direct threat, but

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<sup>44</sup> Sotirovic, V. B. “Making Balkan Caliphate: The Wahhabies – A New Danger for the Balkan and European Security”. *Oriental Review*. 31 Dec 2014. <http://orientalreview.org/2014/12/31/making-balkan-caliphate-the-wahhabies-a-new-danger-for-the-balkan-and-european-security/>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Kotochevski, M. “Wahhabism in the Balkans: Islamic threat or threat to the Islam”. *Security Dialogues* 4/1. 2013. 13–14. <http://sd.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/pdf/Bezbednosni%20dijalozi%20Vol.4%20No%201%202013.pdf>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Sotirovic. “Making Balkan Caliphate: The Wahhabies – A New Danger for the Balkan and European Security”.

<sup>47</sup> Dedic. “Wahhabis in Sandzak Collaborate With Secret Service in Belgrade, At Whose Behest They Cause Incidents”.

<sup>48</sup> “Slovenian Intelligence Confirms Kosovo Link to Sandzak Arrests”. *Balkananalysis*. 12 April 2007. <http://www.balkananalysis.com/blog/2007/04/19/slovenian-intelligence-confirms-kosovo-link-to-sandzak-arrests/>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>49</sup> 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2012. <http://media.popis2011.stat.rs/2012/Nacionalna%20pripadnost-Ethnicity.pdf> Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>50</sup> “Serbia: Presevo valley Islamic community retains Kosovo ties”. *Wikileaks*. 12 June 2009. [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BELGRADE507\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BELGRADE507_a.html), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Peci, E. “Kosovo Demands 'Reciprocal Rights' for Serbian Albanians”. *Balkan Insight*. 6 June 2013. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-parliament-approves-resolution-for-presevo-valley>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

since the hostile environment and the low level of acceptance, fundamentalist doctrines could spread more easily among the Albanian Muslims, so Muslim communities in the southern part require the particular attention of the security forces.

## KOSOVO

Hundreds of Mujahedeen – having come both from abroad and from the locals – took part in the clashes between Serb forces and Muslim-majority Kosovo Albanians' armed groups.

The results, which are associated with the significant social restructuring of the still reigning conflict, are already visible: a dominant Muslim community gathered in the territory of Kosovo and there are also individuals proven to follow radical ideologies. After Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo was the origin country of the second largest amount of foreign mujahedeen in the Islamic State forces.<sup>52</sup> According to the Kosovar Center for Security Studies analysis published in 2015, 232 people were proven fighting with the Islamic State, which is thirty percent of the total number of foreign fighters. The economic and political disadvantages of which Kosovo is struggling to recover further complicated the position of the law enforcers.<sup>53</sup> The situation of education and labor market creates hopelessness among young people, so they turn away from politics and strengthen the link with religion, although they consider the spread of radical ideas the second most serious problem after organized crime.<sup>54</sup>

The NATO and EU forces stationed in Kosovo possess the antipathy of radical Wahhabist groups. This is proved by the fact that the Wahhabist unit operating Mitrovica (about 15 people, mostly Albanians in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina) tried to attack the nearby bases on several occasions.<sup>55</sup> In order to prevent the spread of fundamentalism and the similar actions, Agim Bahtiri, mayor of Mitrovica, said in a statement in 2016 that the leadership is going to take some serious steps in districts of Kosovo to counter religious extremism. Bahtiri plans to launch a project to help young people learn what extremism and radicalism means.<sup>56</sup> The radical group of Mitrovica is reportedly linked to the central unit operating in Novi Pazar, where the supply and training are also provided.<sup>57</sup>

Besides Mitrovica, Pec (Peji) settlements should also be mentioned, where many Islamic State fighters have strong connections. It can be said that in the town – and across Kosovo as well – not only the radical Wahhabist, but the Albanian Muslim, anti-Serbian population's actions are a threat. The Kosovo Police detained two persons on 16 March 2016, due to financial assistance to Albanian extremist groups which should have facilitated the joining procedure to the Islamic State. One of those arrested was Fatos Rizvanolli, a car dealership

<sup>52</sup> Besenyó J. "Not the invention of ISIS: Terrorists among immigrants". *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues* 5/1. 2015. 5–20. [http://jssidoi.org/dok/JOURNAL%20OF%20SECURITY%20AND%20SUSTAINABILITY%20ISSUES/2015%20Vol%205%20No%201%20SEPTEMBER/1%20Journal%20of%20Security%20and%20Sustainability%20Issues%20Nr\\_5\\_1\\_1%20\(2\).pdf](http://jssidoi.org/dok/JOURNAL%20OF%20SECURITY%20AND%20SUSTAINABILITY%20ISSUES/2015%20Vol%205%20No%201%20SEPTEMBER/1%20Journal%20of%20Security%20and%20Sustainability%20Issues%20Nr_5_1_1%20(2).pdf) Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Kursani, S. Report inquiring into the causes and consequences of Kosovo citizens' involvement as foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq. Kosovar Center for Security Studies, 2015. [http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Report\\_inquiring\\_into\\_the\\_causes\\_and\\_consequences\\_of\\_Kosovo\\_citizens%27\\_involvement\\_as\\_foreign\\_fighters\\_in\\_Syria\\_and\\_Iraq\\_307708.pdf](http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Report_inquiring_into_the_causes_and_consequences_of_Kosovo_citizens%27_involvement_as_foreign_fighters_in_Syria_and_Iraq_307708.pdf), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 14., 17.

<sup>55</sup> Kotochevski, M. "Wahhabism in the Balkans: Islamic threat or threat to the Islam". 11–23.

<sup>56</sup> Gecaj, K. "Deradikaliziminis me komunat". *Zeri*. 14 March 2016. <http://zeri.info/aktuale/80489/deradikaliziminis-me-komunat/>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>57</sup> "Slovenian Intelligence Confirms Kosovo Link to Sandzak Arrests".



owner in Peci, who – according to the newspaper – organized the fundamentalists' journey from Kosovo to Syria.<sup>58</sup>

Arfan Qaeder Bhatti, head of the Al-Qaeda in Pakistan visited the town, moreover, Princ Dobroshti was also a resident, who became 'famous' after the planning and undertaking the attack on the Israeli and US embassies in Oslo and because of his role in the Albanian mafia.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned, a primary recruiting and collecting point is Kacanik. From 2012 until 2015, the Telegraph has stated that a total of 24 residents traveled to Syria in order to fight with the radicals.<sup>60</sup> In the South-Kosovan town's mosque, 25-year-old Lavdrim Muhaxheri was a frequent visitor. In his early years, he took part in NATO missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo, then suddenly he seceded in 2012, and decided to join the Islamic State. He left the country and sent several recruiting messages to Syria in Albanian language, and invited the Kosovo Albanians to join the jihad.<sup>61</sup> He drew media attention when in July 2014 he beheaded a young man in a video, explaining: he did the same what the Kosovo Liberation Army / KLA would do with the spies. Also Kacanik was the hometown of 41-year-old Hetem Dema, who later joined to the forces of the Al-Nusra Front.<sup>62</sup>

Most of the emigrants had ties for a long time with Pristina, the capital as well. The first Kosovan killed in Syria (died in 2012 during fighting), Naman Demolli lived in Pristina.<sup>63</sup> Mohammad al-Arnaout, a local journalist, said the recruitment took place mainly in the "Makowitz" and "Mitrovica" mosques.<sup>64</sup> Petar Cvetkovic, head of the Serbian Military and National Security Service (VBA) claimed: Instead of Serbia, it is likely that the domestically unstable Kosovo and Metohija region will be more a favorable destination for radical individuals in the future<sup>65</sup> Regarding the future of Kosovo, we need to trust in KFOR, who stabilize the security situation and enhance the rule of democratic relations in cooperation with the local law enforcement units.

## ALBANIA

Balkan wars generated a huge influx of foreign Muslims to Albania, too. The immigrants later survived ethnic and religious conflicts, persecution of Albanians in Bosnia and Kosovo and the dynamic radicalization of religion, where Wahhabist and other fundamentalist ideologies gained ground. While considering the security of the country, we have to mention, that the particular threat is primarily the Albanian organized crime, but the Muslim country is also the focus point of the supporters of radical ideologies and terrorist organizations.

<sup>58</sup> "Biznesmeni që financoi terrorizmin". Klankosova. 17 Mar 2016. <http://klankosova.tv/biznesmeni-qe-financoi-terrorizmin/>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>59</sup> "Slovenian Intelligence Confirms Kosovo Link to Sandzak Arrests".

<sup>60</sup> Freeman, C. "Inside Kacanik, Kosovo's jihadist capital".

<sup>61</sup> "The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989/2253 Committee". UN. <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/sites/www.un.org.sc.suborg/files/1267.pdf>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Paraszczuk, J. "Report Finds Alarming Outflow Of Kosovars To Islamic State". <http://serbianna.com/blogs/michaletos/archives/1656>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Harraz, A. "Who are the Kosovar fighters in Syria?". Al Jazeera. 11 Feb 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/02/kosovar-fighters-syria-isil-iraq-kosovo-160211060736871.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Bardos, G. N. "Jihad in the Balkans: The Next Generation".

<sup>65</sup> "VBA: Islamisti na Kosovu pretnja po bezbednost". 2016. <http://www.alo.rs/vba-islamisti-na-kosovu-pretnja-po-bezbednost/38410>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

Although, at present, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are the most frequent sending countries of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, the fundamentalist ideology can be easily found among the Albanian radical mosques' visitors. According to an analysis of the Counter-Terrorism Center at West Point in 2012, five hundred ethnic Albanians fought with the Islamic State and Al-Nusra Front.<sup>66</sup>

In 2014, according to Balkan Insight data, further ninety people traveled to the training camps of the terrorist organizations.<sup>67</sup>

It poses a huge difficulty that many of the economic and educational development projects in the country were launched by Saudi Arabian assistance. These initiatives were implemented by the Saudi Joint Relief Committee for Kosovo and Chechnya (SJCRKC), which was repeatedly linked to Al-Qaeda and the radical Wahhabist ideology.<sup>68</sup> In addition to the education provided by the local imams, foreign – mostly Middle Eastern-based organizations<sup>69</sup> welcome students for different scholarships<sup>70</sup>, during which a very high chance of radicalization can be seen. This is proven by the fact that the police arrested Imam Genci Abdurrahim Balla and his partner Bujar Hysain 2014, who had been in Saudi Arabia<sup>71</sup> and having returned home began recruiting in Albania, moreover, they openly supported the Islamic State ideology, and stored and manufactured weapons as well.<sup>72</sup>

Albanian radicalization centers are located in the central parts of the country, around Tirana, Elbasan, Pogradec and Librazhd. Albania considers EU accession as priority; thereby particular attention is paid to the fight against terrorism and organized crime on international levels. The surveillance, intelligence and police forces seek to cut back the ongoing radicalization. For example, in 2014, when the city's two main mosques were under police raid<sup>73</sup>, nine persons (including the aforementioned Bujar Hysa) were arrested. The Prosecution Office for Serious Crimes condemned the nine persons for recruiting approximately seventy people and supporting terrorist organizations' operation and propaganda.<sup>74</sup> Among others, they recruited 23-year-old Ervin Hasanaj, who was able to arrange his journey to the Syrian accession through the mosque in Tirana.<sup>75</sup> Shkëlzen Dumani also came from Tirana,

<sup>66</sup> Shtuni. "Ethnic Albanian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria".

<sup>67</sup> Likmeta, B. "Arrested Albanian Imams Praise Charlie Hebdo Attack". Balkan Insight. 26 Jan 2015. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/arrested-albanian-imams-support-attack-on-charlie-hebdo>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>68</sup> Blumi, I. Political Islam among the Albanians: Are the Taliban coming to the Balkans?. 2nd Ed. Prishtina: KIPRED, 2005. [http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/Political\\_Islam\\_Among\\_the\\_Albanians\\_-\\_Are\\_the\\_Taliban\\_coming\\_to\\_the\\_Balkans\\_137060.pdf](http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/Political_Islam_Among_the_Albanians_-_Are_the_Taliban_coming_to_the_Balkans_137060.pdf), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>69</sup> For example the World Assembly of Muslim Youth

<sup>70</sup> Finnegan, W. "The Countdown: The disputed region gears up to declare independence". The New Yorker, 15 Oct 2007. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/10/15/the-countdown-2>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>71</sup> Shtuni. "Ethnic Albanian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria".

<sup>72</sup> Likmeta. "Arrested Albanian Imams Praise Charlie Hebdo Attack".

<sup>73</sup> Spahiu, E. "Ethnic Albanian Foreign Fighters and the Islamic State". Terrorism Monitor 13/10. 2015. 3–5. [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=43917&no\\_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43917&no_cache=1), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>74</sup> "Prosecution Office sent to trial the group of recruiters for conflicts in the Middle East". Prosecution Office for Serious Crimes. 2014. [http://www.pp.gov.al/web/Prosecution\\_Office\\_sent\\_to\\_trial\\_the\\_group\\_of\\_recruiters\\_for\\_conflicts\\_in\\_the\\_Middle\\_East\\_760\\_2.php#VvbXAdLhCM8](http://www.pp.gov.al/web/Prosecution_Office_sent_to_trial_the_group_of_recruiters_for_conflicts_in_the_Middle_East_760_2.php#VvbXAdLhCM8), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>75</sup> Bogdani, A. "ISIS Killed Albanian Jihadist Who Wanted Out". Balkan Insight. 22 May 2015. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/isis-killed-albanian-jihadist-who-wanted-out>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

who illegally abducted his two children (a six- and a nine-year-old) in 2014 then joined the battle in Syria and were killed during operation.<sup>76</sup>

During the current migrant wave and economic difficulties a growing audience is to be reached and more people might be convinced to pledge allegiance to the Islamic State and other radical groups by the propaganda launched in Albanian language. Many times the propaganda is built on the “common” Wahhabist ideological basis and the importance of the rise of the “Balkan traditional Islamism”. These messages are currently being held at a low level but the occasionally flaring fundamentalism should grow by the radicalization of the international situation, which can easily threaten the fragile stability of the Balkan region.

## MACEDONIA

The spread of fundamentalist doctrines in Macedonia is a significant problem for the country. Wahhabists possess growing amount of supporters, which was further increased by the significant proportion of migrants who arrived in Macedonia. The basis of the radical supporters is mostly among Albanian population, but the Bosnian Muslims of Macedonia and local Muslim communities also pose a threat. Additionally, the radical organization, named Tarikat, which bases its ideology also on the fundamentalist interpretation of Koran is highly active both in Macedonia and Montenegro.<sup>77</sup>

Radical Wahhabist doctrines are spread in the Skopje region (Tanushevci, Brest, Malino Malo and Arachinovo) and in the areas bordering Kosovo (Kumanovo, Tetovo and Gostivar), but they also have an impact on some of the larger towns (Struga, Debar, Kichevo, Radovish, Prilep, Resen and Ohrid).<sup>78</sup> The main recruiting centers in Skopje are the Yaya Pasha<sup>79</sup> and the Isa Beg mosques<sup>80</sup>, but thanks to modern recruitment methods of the radical organizations (web ads, Facebook) the problem is delocalized. In August 2001 in Gazi Baba district, the armed forces killed 19 people and nine people were arrested due to their links to the Islamic State and weapons stocks for the supply of the terrorist organization.<sup>81</sup>

The Macedonian police forces had an armed conflict in 2001 in Slupchane, where – after the local imam’s call – the operating Mujahedeen groups decided to activate. As a result, the police force observed mobilization in Nikushtak, Grushino and Arachinovo villages.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Bogdani, A. "ISIS Holding Albanian Children ‘Hostage’ in Syria". *Balkan Insight*. 4 Jan 2016. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/isis-holding-albanian-children-hostage-in-syria-01-04-2016>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>77</sup> Guskova, E. "Islamic State Coming to Balkans (II) (Not All Immigrants are Asylum Seekers)". *Strategic Culture Foundation*. 10 July 2015. <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2015/07/10/islamic-state-coming-to-balkans-ii.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>78</sup> Kotochevski. "Wahhabism in the Balkans: Islamic threat or threat to the Islam".

<sup>79</sup> Kotochevski. "Wahhabism in the Balkans: Islamic threat or threat to the Islam".

<sup>80</sup> Geteva, K. "Imams Support Reis". *Wikileaks*. 2010. [https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/11/1175852\\_re-os-macedonia-8-3-skopje-imams-back-macedonia-islamic.html](https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/11/1175852_re-os-macedonia-8-3-skopje-imams-back-macedonia-islamic.html), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>81</sup> Marusic, S. J. "Macedonia Arrests Nine ISIS Suspects". *Balkan Insight*. 7 Aug 2015. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-arrests-nine-isis-suspects-08-07-2015>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>82</sup> Petrovski, P. "Testimonials: 2001". Toronto: Risto Stefov Publications, 2015. [http://www.macedonianhistory.ca/Stefov\\_Risto/Testimonials%20-%202001%20-%20ebook.pdf](http://www.macedonianhistory.ca/Stefov_Risto/Testimonials%20-%202001%20-%20ebook.pdf), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

The Albanian paramilitary troops launched less powerful attacks against the Macedonian security forces, who responded with the available weapons at a similar level (using small arms and light artillery).<sup>83</sup>

In 2004, French expert Claude Moniquet stated, that a total of one hundred fundamentalists live and operate (recruit, train and maintain contact) in Macedonia.<sup>84</sup> Kenneth Morrison revealed five times more, who said some 550 radicals were identified in 2001 and 2002 alone. According to Kotovchevski's data, in 2001, about a hundred Mujahedeen were stationed in Lipkovo, 40 in Otlja, 35-40 in Matejcheben, 50-60 in the „center” in Tetovo.<sup>85</sup>

Although police forces are able to keep control of the situation, the radical groups do not pose an immediate danger; however, the number of immigrants may increase the amount of radical ideas' followers as well as provide material support and continue the delivery of ideology and terrorists to Western Europe. The situation in Macedonia due to the uncontrolled influx of people is significant security threat, which is not enlightened by the reigning Wahhabist doctrines and the persistent propaganda of imams, either.

## MONTENEGRO

Montenegro's geographic location makes its security situation very difficult, since the threat of the influx of radical ideologies and persons who are aiming to reach the Adriatic Sea are present from three main directions. The Muslim groups have already begun to build their small communities in the 1990s. The number of followers is still limited (comparing to the Orthodox), only 18 per cent of the Montenegrin people identified themselves as Muslims.

Due to the proximity of Novi Pazar, Muslim majority lives in the Montenegrin part of Sandzak province 'Bijelo Polje' and the northern bordering cities of Kosovo and Albania (Plav and Rozaje). According to data from Podgorica, the radical Muslim groups operating in Plav considered themselves the followers of "traditional Islam", however, based on the interpretation of the Koran and practiced style, they followed the Wahhabist ideology. The group's leader was Sead Jasavic who studied at universities in Saudi Arabia and arriving to Montenegro he started recruiting.<sup>86</sup>

The southern part of Bar County, bordering the Adriatic Sea, has also a Muslim-majority. In Podgorica, only four percent follows Islam religion.<sup>87</sup> Among them only 100 Wahhabis were recorded in 2007 by the National Security Agency of Montenegro.<sup>88</sup> Wahhabist centers can mostly be found in areas, bordering Kosovo and Serbia.

<sup>83</sup> Dimitras, P. "Daily briefing from Macedonian press about Macedonian crisis". Euro-Balkan, Institute on Macedonian Crisis. 2015. [http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/english/organizations/eurobalkan/br\\_10\\_05\\_01.html](http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/english/organizations/eurobalkan/br_10_05_01.html), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Deliso, C. "Fissures in Balkan Islam". The Christian Science Monitor. 14 Feb 2006. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0214/p06s02-woeu.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Morrison, K. "Wahhabism in the Balkans". Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 2008. [http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/50179/ipublicationdocument\\_singledocument/70c664de-0b1c-4ec2-9eb7-4158e38e87a0/en/2008\\_March\\_Wahabism.pdf](http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/50179/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/70c664de-0b1c-4ec2-9eb7-4158e38e87a0/en/2008_March_Wahabism.pdf), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>86</sup> "Radical Islam in Montenegro". Wikileaks. 2009. [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09PODGORICA171\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09PODGORICA171_a.html), Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>87</sup> "Population of Montenegro by sex, type of settlement, ethnicity, religion and mother tongue, per municipalities". Monstat. 12 July 2011. <http://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/popis2011/saopstenje/saopstenje%281%29.pdf>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>88</sup> Morrison. "Wahhabism in the Balkans".

Even though the only limited demonstrations indicate the presence of radicalism, the Montenegrin police forces permanently monitor the functioning of the potential fundamentalist groups.<sup>89</sup> They are working in close collaboration with religious leader, Rifat Fejzić, who has a serious influence on political life, so that the Muslim groups are represented at decision-making levels. In his statement Rifat Fejzić highlights the extremist doctrines condemnation and calls for a moderate practice of religious believers.<sup>90</sup>

## BULGARIA

Similarly to other states in the Balkans, Bulgaria is also affected by the growth of radical ideology. The current centers maintain close contacts with the Middle Eastern organizations, but the police forces are able to mitigate the threat posed by extremism. Thus Bulgaria is not among the prior Balkan terrorist centers.

In Bulgaria, the main center is the town of Pazardjik, or in the narrowest sense the Ebu Bekir mosque, where in November 2014 the police arrested a local imam Ahmed Moussa and his twenty partners. Moussa was charged with disseminating propaganda of the Islamic State and the Muslim Brotherhood and the technical-material support of fundamentalist (Salafist). Ahmed Moussa was originally Christian, converted to the Salafist religion in the mid-1990s in Sumitsa, Bulgaria.<sup>91</sup> In July 2015, the armed forces raised additional charges against 14 people in the near Plovdiv, Asenovgrad and Startsev because of the active support of the Islamic State ideology.<sup>92</sup>

One-sixth of the country's population is Muslim, up to now the country had no significant ethnic conflicts or extremist movements.<sup>93</sup> However, the migration and the tendency through which – with strong support of Middle Eastern investors – about a hundred and fifty new mosques were built since the 1990s, intertwined with the difficult labor market situation can lead to problems in the future.<sup>94</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Processes following the collapse of Yugoslavia and the mid-1990s Balkan crisis have given opportunity to the Mujahideens – and the accompanying ideologies – from the Middle East, to reach the unstable area of Balkans. The number of followers gradually increased, to which the lack of education and the hard situation of workers contributed as well.

<sup>89</sup> Morrison. "Wahhabism in the Balkans".

<sup>90</sup> Aldis, A. and Herd, G. *The Ideological War on Terror: Worldwide Strategies For Counter-Terrorism*. Routledge, 2006. <https://goo.gl/1aZvFN>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>91</sup> Stoilova, Z. "The Roma and the Radicals: Bulgaria's Alleged ISIS Support Base". *Balkan Insight*. 11 Jan 2016. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/the-roma-and-the-radicals-bulgaria-s-alleged-isis-support-base-01-10-2016-1>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>92</sup> „Окръжна прокуратура-Пазарджик предаде 14 лица на съд за проповядване на омраза на религиозна основа и за пропаганда за война” (Okrzhna Prokuratura Pazardzhik predade 14 lica na svi za propaganda za vojna). Pazardzhik Regional Prosecution Office. 2 July 2015. <http://www.prb.bg/bg/oppazardzhik/news/pressobsheniya/okrzhna-prokuratura-pazardzhik-predade-14-lica-n-2/>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>93</sup> Toshkov, V. "Radical Islam on rise in Balkans, raising fears of security threat to Europe". *Fox News*. 18 Sep 2010. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/09/18/radical-islam-rise-balkans-raising-fears-security-threat-europe.html>, Accessed on 28 March 2016.

<sup>94</sup> Besenyő J. "The Islamic State and its human trafficking practice". *Strategic Impact* 60/3. 2016. 15–21. [http://cssas.unap.ro/en/pdf\\_periodicals/si60.swf](http://cssas.unap.ro/en/pdf_periodicals/si60.swf), Accessed on 7 Jan 2017.

In many areas, thanks to the assistance provided by Middle-Eastern donors, Muslim communities had the opportunity to gain experience abroad, through which a number of moderate Muslims shifted to the extreme (especially Wahhabist and Salafist) doctrines, a radical interpretation of the Koran. Their teachings also gained followers among the local communities, and they built up a growing network of connections, while in several regions, followers of the fundamentalist ideology outgrew the amount of moderate Muslims.

The Balkan's Muslim leaders stress the importance of preventing radicalization and fundamentalist doctrines, but Wahhabist and Salafist groups keep the moderate Islamic centers' operation – and the state organization as a whole – under constant pressure. The politically or economically unstable areas further complicated the situation in the region, which is currently experiencing an influx of refugees, during which radicalized individuals can access local centers directly without any administration. Thereby they can provide a new boost to the local followers' work to continue fundamentalism and jihad.

The most involved states are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo, but the analysis shows that radical Islamism can be found in other states of the Western Balkans, too. The departure of recruited people to Syria and Iraq pose a continuous threat, as well as the uncontrolled influx and blending in of radicalized peoples in the originally Muslim villages, which support fundamentalist ideology. Local imams and persons engaged in recruitment are in constant communication with the terrorist organizations in the Middle East and its branches. According to their needs, constant supply is provided in the form of material support or pre-qualified fighters. A serious problem is that recruiting is not only linked to the local mosques, but to the most modern techniques, with which even for the latest techniques of the police forces is hard to fight. The armed national defense units hold the terrorist hubs under constant surveillance, and seek to arrest or eliminate the fundamentalists, in order to avoid further radicalization.

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