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**NAVAL
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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**ISLAMIST TERRORIST NETWORKS IN
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

by

Slaven Blavicki

September 2009

Thesis Co-advisors:

Mohammed M. Hafez
Zachary Shore

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ISLAMIST TERRORIST NETWORKS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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ABSTRACT

After the attacks on the United States in September 2001, Bosnia and Herzegovina acquired a reputation as a country supporting international terrorism. This perception was mostly a result of the 1992–1995 war, when foreign fighters tied to Islamist terrorist groups came to support the Bosniaks and spread radical Islam.

The thesis investigates three theories about the development or support of terrorist networks and the radicalization of society. The thesis assesses each theory's explanatory power in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The main research findings include the following. Islamist vanguards have succeeded in attracting some young Bosniaks who abandoned their traditional beliefs, accepted more a puritan and less tolerant form of Islam, and became potential manpower for Islamist extremists. Constant political confrontations among Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians representing different ethnic groups have led to political instability. The country has neither the coercive nor the administrative capacities to provide a safe and stable environment, permitting the development of terrorist cells and affiliates. Even though Bosnia and Herzegovina has a permissive environment where extremist vanguards promote radical ideologies and call for *jihād*, the Muslim population generally does not support these groups or extremist violence.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explain the relative weakness of the Islamist terrorist networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and lack of supportiveness of Bosniaks for Islamic radicalism. The research has further importance in explaining the eventual vulnerability of Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims to the Islamist ideology that might possibly lead to the creation of Bosnia and Herzegovina terrorist cells or affiliates. Better understanding of these issues can find practical application to minimize the spread of radical ideology among the Muslim population. In addition, a better understanding of the development of Islamic radicalism is a good basis for discussion or argument for the need to help countries that are potential hosts for terrorist groups by improving their counterterrorist measures. The fight against terrorists is a worldwide issue, and carefully considering the problems of a small country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina can have a positive effect on global security.

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a small multinational European country with a short but very difficult and complicated history. The country became independent in 1992, at the beginning of what was to become a four-year civil war. The war ended on December 14, 1995, when domestic political leaders, mediated by representatives of the international community, signed the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), better known as Dayton Peace Agreement. The international community and the Bosnia and Herzegovina government have accepted responsibility to stop hostilities, build trust between belligerent parties, and provide a safe, stable environment based on rule of law and democratic principles. The Dayton agreement defines Bosnia and Herzegovina as a democratic state, which consists of the two Entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska.¹

¹ “General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Annex 4, Articles 2 and 3. (Dayton, Ohio, December 14, 1995).

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, many international officials declared that Bosnia and Herzegovina provided safe haven for Islamist terrorists, mainly because of the Islamic fighters who came to support Bosniaks in the 1992–1995 war. The exact number of these foreign fighters is unknown, and most sources present conflicting numbers, which range from a few hundred to several thousand people. For instance, Stephen Schwartz operates with a large number, suggesting that 6000 foreign fighters came to Bosnia and Herzegovina.² After the war, most of the foreign fighters left the country, but some remained to live as citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to E. Kostantinova, “All had obtained Bosnian citizenship through marriage or in recognition of their role in the war. About 200 of them remain in Bosnia, many of who[m] [are] suspected of having links to Bin Laden’s al-Qa’ida network and other terrorist groups.”³ These foreigners, it is often suggested, brought with them a radical Islamic ideology that they have been trying to spread among the Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims since their arrival.

The report of the International Crisis Group for 2001 stated that Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a very attractive place for Islamist terrorists to establish networks because of the large Muslim population, weak state institutions, weak economy and poor social conditions.⁴ Therefore, it could be expected that the country’s recent independence, civil war, arrival of foreign fighters, high level of poverty, and other factors would lead to the development of terrorist cells and affiliates. This is not the case. The U. S. Congressional Research Service in 2005 stated that many experts on the issue do not see the country as a key region for harboring or funding terrorists.⁵ Also, Petter Nesser’s chronology of attempted and executed terrorist attacks by Islamist extremists in

² Stephen Schwartz, “Wahhabism and al-Qaeda in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Terrorism Monitor* 2, no. 20 (October 21, 2004), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=27034](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=27034) (accessed January 22, 2009).

³ E. Kostantinova, “Special Report: Al-Qa’ida in the Balkans, is it there or isn’t it?” *Jane’s Islamic Affairs Analyst* (March 28, 2002).

⁴ International Crisis Group, “Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-Terrorism,” *ICG Balkans Report* no. 119 (November 9, 2001), 2. <http://se2.isn.ch/serviceengine/FileContent?serviceID=10&fileid=385DC0AF-E1A0-CF33-A7FF-C0F65D7317C2&lng=en/> (accessed January 22, 2009).

⁵ Steven Woehrel, “Islamic Terrorism and Balkans,” *CRS Report for Congress* (July 26, 2005), 1.

Europe from 1994 to 2007 shows that Bosniaks were involved in less than three percent of those incidents, and in no cases involving direct execution of terrorist acts. Indeed, they were only suspected of terrorist activities.⁶

Among the many theories explaining the origins of insurgent violence, the three theories most often posited as explanations of how terrorism emerges and spreads are the theory of socio-political grievances, the ideological theory, and the permissive state theory. The question is, what does the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina tell us about the explanatory power of these theories? Can these theories explain the relative weakness of Islamist terrorist networks in Bosnia?

B. HYPOTHESES

To answer these questions, the thesis investigates the three main theories that define the roots and necessary conditions for developing or supporting terrorist networks and radicalizing a society, and discusses their applicability in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The theory of socio-political grievances claims that terrorism is a direct consequence of grievances caused by foreign policies and domestic or foreign conflicts. Politically excluded masses are galvanized and adopt violence as a means to bring issues to the attention of the international community or to destabilize domestic or foreign enemies.⁷

The ideological theory claims that terrorism is motivated by extreme interpretations of religious traditions, doctrines and sacred texts, where violence toward real or perceived enemies is justified as a holy duty.⁸

⁶ Petter Nesser, "Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994–2007: Planned, Prepared, and Executed Terrorist Attacks," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, no. 31 (2008): 924–946.

⁷ Petter Nesser, "Jihadism in Western Europe After the Invasion of Iraq: Tracing Motivational Influences from the Iraq War on Jihadist Terrorism in Western Europe," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 4 (June 2006): 323–342.

⁸ David C. Rapoport, "Sacred terror: A contemporary example from Islam," in *Origins of Terrorism*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 103–130.

The permissive state theory claims that weak or failing states produce conditions attractive for establishing international terrorist networks and recruiting new followers because of their political instability and their coercive and administrative incapacity.⁹

C. IMPORTANCE

Radical Islam is an increasing concern among the world's population, and no country with a Muslim population is immune to this issue. Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the countries where radical Islamic elements are present. Radical Islam has been evolving slowly but steadily.¹⁰ If radical Islam becomes more accepted by the Bosniak population, there is a greater chance that some radicalized Muslims would be recruited by Islamist terrorist organizations. As a consequence of radicalization, Bosnia and Herzegovina could easily lose its chance to become a stable country and thus would forever remain in the "lobby" of the European community, never achieving the conditions necessary for membership in the European Union.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. General

Islamism is "a radical anti-secular and anti-Western political current of contemporary Islamic thought with both revolutionary and revivalist character."¹¹ The major characteristics of the Islamism are a virulent rejection of secular democratic values, intransigent resistance to any "infidel" social, political, economic or cultural influences over the Muslim world, an extreme hostility toward less committed and non-militant Muslims (who are often labeled as "apostates" or "unbelievers") and a demand for the creation of an Islamic state, or Islamic order, governed by a strict, puritanical

⁹ James A. Piazza, "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?" *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 469.

¹⁰ Sara Babic, "Bosni prijeti opasnost of Vehabista," *Nacional*, no. 561, August 14, 2006. <http://www.nacional.hr/clanak/27003/bosni-prijeti-opasnost-od-vehabista/> (accessed January 22, 2009).

¹¹ Jeffrey Bale, "Islamism," in *Encyclopedia of Bioterrorism Defense*, ed. Ricahrd F. Pilch and Raymond A Zilinskas (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2005), 296.

interpretation of Islam.¹² There are two subgroups of Islamism, gradualist and *jihadist*. The main distinction between the two is how they achieve their ideological goals. Generally, gradualists' approach is based on the Islamization of society by educating Muslims about Islam, influencing their consciousness, and infiltrating and Islamizing state institutions. Although gradualists can establish secret armed groups, the violent approach is more common among *jihadists*, who “advocate the waging of *jihad*, in the sense of an armed struggle against unbelievers (*kuffar*).”¹³ While the two subcategories differ in strategy, they both consider radicalization of the society as a necessary first step to achieve their objectives. According to the definition given by Netherland General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), radicalization is

the (active) pursuit of and/or support to far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect).¹⁴

While not inevitable, it is possible that the radicalization process will result in extremist violence. There is a small and yet important distinction between radicalization and extremist violence; small because the radicalization can result in extremist violence, and important because some radicals never adopt violence as a strategy for accomplishing their objectives. Understanding terrorism is not possible without an understanding of the process of radicalization.

Scholars disagree on the origins of terrorism. Some find the roots of terrorism in political, socioeconomic, or religious dimensions, while others propose alternate views. The most relevant theories for the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina are the theory of socio-political grievances, the theory that terrorism is motivated by religion, and the theory that state permissiveness allows the growth of terrorist elements.

¹² Bale, 296–298.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 297.

¹⁴ AIVD: General Intelligence and Security Service, *From Dawat to Jihad*, December 2004, 14. <http://www.minbzk.nl/contents/pages/42345/fromdawatojihad.pdf> (accessed June 28, 2009).

2. Theory of Socio-Political Grievances

The theory of socio-political grievances states that grievances caused by internal or external factors alienate the population from the status quo. In attempting to bring the issue to the attention of the responsible authorities, the alienated masses, manipulated by radical vanguards, sometimes decide to use violence as a means of communication.

While some scholars uphold the theory that external influences cause radicalization, others relate radicalization to the issues caused by internal conflict and post conflict injustice. Gabriel Sheffer argues that diasporas and “other” groups are more likely to support terrorism, where “others” include anti-globalists, refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, newly arrived migrants, organized trans-state ethno-national diasporas, and cultural and religious transnational dispersals. Support for violence can be motivated by expulsion from one’s country of origin, struggles for separation and independence, discrimination, and legal and political persecution.¹⁵ However, political grievances alone do not cause people to advocate violence as a means of communication. According to Mohammed M. Hafez, “the absence of institutional channels for conflict mediation and political contestation encourages rebellion by delegitimizing the ruling regime and disempowering moderate voices within the movement.”¹⁶ Socio-political grievances together with political blockages increase the likelihood of political violence.

The theory of socio-political grievances implies that the grievances of Bosnia and Herzegovina Bosniaks developed as a result of international and American foreign policies toward themselves or other nations with whom Bosniaks identify. Grievances associated with the civil war alienate some Bosniaks. Lacking domestic political channels to express their grievances in Bosnia and Herzegovina, dissatisfied Bosniaks become more prone to adopting violence as a means of drawing attention to their issues.

¹⁵ Gabriel Sheffer, “Diasporas and Terrorism,” in *The Roots of Terrorism*, ed. Louise Richardson, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 117–129.

¹⁶ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel* (Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2003), 27.

3. Terrorism Motivated by Religion

Many scholars argue that religion plays a role in initiating extremist violence; indeed religion is more often used to give violence a sacred dimension and justify it as a fight between good and evil. Mark Juergensmeyer argues that “religious language and ideas play an important role [in religious violence] but not necessarily the initial one.”¹⁷ However, in analyzing different religious extremist groups, Juergensmeyer discovers several common ideological components. First, there is “the perception that the modern idea of secular nationalism was insufficient in moral, political, and social terms.” Second, all group members “felt personally upset with what they regarded as the oppression of the secular state.” Finally, all of them justify violence by the idea of cosmic war.¹⁸ Even if religion is mostly used to justify or intensify violence initially caused by social, economic and political factors, there is still room to argue that some religious extremist groups base their violence on theological motivations, attempting to establish a new order inspired by sacred text.

Extremism can be found in any religion, but Islamist extremism is the most recent. Islamist extremists see waging *jihad* against unbelievers as an obligation of every Muslim. This war, they believe, started in the time of Muhammad, and will end when all those who reject Islam are either converted or killed. The conflict between Islamist extremists and everybody who does not share their ideology already exists. Their strategy for achieving their objectives depends upon their strength and having a supportive environment. It can vary from extremists acting as gradualists who educate the population about Islam, to establishing secret armed groups, to open confrontation with the enemy. Susanna Pearce says that religious doctrines, religious organizations, and a religious diasporas correlate directly with the intensity of the religious conflicts.¹⁹

¹⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, “Religion as a Cause of Terrorism,” in *The Roots of Terrorism*, ed. Louise Richardson (New York: Routledge, 2006), 139.

¹⁸ Juergensmeyer, 140–141.

¹⁹ Susanna Pearce, “Religious Sources of Violence,” in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes, Volume III: Root Causes*, ed. James J. F. Forest (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 111.

Keeping in mind that Islamist extremists can exist on the margins of almost any society, these three elements can be considered factors that influence their strength and societal acceptance.

The rise of Islamist extremists in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be expected if marginalized elements, supported by internal or external players, successfully indoctrinate the masses and recruit followers and supporters from among the newly-radicalized Muslims. In this case, the country would have the potential to serve as an Islamist extremist sanctuary.

4. Theory of Permissive Environment

Permissive environments for the rise of terrorism are primarily related to weak state institutions that are incapable and ineffective at performing their duties. According to Erica Chenoweth, “[P]olitical stability of the existing regime is the most significant factor affecting the origins of terrorism.”²⁰ Chenoweth argues that because of their negative impact on state institutional mechanisms, politically unstable regimes are more likely than stable regimes to provide permissive environments where terrorist organizations can develop.²¹ There are four basic categories defining the strength of a state: strong, weak, failed and collapsed. The strength of the state is determined by its ability to deliver political goods to its citizens. Political goods include human security, prevention of cross border threats and domestic crime, mechanisms for citizens to resolve disagreements, rule of law, ways for citizens to participate in politics and political processes, education, medical and health care systems, physical and communications infrastructure, banking systems, and the promotion of civil society.²² The state’s ability to provide such goods is directly influenced by the stability of the political system. James A. Piazza relates state weakness to the inability to project power throughout its own territory; such states are under constant threat of civil war, secession and internal power

²⁰ Erica Chenoweth, “Instability and Opportunity: The Origins of Terrorism in Weak and Failed States,” in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes, Volume III: Root Causes*, ed. James J. F. Forest (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 17.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 18–19.

struggles. In addition, weak states cannot provide basic security, economic stability, effective bureaucracy or judicial institutions.²³ Therefore, weak and failed states are more likely to host terrorist groups, are more often under terrorist attack, provide more new recruits for terrorist groups, and are more attractive environments for establishing bases from which terrorists can operate abroad.²⁴

The theory of permissive environment fits the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina if it is assumed that the constant confrontations among Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians erodes state institutions and the mechanisms for providing basic goods to citizens. As a result, the state would be unable to efficiently control its borders or its entire territory, the level of corruption would be very high, bureaucracy would slow and ineffective. The country would be economically unstable and the rule of law would not be effective. With political elements supporting radical ideologies, Bosnia and Herzegovina might be seen as a country that provides space for terrorist vanguards to recruit new followers and establish bases from which they can operate abroad.

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

This thesis is a case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its Muslim population in relation to Islamist terrorism. To answer the research question, the thesis investigates three hypotheses about the development of or support for terrorist organizations and the radicalization of society in order to determine which approach best explains the absence of Islamic radicalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although many scholars have written about Bosnia and Herzegovina and the war in the early 1990s, only few describe the recent situation in the country with regard to terrorist activities and the spread of Islamic radicalism.

Furthermore, Bosnia and Herzegovina's capabilities for electronically published journals and other publications are still very limited. Recent scholarly works are only partially available. In addition, the academic behavior of local scholars is an important

²³ Piazza, 470.

²⁴ Ibid., 471.

consideration. Some literature is very biased and contains nationalist rhetoric. Therefore, use of local sources is a sensitive matter requiring an impartial and unemotional approach to gathering information. However, consideration of local sources, with their inside information and perspectives, is necessary for a full understanding of the situation.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

Chapter I provides a brief background on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina with regard to Islamic radicalism and terrorism and presents several hypotheses about the roots of terrorism. Each hypothesis is supported by various scholars. The chapter describes what each theory means in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Chapter I also discusses the methodology of the thesis research and the importance of an impartial and unbiased approach to sources.

Chapter II tests the theory that internal and external political factors cause insurgent violence. The first factor is related to the creation of the grievances among the Muslim population by foreign policies toward Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in other countries. The internal factors mainly involve the consequences of the war on relations among different ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the eventual development of grievances among Bosniaks. Bosniaks, the majority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina population, have to share power equally with Croats and Serbs. Their grievances could be caused by the post-war distribution of power based on the size of the ethnic group, with concurrent power-sharing equality among the three majority ethnic groups. In addition, the return of the Bosniaks expelled during the war by Serbs or Croats has been very slow and difficult. Together with slow post-conflict justice, the distribution of power could cause Bosniaks to turn to a radical approach in seeking for justice or even revenge. Fortunately, there is no political party or strong self-organized group with an extremist ideology that might manipulate the alienated Bosniaks, organize armed groups and try to resolve the current issues with violence. The Bosniaks are still waiting patiently for their problems to be resolved by legal and peaceful means through the country's democratic institutions.

Chapter III discusses a religious explanation of insurgency and the spread of radical Islam among Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims. The radical ideology came to Bosnia and Herzegovina with Islamic foreign fighters and humanitarian organizations. Some donors from Islamic countries built religious facilities that preach a version of Islam quite different from that normally heard by moderate Bosniaks. Facing a religious revival after living in a communist regime for half a century, and in search of a national identity, some Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims became vulnerable to imported ideologies. Guided by radicals from the Middle East and southwest Asia, radicalized Bosniaks became promoters of Islamism. To convey their message and attract more followers, the radicalized Bosniaks created many Web sites promoting *jihād* and anti-Western ideology. In addition, several organizations, mostly consisting of young people, have tried to convince moderate Bosniaks to abandon their traditional Islamic practice, characterized as corrupted and deviant, and adopt a puritanical and uncorrupted form of Islam as practiced by the prophet Muhammad. The Bosniak population has been manipulated not only by foreign elements, but also by insiders who have taken advantage of the public's vulnerability during its search for a national identity. Encouraging adherence to religious and cultural practices that differ from those practiced by moderate Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims, these insiders try to make visible the differences between Bosniaks and other ethnic groups in order to separate the Muslims and make them more vulnerable to manipulation. Alienated Muslims have been used as a tool to achieve various political and personal agendas under the guise of national identity and religion. Some of the most recent incidents involving radicalized young Bosniaks are described in this chapter.

Chapter IV tests the theory that weak states produce conditions attractive for establishing international terrorist networks and recruiting new followers. The purpose of the chapter is to describe conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and determine if the country has permissive environment for establishing or supporting Islamic radicals and terrorist groups. As a result of the war, the country's social, economic and political capacities have been so devastated that the country has for years been a weak state. The county is characterized as politically unstable due to constant political confrontations

between a few of the most important politicians representing different ethnic groups whose rhetoric is not supportive of the Bosnia and Herzegovina multiethnic environment. Lacking unity within the political elite, the country has faced negative consequences for years, which are evident in its poor coercive and administrative capabilities. Corruption is everywhere. Security institutions, incapable or ignorant of how to deal with destabilizing elements, are directly or indirectly responsible for the permissive environment. The chapter reviews the Bosniak political elite's support of the inflow of radicalism, their past attempts to create an Islamic state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their existence in political, religious and most other spheres of the Bosnia and Herzegovina society today. The chapter provides a better understanding of why Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing destabilizing elements even in the nearly fifteen years after the end of the war.

The thesis concludes with Chapter V, which argues that Islamic radicals have found weak support among the Bosnia and Herzegovina Bosniak population. Even with many of the necessary conditions for the development of Islamist extremism, most Bosniaks do not support radical Islam and the radical influences from other Islamic countries. The Bosniak population seems unwilling to abandon its traditional moderate Islamic practices and has not adopted violent strategies to satisfy its grievances. It seems that all the theories on the origins of terrorism discussed in the thesis fail in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Analysis of societies similar to Bosnia and Herzegovina should perhaps start by considering why some societies are not supportive of radicalization and extremist violence. For further research, the most important variables influencing Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims' lack of support for radical ideologies and Islamist terrorism probably include prolonged coexistence with other religious groups, high literacy rates, the practice of moderate Islam, belief in and support for democratic values, and a sense of belonging to an area in which people share common values.

II. TERRORISM ROOTED IN SOCIO-POLITICAL GRIEVANCES

A. INTRODUCTION

One theory defining the roots of terrorism is the theory of socio-political grievances. The theory of socio-political grievances says that terrorism is a direct consequence of grievances caused by foreign policies and domestic or foreign conflicts where, due to political exclusion, galvanized masses adopt violence as a means to gain the attention of the international community or to destabilize foreign or domestic elements supporting the enemy.²⁵

The theory of socio-political grievances implies that some of the Bosniak population would develop grievances in response to the policies of the international community and the United States toward Bosnia and Herzegovina and other nations or ethnic groups with whom Bosniaks identify, and also as a consequence of the 1992–1995 war among the Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. Their inability to participate in the political system and bring these issues to the attention of responsible authorities could cause some Bosniaks to become too alienated. Manipulated by extremist vanguards, they might turn to violence as a means of communication.

This chapter discusses the grievances caused by external and internal factors that could eventually lead to the radicalization of a majority of the Bosniak population, the existence of counter-elite elements who could become armed elements of political parties or vanguards of terrorist organizations, and the openness of the Bosnia and Herzegovina political system.

B. EXTERNAL FACTORS

1. Foreign Policies Toward Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims

The Former Yugoslavia greeted the 1990s with tensions among its ethnic groups. The level of tension was so high that it was obvious that disagreements and the secession

²⁵ Nesser, "Jihadism in Western Europe after the Invasion of Iraq."

of the Yugoslav republics would not proceed peacefully. The secession of Slovenia in June 1991 ended with ten-day war. Attempts by Croatia to secede ended in the occupation of more than a third of its territory by Serbs supported by the Yugoslavian People's Army (YPA).

On Sept. 25, 1991, the United Nations [UN] imposed an arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia for the ostensible purpose of promoting peace and security in the Balkans. But for over three-and-a-half years the embargo has failed to achieve its objectives. Instead, it has made possible ethnic cleansing, genocide and the dismantling of a member state of the UN.²⁶

In Bosnia and Herzegovina alone, during the 1992–1995 war, about 100,000 people were killed, tens of thousands of women were raped, many prisoners of war were mistreated, and more than two million people were displaced. Bosniaks suffered most of the casualties. “An UN-imposed arms embargo guaranteed that a well-armed Serbia could annex territory and expel over a million civilians while facing only limited resistance.”²⁷ The Bosniaks and Croats at the beginning of the war were unarmed and unprepared, while the Bosnia and Herzegovina Serbs were well armed, equipped, and well organized.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Serbs controlled weaponry belonging to the YPA and received assistance from neighboring Serbia. Most of the commanding cadres of the Serb forces were the YPA career officers, well trained and organized. Bosnia and Herzegovina Croats turned to their second motherland, Croatia, which sent them aid. Only the Bosniaks had no one to turn to. When the international community, particularly the United Nations and United States, failed to stop the conflict and the suffering of innocent victims, the Bosniaks had good reason to feel abandoned. There are many theories explaining the wavering policy of the UN and U.S. toward the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but one is especially interesting. Paul R. Pillar says,

²⁶ Paul R. Williams, “Why the Bosnian Arms Embargo Is Illegal,” *Public International Law and Policy Group* (June 15, 1995), <http://www.publicinternationallaw.org/publications/editorials/Bosnian%20Arms%20Embargo.htm> (accessed April 10, 2009).

²⁷ Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz, “Why Bosnia?” *Third World Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (September 1994), 369. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3993291> (accessed August 17, 2009).

Many critics believe the United States pursues policies that hurt the interests of Muslims not just because this is an unfortunate by-product of foreign policies formulated for other reasons, but because the United States wants to hurt Muslims. Some even believed that Washington kept aloof from the Bosnian war as long as it did because it was happy to see Serbs kill off Muslims.²⁸

When Robert Fisk made his journey to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993, several Bosniaks, officials and ordinary people alike, expressed their opinion about the international community's lack of interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina, saying they felt abandoned. They said they did not blame the international community and the U.S. for failing to prevent the conflict, but for failing to stop it.²⁹ Years later, radicalized Bosniaks still blame the U.S. not only for not stopping the war, but also for stopping it when Muslim forces became strong enough to win.

The U.S. did help the Muslims by imposing sanctions on their principal enemy, the Serbs, and hitting Serb positions with air strikes toward the end of the war. But Islamists argue that when Washington intervened with a peace settlement after Muslim troops overran Serb lines, the move was designed to abort a probable Muslim victory.³⁰

2. Foreign Policies Toward Worldwide Muslim Communities

Paul R. Pillar says that “a superpower’s foreign policy matters to the would-be terrorist insofar as he (or she) sees it as affecting either his immediate daily life and welfare or a larger community—usually one defined in terms of religion or ethnicity—from which he derives his identity.”³¹ According to his theory, the external factors that could produce grievances in Bosnia and Herzegovina might be related to ongoing conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Middle East.

²⁸ Paul R. Pillar, “Superpower Foreign Policies: A Source for Global Resentment,” in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes, Volume III: Root Causes*, ed. James J. F. Forest (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 37.

²⁹ *Beirut to Bosnia: Part III*, written and presented by Robert Fisk, directed by Michael Dutfield, Discovery Channel Production, 1994, documentary film.

³⁰ Yaroslav Trofimov, “Seeds of Hate: In Postwar Bosnia, Militant Islam Turns U.S. Allies to Enemies,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 18, 2002, Eastern Edition, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed August 17, 2009).

³¹ Pillar, 33–34.

The interest in happenings among the worldwide Muslim community was not always present among the Bosniak population, at least not at the scale seen today. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina strengthened relations between Bosniaks and other Muslim societies, especially those in the Middle East. With the failure of the international community to protect them, and lacking assistance from other countries, the Bosniak population barely survived the war. The Bosniak political elite, lead by Alija Izetbegovic, seized the opportunity to strengthen relations with Islamic countries and ask for help. Very quickly, support in the form of weaponry and manpower started arriving in the country. The real reasons why some Islamic countries so eagerly assisted Bosniaks remain unclear. While many Bosniaks believe that Muslims' humane sensitivity toward those in need is the only reason why Islamic countries were eager to assist, others believe that beyond the humanitarian concern is an attempt to create an Islamic state in Europe and spread their own influence on European soil.

Either way, it was the beginning of a new friendship between Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims and worldwide Muslim communities. Since then, the Bosniaks have seen some of these as kin countries, always ready to offer help. As a result, some Bosniaks have come to identify themselves with Muslims from around the world. This identification is especially evident with regard to the Palestinian-Israeli issue and Israeli operations against Palestinian insurgents that have killed civilians, women and children more often than militants.

The Palestinian question is a sore point in the hearts of the vast majority of Muslims. The injustice to the people of Palestine, with the dissolution and occupation of their country, and the daily humiliation that Palestinians experience in their country, awaken deep emotions, not only in the Arab world, but also on every corner where Muslims live, and-not to be forgotten-a great number non-Muslims.³²

Some Bosniaks identify their suffering during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the sufferings of Muslims in the Middle East. The Bosniaks represent 66.11 percent of the total casualties from the Bosnia and Herzegovina war, of which 40 percent were

³² Emir Sinanovic, "Drustveno-politicka strujanja u modernom islamskom svijetu," *Bosanski alim*, <http://www.bosanskialim.com> (accessed January 30, 2009).

civilians.³³ It is understandable that some feel sorry for Palestinian victims and want to help them, as they themselves were helped during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosniaks typically express their sympathies for Palestinians with peaceful demonstrations and events organized in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Recently, a Bosnia and Herzegovina humanitarian organization called *Merhamet* collected money to help the Palestinian people facing a humanitarian catastrophe after Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip. Professor Fahrudin Rizvanbegovic, a member of *Merhamet*, appealed to Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens to do at least what Palestinians had done for Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1992-1995 war. “‘We can do more. Our situation is now better than theirs when they were helping us,’ said Professor Rizvanbegovic.”³⁴

Some Bosnia and Herzegovina Bosniaks are dissatisfied with the constant conflict, Israeli operations, and the common belief that the international community is unwilling to act seriously to resolve the issue. These grievances are caused not only by the indifference of the international community, but also by the indifference of the Bosnia and Herzegovina government and its weak attempt to send a message to the international community in support of the Palestinians.

The Palestinian issue is just one example among the many worldwide cases that can shape public opinion and help alienate people from the status quo. The U.S. intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Bosnia and Herzegovina government’s hesitation to recognize the independence of Kosovo are additional examples that may also be important factors. Aleksandar Fatic expresses skepticism about the Balkan Muslim population’s rejection of terrorism.

One of the reasons for relative skepticism regarding this issue is a predictable reaction of Muslim population to aggressive American political and military threats, which has taken the form of a declared “war against terrorism,” when it is simply a chain of international aggressions in the worst tradition of occupations during World War II. The occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan

³³ Slavica Đukic, “Establishing the Number of Victims in the Yugoslav Wars of Succession,” *Bosnia Report*, The Bosnian Institute, New Series no. 55–56, January – July 2007 http://www.bosnia.org.uk/bosrep/report_format.cfm?articleid=3175&reportid=173 (accessed on March 1, 2009).

³⁴ Federalna Novinska Agencija, “20.000 KM pomoci palestinskom narodu,” *Fena.ba*, January 1, 2009, <http://www.sarajevo-x.com/clanak/090106046> (accessed February 26, 2009).

are examples of this trend, and American hawk rhetoric continues to develop toward Syria, Libya, and Iran. If the American aggression continues, it will be only matter of time before Muslim population in the Balkans will conclude that worldwide terrorism is the only possible way to resist the American offensive against Islamic countries.³⁵

Considering the external factors, any violent act committed by radicalized members of the Bosniak community would have the purpose of sending a message that the neglect of Muslims' suffering in the Middle East cannot be tolerated, and to force the Bosnia and Herzegovina government and the international community to take the situation seriously and protect Middle East Muslims.

C. INTERNAL FACTORS

1. Distribution of Power

The 1991 census puts the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina at 4.3 million, of which 41 percent are identified as Muslim, 31.4 percent as Serb, 17.3 percent as Croat, and 7.6 percent as other.³⁶ Even though the Bosniaks are a majority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina population, power at the state level is equally divided among the Bosniaks, the Croats and the Serbs. In order to be implemented, all decisions must be accepted by consensus, and the Bosniaks do not have any advantage over the others. Indeed, they are at a disadvantage. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Serbs and Croats both can rely on their “motherlands,” Serbia and Croatia. Almost all have dual citizenship and rights in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and their “motherland” countries. On the other hand, the Bosniaks can rely only on Bosnia and Herzegovina as their motherland. Therefore, any destabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina would have a bigger impact on the Bosniak population than on the Croats and Serbs, who can easily find support in neighboring countries, as they did during the 1992–1995 war.

³⁵ Aleksandar Fatic, “Organizovani kriminal i obrisi nove strukture bezbednosti u jugoistocnoj Evropi,” *Medjunarodni problem* 56, no. 1 (2004): 56–78, <http://scindeks-clanci.nb.rs/data/pdf/0025-8555/2004/0025-85550401056F.pdf> (accessed January 30, 2009).

³⁶ Martha Walsh, “Aftermath: The Impact of Conflict on Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Center for Development Information and Evaluation, U.S. AID, Washington Working Paper no. 302 (July 2000) http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACJ322.pdf (accessed on March 1, 2009).

Generally, Bosnia and Herzegovina Serbs and Croats do not feel the same degree of nationalist sentiment toward Bosnia and Herzegovina as the Bosniaks. Actually, it seems that most of them have accepted Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state only because they have to. They do not cheer for Bosnia and Herzegovina national sports teams; indeed, they celebrate Bosnia and Herzegovina's losses and the victories of others. Many of them would leave the country if they could. The Bosniaks are frustrated by the behavior of Croats and Serbs who work against the country's stability and prosperity. The Bosniaks can do nothing to make the situation better. They believe that the Croats and Serbs should either decide to accept Bosnia and Herzegovina as their only homeland, with all its advantages and disadvantages, and cut their ties with neighboring countries, or go back to their "motherlands" and place the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Bosniak hands.

2. Consequences of the 1992–1995 War

The Bosnia and Herzegovina war created the greatest human suffering in Europe since World War II.³⁷ During the war, about a hundred thousand people were killed, hundreds of thousands were affected, and half of the population was displaced. The suffering of Bosnians and Herzegovinians did not stop with the end of the war. Actually, there are serious concerns that the current Bosnia and Herzegovina political establishment is not fully committed to minimizing the negative consequences of the war. Nearly fifteen years after the war, the return process and the inefficiency of post conflict justice continue to frustrate many Bosniaks.

a. The Return Process

During the war, about two million people were displaced, half of the Bosnia and Herzegovina population. When the war was stopped in 1995, the political representatives agreed that the return process would be a priority for post-conflict rehabilitation. However, the process has been very slow and aggravated by many factors.

³⁷ Ginanne Brownell, "Bosnia Reborn," *Newsweek.com*, August 7, 2006, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu> (accessed April 2, 2009).

Much of the refugees' property was destroyed during the war as collateral damage or systematically, after the war, to prevent the return of non-Serbs to their homes. The destruction of property and homes is not confined to the Serbs; it was done by Bosniaks and Croats as well. However, most refugees were expelled from the Republic of Srpska and most were Bosniaks. Neither the state nor the entities have exerted maximum effort to help people to return to their homes and end their refugee status. Those who receive help and return home face problems getting jobs or socializing with locals simply because of their ethnic backgrounds. Families with children face additional problems because there is no single educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but rather three, based on the ethnic majority in each locality. For example, Muslim children in the Republic of Srpska must attend classes structured according to the Serb program, learn Serb history, celebrate Serb holidays and learn the Serbian language. Often, these children are subject to harassment by their non-Muslim colleagues. This behavior is not present only among the Serb population.

In the central and southeastern parts of the country [in 2006], Muslim schoolchildren are segregated from Catholic kids in 52 schools. When administrators in one such district tried to integrate a school playground, they received so many threatening phone calls that they scrapped the plan.”³⁸

Tens of thousands of Bosniaks have been living in exile for almost 15 years, and many believe that their political representatives are unable or unwilling to help them. In addition, there is strong resentment among Bosniaks toward the general policies of the Republic of Srpska, which does not seem to support the return process.

b. Post-Conflict Justice

Another issue that can be considered a source of grievance among the Bosniak population is their suffering during the war and the slow process of bringing alleged war criminals to justice. The total number of war victims is estimated at around

³⁸ Brownell.

100,000.³⁹ Among these, about 65,000 were Bosniaks and 40 percent of the victims were civilians. In Srebrenica, a small town within the UN protected zone, Serb forces executed between 7,000 and 8,000 men and boys in July 1995 as a part of the genocide against the Bosniaks.⁴⁰ In Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war, thousands of women were raped, and thousands of Bosniaks were tortured in detainee camps, mostly located in the Republic of Srpska. Many surviving victims know who was responsible for these crimes, and they are waiting for the day when their perpetrators will be brought to the justice. However, justice is sometimes very slow. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the local courts have limited capabilities, which causes some trials to last for years. For instance, the ICTY brought the indictment against Serbian radical leader Vojislav Seselj in 2003 for murdering, torturing, and deporting non-Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war. Seselj showed up at The Hague in 2006. In 2009, more than 14 years after the crimes were committed, the trial is still ongoing. A second case, even more important to Bosniaks, involves General Ratko Mladic. Mladic was the Chief of Staff of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Serb Army during the war, and one of the persons most responsible for the Srebrenica massacre and siege of Sarajevo. The ICTY indicted Mladic on charges of genocide, complicity in genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war. Unfortunately, General Mladic is still at large.

D. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND COUNTER-ELITE ELEMENTS

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a democratic state that operates under the rule of law with free and democratic elections and a political system that promotes human rights and fundamental freedoms. According to Mohammed Hafez, a political system is “the set of formal institution of the state—parliaments, government ministries, policy-implementing agencies—and informal channels, procedures, and ‘policy styles’ by which the state elite

³⁹ Slavica Lukic, “Utvrđivanje stvarnog broja poginulih i nestalih u ratovima na prostoru bivše Jugoslavije,” *NewsVoA.com*, February 12, 2007, <http://www.voanews.com/croatian/archive/2007-02/2007-02-12-voa9.cfm> (accessed March 15, 2009).

⁴⁰ Helge Brunborg, Torkild Hovde Lyngstad and Henrik Urdal, “Accounting for Genocide: How Many Were Killed in Srebrenica?” *European Journal of Population* 19, no. 3 (July 1, 2003): 229–248.

governs.”⁴¹ The political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is open and provides opportunities for political participation to everyone who follows democratic values.

However, counter–elite elements exist in every society, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. They try to exploit grievances and radicalize the masses in order to achieve their goals. Although a few political parties are multinational and have a social agenda, Bosnia and Herzegovina political parties are mostly based on ethnic background. These national parties have won almost every election since the collapse of the socialist regime and the one-party system. Some use popular grievances to manipulate the masses in order to gain support in confrontations with their opponents. Usually, political parties point to social problems to gain support for change and improvement. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, pointing out problems means reminding the population of their wartime suffering and ethnic differences. The Bosnia and Herzegovina population, and especially the Bosniaks, is constantly reminded of the war, which seriously undermines their ability to build trust and confidence toward the other ethnic groups. Nonetheless, all these political parties seem to support democratic processes. Their programs are based on democratic values of freedom, equal rights and opportunities for all citizens.

1. The Patriotic League

At the start of the war, the Party of Democratic Actions (SDA), the Bosniak national political party founded in 1990, had a military branch, the Patriotic League. John R. Shindler argues that,

the Patriotic League was created as the SDA’s private militia, not as a Bosnian force; its officers were selected by the party, and it was established to serve Izetbegovic and his cause.⁴²

Even though the group declared its objective as the protection of Bosnia and Herzegovina sovereignty, its members usually expressed their patriotism by attacking the non-Muslim population. Because many criminal elements joined the Patriotic League,

⁴¹ Hafez, 27.

⁴² John R. Schindler, *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qa’ida, and the Rise of Global Jihad* (St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2007), 70.

the group seeded fear among the citizens of Sarajevo, where the Patriotic League was the strongest. The group was formed with support from Islamic countries, but its agenda, with a strong Bosniak nationalist sentiment, never took on a religious character. The Patriotic League existed until 1992, when the Bosnia and Herzegovina Bosniak government created the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the group was merged into the new military organization.

Some elements of the Patriotic League still exist. The organization has a Web site, www.plbih.org, which serves as a virtual platform for assembling Bosnia and Herzegovina patriots in the country and abroad. The organization declares itself a nonprofit, nonparty organization whose goals are supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign country, but there are indications of a hidden agenda of Bosniak nationalism.

[Indeed], in its efforts to engage and actively participate in preserving the integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Patriotic League is committed to [among other goals] a better future for Bosnia and Bosniaks, [not mentioning future of other ethnic groups existing in the country].⁴³

E. CONCLUSION

Obviously, some Bosniaks see themselves as a part of the worldwide Muslim community and have developed an interest in happenings in Muslim world. This sense of belonging increased during the war, when Bosniaks, abandoned by Western countries and living under an UN-imposed arms embargo, turned to Islamic countries for help. The response was prompt. Some Middle Eastern states and organizations responded eagerly with all kinds of support necessary for the Bosniaks' survival. The relationship between the Bosniaks and the Islamic states established almost two decades ago still influences the sensibility of Bosniaks toward events in those countries. Accordingly, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the U.S. intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, and other situations are seen not simply as issues involving Palestinians, Iraqis and Afghans, but as issues for the worldwide Muslim community, of which Bosniaks are a part.

⁴³ Patriotska liga Bosne i Hercegovine, *O nama*, http://www.plbih.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=311&Itemid=55 (accessed April 10, 2009).

Further, the consequences of the war still shape the behavior of some Bosniaks. The Dayton peace agreement created a state where the majority of Bosniaks do not have an exclusive right to rule. While all other states from the former Yugoslav republics are nation-states, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a multinational state. Bosniaks are the only ethnic group without their own state. The distribution of power, the slow and cumbersome return process and slow justice for those who committed war crimes are disappointing to Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims.

Although some political parties have continuously manipulated the Bosniak population, arousing their nationalist sentiments to gain public support, there is no evidence that any political party would try to establish an armed branch with the alienated population, nor is there evidence that alienated masses would be attracted by extremist vanguards operating on the margins of the society or would adopt violence as a means of communication.

Based on democratic principles, the Bosnia and Herzegovina political system allows everyone to participate politically and resolve their issues through the system. Given this opportunity, rather than turn to violence, the masses opt to support their favorite political parties, to organize themselves within political parties, and to resolve their grievances through dialog. Political openness minimizes the chances that the dissatisfied masses will become violent. Therefore, the theory of socio-political grievances seems inadequate to explain the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

III. TERRORISM MOTIVATED BY RELIGION

A. INTRODUCTION

The theory advocating religion as a root of extremist violence states that extremist violence motivated by religion is based on extreme interpretations of religious tradition, doctrine and sacred text, where violence toward real or perceived enemies is justified as a holy duty.⁴⁴ Such groups are often intolerant toward other religious groups and see their perception of the world as the only correct one. Religious extremists are not particularly confined to any religion. Indeed, throughout history extremist groups have appeared in a variety of religions, persisted for some time, and then either rejected violence as a mean of communication or disappeared.

The most recent extremist religious movement is Islamism. Islamism rejects secular democratic values, resists “infidel” social, political, economic or cultural influences over the Muslim world, shows extreme hostility toward less committed and non-militant Muslims, and demands the creation of an Islamic state or order governed by a strict, puritanical interpretation of Islam.⁴⁵ Islamism has two subgroups, gradualist and *jihadist*. Gradualists’ approach is based on educating Muslims about Islam, influencing their consciousness, and infiltrating and Islamizing state institutions. *Jihadists* take a violent approach, fighting a war against unbelievers.⁴⁶ Islamists see *jihad* as an obligation of every Muslim. They believe that this war, started in the time of Muhammad, will end when all those who reject Islam are converted or killed. The long-term conflict between Islamist *jihadists* and infidels has waxed and waned. Therefore, religiously motivated extremist violence should be assessed in terms of the elements that influence the intensity of the conflict. Susanna Pearce writes that religious doctrine,

⁴⁴ David C. Rapoport, “Sacred Terror: A Contemporary Example from Islam,” in *Origins of Terrorism*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 103–130.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 296–298.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 297.

religious organization and religious diasporas are in direct correlation with the intensity of religious conflict.⁴⁷ There is no question does the conflict exist; the question is the strength of the extremist elements.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, this theory implies that Islamic radicals, supported by either internal or external players, would influence the Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslim population in an attempt to alienate them from the status quo and mobilize them as new members or supporters. Strengthening the Islamist movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina would create a safe haven for Islamic terrorists from which they could operate deeper inside of Europe. This chapter investigates the Islamists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the internal and external players who support radical ideologies, and how these elements influence Muslim society.

B. COUNTER-ELITE ELEMENTS

Bosnia and Herzegovina society is a mix of Muslims and Christians. The political representatives share power, promoting secular state and democratic values. Although this state organization is accepted and supported by most of the population, some elements oppose democratization and secularization. These elements have been trying to alienate moderate Muslims by persuading them to abandon their traditional Islam, which is characterized as corrupt and distorted, and return to strict and puritanical Islam.

The activities of Islamic radical and Islamists are visible in the promotion of pan-Islamic society, *jihad*, and different forms of radical Islam. Because of Bosnia and Herzegovina's multi-ethnicity and the dominance of moderates within the Muslim community, the radicals promote their goals in a less aggressive way and not too openly to avoid reprisals from the secular regime, non-Muslims and moderate Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims. It appears that Islamist are eager to submit to the law of the country as long as they are weak, but they constantly attempt to increase their numbers until they reach the necessary strength to wage *jihad* openly against infidels.

⁴⁷ Pearce, 111.

1. Religious Currents Promoting Islamism

Wahhabism is an Islamic radical movement established by Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al Wahhab in Saudi Arabia during the eighteenth century. Its followers preach a strict and puritanical interpretation of Islam. Wahhabism is among the most radical currents within the Muslim world. They are distinguished by their practice of declaring as infidels those Muslims who do not share their beliefs.⁴⁸ The attempt of al-Wahhab was “not simply to purify Sunni Islam but to wage *jihad* against all other forms of the religion.”⁴⁹ Members of the movement have never called themselves Wahhabis or followers of any other form of Islam by name. They simply call themselves Muslims preaching the real Islam, the Islam demanded by the Prophet Muhammad.

It is easy to label someone, invite a new term such as Wahhabist, fundamentalist, terrorist, extremist...Wahhabis do not exist at our place, and we consider ourselves those who follow original Islam. “I would never say for myself ‘I am a Wahhabi.’ For me it means nothing,” said Adnan Pezo, the former leader of the Active Islamic Youth.⁵⁰

Wahhabism arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina in several ways. First is with foreign Islamic fighters who came to Bosnia and Herzegovina to support local Muslims during the war, and who beside waging *jihad* had the missionary purpose of spreading a more radical interpretation of Islam than that practiced by moderate Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims. Second, since the collapse of the communist regime in Yugoslavia, the Muslim political establishment increased relations with Islamic countries from Middle Asia. This allowed Islamic states to spread their influence to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Islamic countries typically offer scholarships for young Bosniaks to attend religious schools in the Middle East. In addition, donors from Middle Eastern Islamic countries have built many mosques, religious schools and centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina that promote fundamentalist Islam.

⁴⁸ David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 74.

⁴⁹ Fawaz A. Georges, *Journey of the Jihadis* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), 94.

⁵⁰ Dzenana Karup, “Qur’an je nas ustav,” *BHDani.com*, no. 72, March 30, 1998, <http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva/72/tekst172.htm> (accessed May 24, 2009).

a. Islamic Foreign Fighters

Islamic foreign fighters who came to fight on the side of Bosniaks became religious indoctrinators of secular Muslims from the very first days of their presence in the country. They formed a military unit called *el-Mujahid*, and the unit enjoyed a special status within the Bosniak defense forces and Bosniak community. The members of the unit lived according to strict *Shari'a*, and their fighting was driven by *jihadist* ideology. Everybody who wanted to join the unit had to pass several weeks of religious indoctrination, learning how to practice true Islam and to live according to Islamic religious norms. After the war, many *Mujahideen* left the country and went to other places where they could continue the *jihad*, but not all of them. Some stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue their missionary activities, and some remain because they have nowhere else to go or have married Bosniak women and established families.

The Citizenship Review Commission (CRC), formed to review the status of foreign mujahedin fighters and others who obtained Bosnian citizenship during and after the 1992–95 war, completed its review of approximately 1200 cases. The CRC withdrew citizenship from 612 individuals it deemed to have obtained Bosnian citizenship unlawfully.⁵¹

Foreigners who remained after the war have merged with radicalized Bosniaks in several locations. The biggest location is in Maoca Gornja, a village about 20 kilometers south of Brcko town, where they have established an Islamic community and live according to Islamic religious rules. Children attend religious school with a curriculum based on the Jordanian educational system controlled by Nusret Imamovic, a self-proclaimed teacher and director of the school. Imamovic is a Bosniak convert and an important figure in radical circles of Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims. Imamovic publicly refuses any kind of collaboration with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Islamic community, and rejects legally elected Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities. Responding to a question about Muslims and democratic elections, he says,

⁵¹ Embassy of the United States in Bosnia and Herzegovina, State Department Reports, *2007 Country Reports on Terrorism: Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2008, <http://sarajevo.usembassy.gov/terrorism-2007.html> (accessed April 2, 2009).

We [Muslims] do not need to answer in the elections, as it is the kind of support to *taghuts* [scholars in the service of tyrants], and we are responsible to give up from them with not believing in them. It means that we must oppose them instead support them.⁵²

Imamovic also comments on suicide bombing, saying, “This fighting we do not consider as prohibited; however, at the same time we do not think that it should be used like the classical weapons, but only in special occasions and situations.”⁵³

In 2005, in an interview with a journalist from *Vecernji list*, a newspaper from Croatia, Enes Mujkanovic, another convert and the leader of the Wahhabi group in Gornja Maoca, spoke openly about their intolerance of anyone who does not share their beliefs. He says that he prays to Allah for all Muslims in the world to turn to Allah and follow His way. When the journalist asked him why they live isolated from the rest of the Bosnia and Herzegovina population, he said that they lived in accordance with Mohammed’s laws, and when trouble occurs, one must retreat into isolation and wait for the right moment to take revenge against the enemy. He says that he believes that when Allah’s army enters Rome and decimates the crusaders, they would be at its head.⁵⁴

b. Foreign Sponsorship

Wahhabism originates in Saudi Arabia, and with their strong financial support has been spreading to other countries with Muslim populations. Typically, Saudi donors promote Wahhabism with scholarships to attend institutions of higher education in some Middle Eastern Islamic countries and by providing in-country capabilities for preaching, religious schools and recreational centers.

⁵² Nusret Imamovic, Forum: Pitanje u vezi glasanja na izborima u BiH, November 7, 2008, <http://www.putvjernika.com/Odgovori-na-pitanja/pitanje-u-vezi-glasanja-na-izborima-u-bih.html> (accessed May 13, 2009).

⁵³ K.S., “Poruka iz BiH: Samoubilački napadi samo za izuzetne prilike,” *Index.hr*, December 12, 2008, <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/poruka-iz-bih-samoubilacki-napadi-samo-za-izuzetne-prilike/413349.aspx> (accessed January 22, 2009).

⁵⁴ Hassan Haidar Diab, “Wahhabis: Croats Must be Eradicated,” *Vecernji-List.hr*, September 16, 2005, http://www.adnki.com/index_2Level.php?cat=Security&loid=8.0.213193666&par=0 (accessed January 21, 2009).

The offer of scholarships to Bosnia and Herzegovina youth to attend universities, mostly in Mecca, started during the war. Since then, several generations of students have graduated and returned to the country. One of these students was Jusuf Barcic. When he came back, he started promoting a form of Islam different from the one commonly practiced by Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims. His followers increased slowly and steadily. Barcic was in constant conflict with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Islamic community. He and his followers denied any positive law, claiming there is a no law besides Allah's law. Barcic was killed in a car accident, but his movement did not die with him. Over 3,000 mourners, from Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere in Europe, attended his funeral, an indicator of the expansion of radical Wahhabi ideology.

Another way of spreading fundamentalist Islam is by building mosques, religious schools and centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to some analyses, more than \$700 million has been invested in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Saudi-financed organizations. Reportedly, the bulk of investments has gone to build new mosques, renovate old ones, and establish Islamic educational institutions. For instance, Sarajevo's King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud Mosque and Cultural Center was built in 2000 with Saudi funds and operates with Saudi financing. The estimated cost of the mosque and its sports and cultural center is more than \$28 million.⁵⁵ Saudi funded Islamic Pedagogical Academies teaching a much more conservative form of Islam to their Bosniak students have also been established in Bihac and Zenica.

The King Fahd mosque in Sarajevo and many other mosques built or rebuilt with assistance from foreign donors have been given a different appearance more characteristic of Middle East architecture than the Ottoman building style used by Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims. "Indeed the entire Bosnia and Herzegovina landscape is being remade with the construction of numerous 'petro-dollar' ultra-modern Middle Eastern style mosques."⁵⁶ The preaching in these mosques, like their architecture, differs

⁵⁵ Dan Bilefsky, "Islamic Revival Tests Bosnia's Secular Cast," *NewYorkTimes.com*, December 27, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/27/world/europe/27islam.html> (accessed May 22, 2009).

⁵⁶ Steven Oluic, "Green Flag over the Balkans," *FAO Journal*, volume X no. 3 (December 2006): 42, <http://www.faoa.org/PDF/pub34.pdf> (accessed April 12, 2009).

from that accepted and practiced by the Bosniaks since Ottoman rule. The mosque, its *medresa*, administrative offices and cultural center are controlled by the Saudis, not the Bosnia and Herzegovina Islamic community. With its extra-territorial status, the mosque has become a major center of Wahhabism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Finally, many religious schools provide free education for Bosniak youth, with lectures in the Arabic language. Living according strict religious rules is one of the conditions of attending these schools. In post conflict countries with poor economic and social conditions like Bosnia and Herzegovina, free education is an attractive choice for less wealthy people as a way of providing some kind of education, even if it is religious, for their children.

My husband was killed in Srebrenica in 1995 and I was left with four children, no income, no skills. The aid I receive means we can live decently, but I have to respect the religious laws. My daughters are attending a religious school for free, and my sons will study for free either in Sarajevo or in any big Muslim country.⁵⁷

This is a typical story how Muslim youth from Bosnia and Herzegovina are recruited to spread fundamentalist Islam from middle Asia.

2. Web Sites and Organizations Promoting Islamism and Jihad

Nowadays, the most common and the efficient way of spreading information is through Web sites, chat rooms and on-line forums. Islamists use those opportunities very successfully, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is not spared their influence. There are several Web sites in the Bosnian language from organizations promoting *jihad* and radical Islamic ideology.

a. *Pilgrims' Journe—Put vjernika*

One of the Web sites that regularly expresses a negative attitude toward both the democratization of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Westerners, mostly Americans, is *Put vjernika*. In February 2009, the site published a movie, *Juba, the Baghdad Sniper*,

⁵⁷ Vesna Peric Zrimonjic, "Balkans: Symbolism of Muslim Veil is in Eye of Beholder," *Global Information Network*, November 22, 2006, 1, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed March 18, 2009).

showing the execution of American soldiers patrolling or manning checkpoints in Iraq. According to the Federal Police (FUP), the movie was initially distributed among radical Bosniaks of the Wahhabi movement who had expressed willingness to go to Afghanistan or Iraq.⁵⁸ In a questionnaire posted on the Web site, visitors expressed their perceptions of the American operation in middle Asia, with more than 90 percent believing that the American war on Islamist terrorism is nothing other than a war against Islam and Muslims.

On the same site, Dr. Ebu Hazim el-Dzibali published an article, “What fooled them?” criticizing behavior of Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He says that the Bosniaks have diverged from Allah’s path for the creation of an Islamic society and that the democracy accepted by Bosniaks is the final evil opposing creation of a society in accordance with Allah’s will.⁵⁹

It is not clear who has been financing and moderating the site. The president of the Committee for Defense and Security in the Parliament of the Republic of Srpska, Petar Djokic, says that “it [was] believed that [Enes Mujkanovic] the leader of Islamists from Gornja Maoca also runs an extremist Bosnian Muslim Web site, www.putvjernika.com.”⁶⁰ Even if the owner is unknown, the purpose of the site is perfectly clear. The site is designated to promote *jihad* and anti-Western and anti-democratic ideology, targeting the Bosnia and Herzegovina Bosniak population as a source of new members and sympathizers.

b. Ensarije Serijata

Ensarije Serijata is a clandestine organization promoting *jihad* and anti-Western, anti-democratic ideology. As stated on the Web site’s page “O nama” (“About

⁵⁸ Anes Alic and Damir Kaletovic, “Bosnia Investigates Radical Threats,” *International Relations and Security Network* (ISN Security Watch, March 30, 2009), <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/IR-Directory/Detail/?fevnodeid=106396&fevid=33&ots591=4888CAA0-B3DB-1461-98B9-E20E7B9C13D4&lng=en&v33=106396&id=13306> (accessed April 22, 2009).

⁵⁹ Ebu Hazim el-Džibali, “Forum: Sta ih je prevarilo!? Put vjernika,” (April 16, 2009), <http://www.putvjernika.com/U-fokusu/sta-ih-je-prevarilo.html> (accessed April 22, 2009).

⁶⁰ “Radical Islamists Expanding in Bosnia,” *Serbianna.com*, March 28, 2009, <http://www.serbianna.com/blogsnewspost?p=1666> (accessed May 8, 2009).

Us”), the organization was founded in 1994 by Muslims who wanted to deliver an Islamic message blocked by non-Muslims and some Muslims who support a form of Islam closer to the principles and laws of Islam’s enemies. The organization owns a Bosnian language Web site where the members of the organization openly promote their extremist ideology. The origin of the site is not known, nor is it known who finances and maintains it.⁶¹ The site has many translations of papers by Abu Hamza al-Masri, a former imam of North London Central Mosque and supporter of al-Qaeda. Without a doubt, both the site and the organization are parts of the global *jihad* network.

We are here to defend Allah’s Law. Some of us have already been killed, and some are in prison. We have correspondents in countries where *jihad* is waged and we support all the Islamic Jihad groups that are stale in the defense of Islamic law.⁶²

The members of the organization worked to help the *Mujahideen* and refugees in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kashmir and elsewhere. This assistance consists of a presence on the battlefields, various religious projects, and opposition to anti-Islamic propaganda. They also provide military counseling to Muslims so they can help oppressed Muslims and not be misguided and deceived by western European society.⁶³

Because of its clandestine nature, the activities of the organization cannot be identified and separated from other activities seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina that are a part of the Islamization of Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims; therefore, the organization’s physical presence in the country is open to question.

c. Active Islamic Youth

The Active Islamic Youth was an organization established during the war by a group of Bosniaks attempting to promote the fundamentalist Islamic teachings that they learned from foreign Islamic fighters while serving in the same unit, El-Mujahid. The mission of the organization is to awake the religious sentiment of the Bosnia and

⁶¹ Ensarije Serijata: O nama, Zajdul Hajr, http://www.geocities.com/ensarije_serijata/onama.htm (accessed May 24, 2009).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

Herzegovina Muslim population, which has been deprived of “traditional” Islam by the Communist regime of the former Yugoslavia and by Muslims who practice moderate Islam, and return the society to the strict, puritanical interpretation of the sacred text. The members of the organization are young Bosniaks who find their life philosophy in religion. Adnan Pezo, the former leader of the organization, says that only Bosniaks were in the organization. “We cannot allow ourselves to have some Arabs here because it would, perhaps, produce aversion in some people,” he told the magazine *Dani*.⁶⁴ The embassy of the United States in Bosnia and Herzegovina describes the organization and its activities as extremist and bursting with anti-American rhetoric spread through its weekly print and online publication, *SAFF Magazine*.⁶⁵

In order to attract more members and spread their ideology, the organization established two main sectors, a sector for *Da'va* and a sector for sport and culture. The purpose of the *Da'va* sector is to organize courses on Islamic teachings and the English and Arabic languages within the entire Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The sport and culture sector has organized the Tae Kwon Do Academy, which operates in Zenica, Bugojno, and Travnik.

The organization was very active before September 11, 2001. One of its many activities was organizing a demonstration against the war in Chechnya. The demonstration took place on March 17, 2000, when a couple of hundred people gathered in front of the Begova mosque in Sarajevo and walked through Ferhadija Street. Even though this was supposed to be an ordinary gathering to raise a voice against violence, and without any political or other hidden agenda, the event escalated into something else. The participants carried green and black flags with Arabic inscriptions, and the whole street shouted “Allahu akber,” (Allah is great). The leader of the Active Islamic Youth, Adnan Pezo, gave a speech calling on people to help their “brothers” in Chechnya, and most of his speech was in the Arabic language. Instead of showing solidarity with the victims of Putin’s terror, some participants, dressed in typical Arabic clothes, the men with long beards, started to blame United States politics, some Bosnia and Herzegovina

⁶⁴ Karup.

⁶⁵ *State Department Reports, 2007 Country Reports on Terrorism: Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

opposition politicians, and *Magazin dani*, calling for *jihad* against Madeleine Albright, Zlatko Lagumdžija, Senad Pecanin and the magazine.⁶⁶

After September 11, the organization was under investigation and it was discovered that the organization was financed by Saudi humanitarian organizations, including Al Haramain. In autumn 2002, the United States declared Al Haramain as an organization sponsoring terrorist networks and froze its funds. Many Saudi donors stopped sending money to the Active Islamic Youth because of its bad reputation due to its radical nature and collaboration with organizations sponsoring terrorism. With problems in its functioning, and especially its financing, in 2008 the organization “experienced fractures among its leaders and is no longer an officially registered organization in Bosnia.”⁶⁷ However, the members of the organization are still active as evidenced by the normal maintenance of its Web site and publication of the *SAFF Magazine*, the official voice of Active Islamic Youth.

3. Manipulating the Masses Through Religion and Culture

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s society, as a part of the former Yugoslavia, had equal rights for women and men. Women could get the same jobs as men and they could participate in politics and serve as teachers. They were not just mothers and homemakers; indeed, women were present in every sphere of society. Bosnia and Herzegovina’s women were well educated and emancipated. The literacy rate for females in Bosnia and Herzegovina is around 97 percent and still growing. To cut ties with old Muslim habits, where women were treated according to Islamic traditions and beliefs, the Yugoslavian government prohibited the wearing of veils.

⁶⁶ “Predizborni poziv na dzihad,” *BiHdani.com*, no. 147, March 24, 2000, <http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva/147/t1478.htm> (accessed June 12, 2009).

⁶⁷ United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: Bosnia and Herzegovina*, April 30, 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49fac68bc.html> (accessed May 24, 2009).

It was 1950, toward the end of September, when hundreds of Muslim women filled the streets of the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, and ceremonially took off their veils. The symbolic act was intended to mark the end of an era when they left their homes “covered.”⁶⁸

Forty years later, in the same Bosnia and Herzegovina, fully covered women and men with long beards became common.⁶⁹

‘*Hijab* [a veil] is a matter of choice,’ Fahira Fejzic Chengic from the Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo recently wrote in a local magazine. “I decided to wear it, fully aware of all positive and negative consequences.”... She took to traditional Islamic clothes and the veil during the 1992-95 war when former Yugoslavia fell apart.⁷⁰

Wearing a veil is really the choice of each individual, but in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it became a tool for distinguishing between Muslims and non-Muslims. Alienated Muslims become more vulnerable to manipulation.

Fahira Fejzic Chengic is a wife of Hasan Chengic, a Muslim cleric, who was convicted in the 1980s together with Alija Izetbegovic by the regime of Yugoslavia for promoting radical Islamic ideology. After prison, he became an important figure in Bosnia and Herzegovina political life. During the war, Chengic had been involved in Iranian arms shipments to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, Chengic was involved in activities of the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), a false humanitarian organization connected to Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorist network. As an active member of SDA, Mrs. Chengic has been responsible for providing journalist support to the activities of her husband.⁷¹ Therefore, it was not clear did Mrs. Chengic decide to wear a veil due to her religious beliefs or to give her contribution in manipulating with the Bosniaks women. Further, it has not been a matter of choice for all women. For some it was requirement in order to get aid. “Aid organizations from Islamic countries looked

⁶⁸ Zrimonjic.

⁶⁹ Bilefsky.

⁷⁰ Zrimonjic.

⁷¹ Vildana Selimbegovic, “Vodjina volja iznad svega,” *BiHdani.com*, no. 157, June 2, 2000, <http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva/157/t1577.htm> (accessed May 23, 2009).

after widows, and demanded strict respect of Islamic laws in return.”⁷² In addition, in some places in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Islamic humanitarian organizations provide money to women who wear *hijab*.

Another unclear situation is related to the character of the Bosnia and Herzegovina war as seen from the Bosniak perspective on the one hand, and the dual status of the Bosniaks who lost their lives during the war on the other. While some Western scholars claim that some Muslims units waged *jihad* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosniak politicians have been quiet and not forthcoming regarding this question. The topic of *jihad* in Bosnia and Herzegovina is avoided; at least it is not publicly discussed. *Jihad* is described in the Qur’an as “holy war against any who interfere with the practice of Islam. In practice, *jihad* was often carried out as aggressive war well beyond the borders of Islam.”⁷³ Declaring existence of the *jihad* in Bosnia and Herzegovina would undermine publicly declared policies by the Bosniak politicians, who state that the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina⁷⁴ fought not only for the Bosniak ethnic group, but also for the freedom of all people in the country. Many Bosniaks do not believe that *jihad* was waged during the war. However, the Bosniaks who were killed are categorized into two groups with two different names. While some have been named dead soldiers and fighters, others have been named *shahids*, a term that generally refers to a person killed on Allah’s path, or in other words, *Mujahid* killed in the *jihad*. Even knowing all these facts, some Bosniak politicians still deny the existence of a religious war, stating how they have been “fighting” for an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina with equal rights for everybody, while Serbs and Croats have been more or less seeking secession from the country.

⁷² Zrimonjic.

⁷³ F. Malik, The Qur’an in English Translation Complete, *MidEastWeb for Coexistence*, (August 2007), 3. <http://www.mideastweb.org> (accessed June 28, 2009).

⁷⁴ Not to be confused with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The term Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina refers to the Bosniaks’ armed forces.

C. EVIDENCE OF TERRORIST PRESENCE

While the country has been tied to terrorism mostly because of imported foreign fighters and their relation to terrorist groups, there have been several incidents committed by radicalized Bosniaks. These incidents do not necessarily have the elements necessary to be labeled as terrorist acts, but can be considered serious threats to security due to their intolerant and destabilizing nature.

On December 24, 2002, Muamer Topalovic, a young Muslim extremist, killed three members of a Croatian family from Konjic, a town about 80 kilometers south of Sarajevo. When arrested, Topalovic said that he wanted to act against Croats, explaining his motives as religious-ideological fanaticism. Topalovic admitted that he was a member of the Active Islamic Youth and the Islamic humanitarian organization *Jam'iyat al-Furkan*. The organization provided religious education for Bosniak children and sold religious literature. However, later investigation showed that Topalovic was never an active member of the Active Islamic Youth.

In October 2005, Mirsad Bektasevic, Abdulkadir Cesur, Bajro Ikanovic, and Senad Hasanovic were arrested in Sarajevo and charged with possession of explosives and planning a terrorist attack against an unnamed target. The leader of the group, Bektasevic, was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina and migrated during the war to Sweden where he got citizenship. The investigation found that the group was linked to terrorist networks elsewhere in Europe.⁷⁵

In October 2008, a group of men, members of the Wahhabi movement, physically attacked participants at a gay festival held in Sarajevo while exclaiming "Allahu akber!" and "Kill the gays!" The representatives of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Islamic community defended the attackers, saying that holding such a festival during the month of Ramadan was a provocation; although the organizer said that the purpose of the festival was to promote minorities' rights, not to provoke anybody.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *State Department Reports, 2007 Country Reports on Terrorism: Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

⁷⁶ Bilefsky.

In February 2009, *Glas Srpske*, an internet Web portal, posted an article saying that arming of members of Wahhabi movement and Bosniaks in the territory of the Republic of Srpska, as well as collecting money for their activities, have been evident over the last three years. The author of the article pointed to Muhamed Porca, the imam of the Al-Tawhid Mosque in Vienna and an informal leader of Wahhabi movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as responsible for the illegal activities.⁷⁷

In February 2009, German journalists from *Der Spiegel* reported that the imam of the King Fahd mosque, Nezim Halilovic, often preached about destroying Israel and Jews, calling them Zionist terrorists and saying that their end already came.⁷⁸

D. CONCLUSION

Islamic foreign fighters brought a new form of Islam unknown to the traditional Sunni Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They started indoctrinating Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims immediately upon their arrival during early 1990s, and the indoctrination continues. This form of radical Islam, advocated by foreign missionaries, is known to the West as the Wahhabi movement. Wahhabism is spread not only by Islamic missionaries, but also through different religious programs sponsored mostly by Saudi Arabia. In addition, many scholarships are provided by Islamic countries to Bosniak youth so they can attend religious universities in some Islamic states. The Wahhabi missionaries succeeded in attracting some young Bosniaks, who abandoned their traditional Islam and adopted a radical Islamic ideology. In less than fifteen years, the Wahhabi movement grew to more than 6,000 Bosniaks. Young Bosniaks abandoned traditional and moderate Islam and indoctrinated by missionaries from the Middle East accepted a form of Islam that is unfriendly and intolerant of non-Muslims and less committed Muslims.

⁷⁷ Goran Maunaga, "Vehabije u RS i FBiH ubrzano se naoruzavaju," *GlasSrpske.com*, February 22, 2009, <http://www.glassrpske.com/vijest/2/novosti/18175/lat/Vehabije-u-RS-i-FBiH-ubrzano-se-naoruzavaju.html> (accessed May 22, 2009).

⁷⁸ V.L., "U Bosnia se nalaze pritajeni bombasi samoubice," *Pincom.info*, February 26, 2009, http://www.pincom.info/index.php?p=opsirnije&s=63316&comm_page=2&kombox (accessed May 23, 2009).

The radicalized Bosniaks say that they promote the new ideologies peacefully and in a spirit of developing a shared life among the different religions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to them, the ideologies they advocate are not violent and do not have any ties to the global Islamic terrorist network. They do not see *jihad* as a fight on Allah's path against infidels, but as a daily struggle inside of each believer with all kinds of issues and problems. They attempt to spread their beliefs through *da'wa*, fighting for their goals by spreading the words of Allah as practicing true Islam.

However, reality proves differently. Although they believe that their activism is peaceful, several incidents committed by Wahhabis provide another view. In addition, many Web sites and even some organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina promote violence, calling for *jihad* against the United States and its allies. Therefore, if not now, perhaps in the near future, more radicalized Bosniaks may come under the influence of the *jihadist* vanguards and adopt violence to forcefully spread their beliefs or as part of a holy war against unbelievers.

So far, there had been only a few terrorist acts involving radicalized Bosniaks, and only one resulted in casualties, the brutal killing of a Croat family from Konjic committed by Muamer Topalovic. This can be considered a terrorist act motivated by religion, and also, a continuation of the type of ethnic violence common during the war period. The local newspapers and some officials eagerly declared this incident to be an Islamist terrorist act, even though the purpose of the killings and Topalovic's intent are not so clear. Therefore, one can conclude that participation of the Bosniaks in global Islamic terrorist network activities is minimal or unimportant for the functioning of the terrorist network.

Western scholars do not usually see a strong causal relation between terrorism and Islam. In order to understand this relationship, we should look not to Western perceptions, but to how Islamic radicals see terrorism. According to Islamic radicals, there are three elements of terrorism: natural terrorism, Islamist terrorism and non-Islamist terrorism. Islamic or prescribed terrorism is the first level of duty for every Muslim believer. It involves amplifying the Islamic state and the authority of Islam and removes depravity, injustice and the miseries of the poor and needy. It is said that this

method was used by the Prophet and his Ashabs (followers of Muhammad who had personal contact with him) and now it is used by the *Mujahideen* following Sunna of the Prophet.⁷⁹

Jasmin Merdan, a Wahhabi dissident and co-author of a book on Wahhabi ideology and history, said the issue was not that they prayed or dressed differently, but that they were intolerant and aggressive toward other Muslims. “These are mostly young, uneducated people,” he said. Merdan, who converted in the late 1990s but later left the sect disillusioned, said many Muslim militants who carry out attacks against Western targets were “a product of Wahhabi indoctrination.”⁸⁰

In conclusion, Bosnia and Herzegovina faces the presence and growth of Islamist movements spreading radical Islamic ideologies. The Islamist vanguards, sponsored by foreign donors, are active within Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslim society, radicalizing the masses and increasing the number of new followers. In addition to the presence of Islamist gradualists, Bosnia and Herzegovina faces Islamist extremists that oppose secular and democratic values through various means, glorifying martyrs and calling for *jihad* against infidels. Even lacking a declared terrorist group in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country has radicalized masses among which the terrorist vanguard can recruit new members and find necessary support for operating within the country and abroad.

⁷⁹ Ensarije Serijata: PIO, Zajdul Hajr, http://www.geocities.com/ensarije_seriata/pitanje-teror.html (accessed May 24, 2009).

⁸⁰ Daria Sito-Sucic, “Bosnia’s Muslims divided over inroads of Wahhabism,” *Boston.com*, December 29, 2006, http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2006/12/29/bosnias_muslims_divided_over_inroads_of_wahhabism/ (accessed June 8, 2009).

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IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF TERRORIST NETWORKS IN PERMISSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

A. INTRODUCTION

The Bosnia and Herzegovina civil war ended on December 14, 1995, when domestic political leaders mediated by the international community signed the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP). The international community and the Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians accepted the responsibility to stop hostilities, build trust between belligerent parties, and provide a safe, stable, law-enforced environment for all persons in the country. The international military forces deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995 did a noteworthy job of implementing the military aspect of the GFAP.⁸¹ With the High Representative⁸² (HR) for Bosnia and Herzegovina as the supreme authority, the international community has controlled every aspect of the implementation of the GFAP.

The international community succeeded in stopping hostilities, but it seems that they failed to make a self-sustainable and stable country. Years after the war's end, and despite the aid of several international bodies focused on security issues, corruption, organized crime and the black market remain unresolved security threats. The U.S. embassy reported in 2007 to the American State Department that "Bosnia remained a weak, decentralized state and ethnically-based political confrontations continued to undermine national government."⁸³

⁸¹ Ivo H. Daalder and Michael B. G. Froman, "Dayton's incomplete peace," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 6 (November 1, 1999): 106–113.

⁸² Office of the High Representative (OHR) is an ad hoc international institution responsible for overseeing implementation of civilian aspects of the accord ending the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The position of High Representative was created under the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, usually referred to as the Dayton Peace Agreement, negotiated in Dayton, Ohio, and signed in Paris on December 14, 1995. http://www.ohr.int/ohr-info/gen-info/default.asp?content_id=38519 (accessed June 19, 2009).

⁸³ *State Department Reports, 2007 Country Reports on Terrorism: Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

Research by the Fund for Peace shows that Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be considered a stable state. Indeed, the Failed State Index for Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that the country is much closer to becoming a failed state than a stable one.

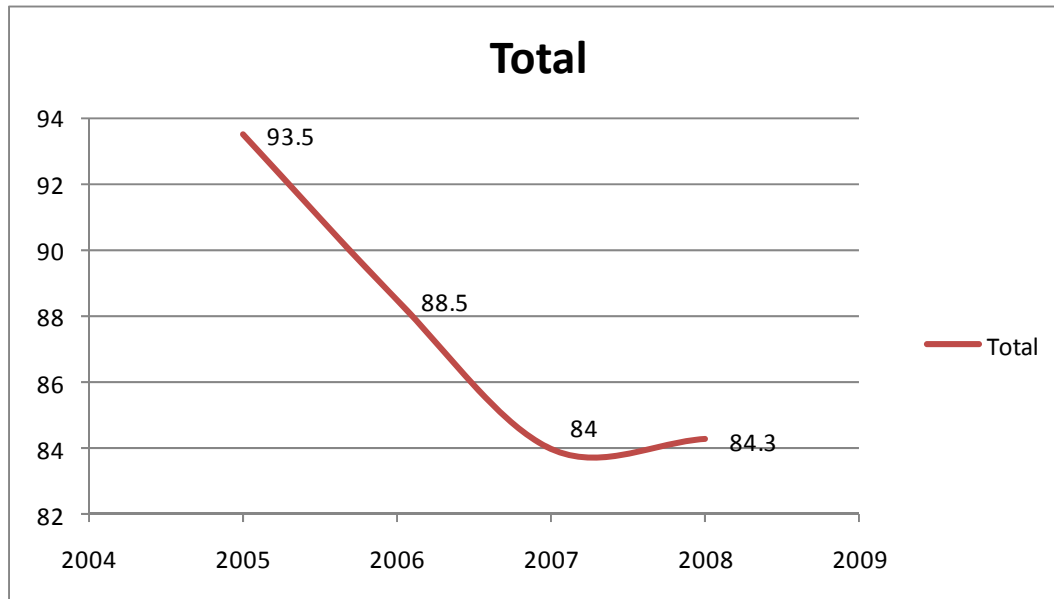


Figure 1. Failed State Index for Bosnia and Herzegovina⁸⁴ (lower is better)

Failed State Index Classification	
Alert	91-120
Warning	61-90
Monitoring	31-60
Sustainable	1-30

The Failed State Index classification varies from 1 to 120, where states classified between 1 and 30 are considered sustainable, and those from 91 to 120 are states under “alert.” Even though Bosnia and Herzegovina has made significant progress in the last few years, and progressed from the worst group to the group under “warning,” the situation is still far from satisfactory, especially considering the 2007 and 2008 results, which show a reversal of the positive trend. According to the Fund for Peace, twelve

⁸⁴ Fund for Peace, “Failed States Index,” http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=140 (accessed June 19, 2009).

indicators may be included in defining the state, which are divided into the three major categories of economic, social and political indicators. These indicators are neither exclusive nor exhaustive for defining the state and additional indicators can be added as well.⁸⁵

James A. Piazza empirically demonstrates a relationship between failed and failing states and transnational terrorist activities, showing that weak states are more likely to host or have their own terrorist groups.⁸⁶ Because of its weaknesses, Bosnia and Herzegovina is seen as a state “vulnerable to exploitation as a potential staging ground for terrorist operations in Europe.”⁸⁷

The theory of permissive environment fits the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina if it is assumed that the constant confrontations among Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians results in attrition of state institutions and the mechanisms responsible for providing basic goods to its citizens. As a result, the state would be unable to efficiently control border crossings or the entire territory, the level of corruption would be very high, bureaucracy would be slow and ineffective, the country would be economically unstable, and the efficient rule of law would not be established. In addition, with political elements supportive of radical ideologies, Bosnia and Herzegovina might be seen as a country providing space for terrorist vanguards to exist, recruiting new followers and establishing bases from which they might operate abroad.

Given the country’s recent history, the characteristics of its inhabitants and its current situation, one might say that political instability—based on ethnic divisions—the political elite support of Islamic ideologies, and the geographic-demographic characteristics of the state can be considered direct or indirect reasons why Bosnia and Herzegovina seems to have a permissive environment for Islamic radicals and Islamic terrorists.

⁸⁵ Fund for Peace, “Failed States Index”, http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=140 (accessed June 19, 2009).

⁸⁶ Piazza, 469.

⁸⁷ *State Department Reports, 2007 Country Reports on Terrorism: Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

B. POLITICAL INSTABILITY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

While political instability, the “propensity of a government collapse,”⁸⁸ is not considered a primary cause of the development of terrorist networks or affiliates, James Forest notes that politically unstable regimes are more prone to attract terrorist organizations than stable regimes. Unstable regimes in particular countries create a permissive environment that inhibits domestic organizations and mechanisms that might prevent terrorist organizations from developing.⁸⁹

Since the beginning of its existence as an independent state, Bosnia and Herzegovina has always been considered a weak state divided by factionalism and ethnic politics. The main impediment to progress is continued ethnically based confrontations between leading politicians representing various ethnic groups. In a December 2008 article, the *New York Times* describes the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina as tense.

The country’s leaders are so busy fighting one another that they are impeding Bosnia from progressing. Locked in an impasse of mutual recrimination are Haris Silajdzic, the Muslim in the country’s three-member presidency, who has called for the Serbian Republic to be abolished, and the Bosnian Serb prime minister, Milorad Dodik, who is supported by Russia and Serbia and who has dangled the threat that his republic could secede.⁹⁰

Acrimony between the two politicians became so intense in 2008 that it reminded many of the months just after the war’s end, when former belligerents may have stopped shooting but were still did not speak except to hurl insults.

Many local politicians and even some international ones see Milorad Dodik, with his nationalist rhetoric, as the main obstacle to progress and one of the biggest opponents of strengthening national institutions. He many times has publicly stated that he is against any centralization at the state level. According to Dodik, the country should be highly decentralized and the governance should be left to the entities. How strongly

⁸⁸ Alberto Alesina and others, “Political Instability and Economic Growth,” *Journal of Economic Growth* (June 1996): 1.

⁸⁹ Chenoweth, 18.

⁹⁰ Bilefsky.

Dodik has defended his political beliefs was seen during the reform of the armed forces. For years, Dodik opposed creation of the common Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the transfer of command responsibility from the entity level to the state level. When he realized that the international community and particularly the U.S. would not accept two armies in one country where power would be concentrated in the hands of politicians at the entity levels, Dodik proposed total demilitarization of the country. Some researchers go even further, stating that because of his nationalist rhetoric and arrogant behavior toward Bosniak and Croat politicians, Dodik should be considered a serious threat to the stabilization process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁹¹

Haris Silajdzic is another political player whose behavior and rhetoric negatively influence the stability of the country. His political platform is based on abolishing the existence of Republic of Srpska, breaking its strong relations with Serbia, and creating a stronger, unitary state centered in Sarajevo. His attitude and policies are seen as hostile to Serb and Croat interests in the country and an attempt to create a Bosniak-dominated state. Showing low tolerance to the needs and concerns of Serbs and Croats, his campaign of the few last years is a major factor that deepens divisions and creates tensions between ethnic groups in the country.

These two politicians are not the only ones seen as responsible for slow progress and an unstable environment in the country. The fact that both of them were elected by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in democratic and free elections in 2006, and that both of their campaigns were based on nationalist agendas, indicates that the country is still deeply divided and the environment is still unsupportive of national rapprochement.

The consequences of political instability and constant confrontation among local politicians from different ethnic groups can be seen in the weak coercive and administrative capabilities of the state.

⁹¹ “Bosnia: RS premier poses new challenge to stability,” *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service*, December 24, 2007, 1. <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/> (accessed July 10, 2009).

1. Weak Coercive Capabilities

The security system in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been established according to democratic norms and standards. There are several organizations dealing with internal security issues, and most of these organizations have been equipped, trained, and coached by the international community. In addition, there is significant cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina security organization and similar organizations in other countries. However, the lack of political unity and political interference in law enforcement has influenced the efficiency of these organizations for years.

One of the biggest obstacles for reaching the necessary level of efficiency of the security organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the ethnic sensibility of the population. The personnel structure of all state organizations is based on the principle of equality of all three ethnic groups according the census from 1991. This means that leading positions in any organization are equally divided among Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats, and other positions are allocated according the population living in the area. This structure is a warrant of stability and protects the national interest of each group in the country. However, this structure has been misused by many politicians, businessmen, and other influential people to protect their own interests, to manipulate the masses or to cover up illegal or criminal activities. Whenever a security organization conducts investigations of these people, they must assign the case to members of the organization from the same ethnic group as the suspects, or the organization would be accused of animosity and revenges. The Bosnia and Herzegovina population has been so heavily manipulated that they automatically react to such accusations by supporting the wrongdoers and calling for the investigation to be mitigated or halted.

The second staffing failure common to security organizations involves political eligibility. In general, to be employed by some of these organizations, the appointment requires a “green light” from the leading political party, and generally, each national party would support only candidates from their own ethnic group. This means that the political parties, which are mostly national parties, have placed their own people within

each organization. The mutual protection of the parties' own interest is presented as a matter of national interest and for this reason is supported by the manipulated population.

a. State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA)

The State Investigation and Protection Agency was established in 2002. Its primary tasks were to protect important persons, government facilities and consular diplomatic missions. In 2004, the parliament extended the tasks of the SIPA to include fighting organized crime, arresting war criminals and fighting terrorism.⁹² The efficiency of the SIPA is very questionable.

The State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) is the Bosnia agency with primary responsibility for counterterrorism operations. The position of SIPA Director was unfilled for most of 2008 and the agency's readiness and capabilities suffered as a result. In addition, the head of the Ministry of Security, parent organization to SIPA, politicized the Ministry's terrorism threat analysis and counterterrorism operations. Although Bosnian capabilities and potential for independent action were degraded over the year, Bosnian authorities were generally effective and responsive to U.S. counterterrorism cooperation requests.⁹³

Thus far, the agency faces difficulties in fighting organized crime and terrorism, which can be explained by the complicated political situation in the country. Whenever the agency has investigated politicians or sensitive issues, an ethnic dimension has been ascribed to its activities, and the agency has been accused of directing its activities against one ethnic group while supporting another, even though the agency's work is simply directed against wrongdoers.

For years, the Bosnia and Herzegovina political magazine *60 Minutes* has provided evidence that Dodik is involved in organized crime and corruption, but no one conducted any investigations of these allegations. Everybody, including the representatives of the international community, seemed afraid of Dodik's reaction and the reaction of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Serbs. Finally, in 2008, SIPA initiated an

⁹² Heinz Vetschera and Matthieu Damian, "Security Sector Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Role of the International Community," *International Peacekeeping* 1 (March 1, 2006): 28–42.

⁹³ *State Department Reports, 2007 Country Reports on Terrorism: Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

investigation of his conversations about several construction projects, including the building for the Government of Republic Srpska, the highway between Banja Luka and Gradiska, and the building for the Republic of Srpska's Radio and Television department. In response, in March 2009 Dodik threatened to withdraw Serbs from state institutions if SIPA did not stop its investigation, claiming that their investigation is politically motivated and orchestrated. Dodik told reporters in Banja Luka on June 11, 2009, that he is not interested in SIPA, and that he would not attend a hearing if he were summoned. He said cynically, "Let them try to detain me."⁹⁴

b. General Police

The reform of police structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been one of the most complicated and tense reforms. The police forces had been functioning according to pre-war communist doctrine. In 1997, the High Representative expressed his intention to use his final authority to reform the police according to democratic principles and to create a unique police structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina that would coordinate its activities in fighting organized crime and other destabilizing elements. The local authorities, representatives of the United Nations International Police Task Force (IPTF), later known as the European Union Police Forces (EUPF), the NATO-led troops, and the OHR spent around 11 years seeking an acceptable structure and supreme authority for the country's police forces. Dodik blocked progress toward the creation of a common structure for the General Police, arguing that there was no need for a centralized General Police because of the existence of the SIPA as state level specialized police. Finally, in 2008 the parties reached agreement. However, so far nothing has happened beyond the signing of an agreement.⁹⁵ At the beginning, the EU was very clear and strong in their request for a strong and efficient police force that would not recognize the administrative lines of the entities and would share a common command structure.

⁹⁴ "Dodik: Ne bojim se SIPA-e, a tuzicu i Ashdowna," *DnevniAvaz.ba*, June 11, 2009, <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji/aktuelno/dodik-ne-bojim-se-sipae-a-tuzicu-i-ashdowna> (accessed June 13, 2009).

⁹⁵ Aldin Arnautovic, "BiH: Reforma policije stoji," *VoANews.com*, January 21, 2009, <http://www.voanews.com/bosnian/archive/2009-01/2009-01-21-voa2.cfm?moddate=2009-01-21> (accessed June 17, 2009).

Ultimately, the EU, as well as local politicians, accepted a questionable solution, establishing only a coordinating body at the state level. Votes in favor of the proposed laws numbered 22, while 19 were against, and one representative abstained. More than a year later, the agreement has not been implemented.

c. Border Police

Bosnia and Herzegovina has about 10,000 kilometers of borders with Croatia, Serbia and Monte Negro. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Border Police employs only 2,000 people. Lack of money and political will makes the border very porous, and the Border Police cannot efficiently control it. In an interview, the director of the Border Police, Vinko Dumancic says that the Border Police is a very professional organization but due to lack of personnel and very difficult land configuration, the police are not able to control every crossing. He adds that the most critical area to control is along the human trafficking routes, which includes the southeast border entrance to the country and the northwest border with Croatia.⁹⁶ Unofficially, Bosnia and Herzegovina has more than a hundred illegal border crossings, not counting possible crossings for walkers.

The weak mechanism for controlling border crossings can be seen in the case of Anto Jelavic, a former member of Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency and president of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). In 2005, Jelavic was convicted of misusing authority and public corruption and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He escaped from prison and fled to Croatia two days before the verdict was read.⁹⁷ He escaped the country through a small controlled border crossing in Herzegovina. Although the Bosnia and Herzegovina Court's Appeal Council Unit for Organized, Economic Crime and Corruption lifted the first verdict and ordered that the main trial be redone, Jelavic refused to return and remained at large in neighboring Croatia.⁹⁸ On April 8, 2009,

⁹⁶ Marija Arnautovic, "Koliko je granica BiH sigurna?" *Slobodnaevropa.org*, May 28, 2009, http://www.danas.org/content/vinko_dumancic/1741432.html (accessed June 13, 2009).

⁹⁷ Peter Lippman, "On 10th Anniversary of Dayton Accord: Are Changes in Bosnia Real or Rhetorical?" *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 25, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 38–39.

⁹⁸ Goran Vezic and Zana Kovacevic, "Ante Jelavic za RSE-Necu se vracati u BiH," *Slobodnaevropa.org*, July 19, 2006, <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/news/676113.html> (accessed June 13, 2009).

Jelavic was kidnapped from Zagreb and brought to the Bosnia and Herzegovina town of Rama, where he was blackmailed for a million euros. Jelavic Somehow escaped his kidnappers and showed up in Zagreb on April 9, 2009. The fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions have not be able to bring Jelavic to justice since his escape to Croatia in 2005, and the fact that he crossed the Bosnia and Herzegovina border twice in less than 24 hours shows that Bosnia and Herzegovina security organizations are very weak and not able to efficiently control the country's borders and its territory. If a public figure like Jelavic can leave and enter the country undetected, then anonymous members of worldwide terrorist networks can even more easily access the country and remain safe and undisturbed.

2. Administrative Incapacity

Administrative incapacity is a failure of the state to provide basic services for its citizens as modern states should. It includes a “minimal level of personal security, economic stability, and functioning bureaucratic and judicial institutions.”⁹⁹ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, administrative incapacity is manifested in the weak state decision making process, high levels of corruption that infiltrate almost all spheres of society, economic instability, and inefficient judicial institutions.

a. Weak State Decision-Making Process

Political animosity and intolerance result in the inability of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament to agree on almost any decision that would improve the future of the country. One of the major proposals was a reform of the Constitution to strengthen the central government. The Parliament split along ethnic lines and rejected the reforms.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, the executive and legislative branches are very inefficient. According to an analysis conducted by the nongovernmental organization the Center for Civilian Initiative, in 2008, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament adopted only 41 laws out of 151 planned. Of those laws passed, only two were new, the others being simply amendments to existing laws.

⁹⁹ Piazza, 469.

¹⁰⁰ Brownell.

A similar situation is found with the Council of Ministers, where efficiency in adopting new laws is less than 50 percent.¹⁰¹ Describing the current situation, Ivica Cavar, the coordinator of the Center for Civilian Initiative monitoring team for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly, says,

In two years of its work, the BiH Parliament adopted 81 laws. During that time, the Croatian Parliament adopted an unbelievable 427 laws. Also, the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina is delayed compared to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. Here we have a country that is a candidate for EU membership, and one which is in approximately comparable to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and again there can be seen the difference, as the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted 53 laws in the second half of last year.¹⁰²

Another example of the ineffectiveness of the Bosnia and Herzegovina administration is visible in the slow progress toward European Union membership. To be accepted as an equal EU member, Bosnia and Herzegovina must fulfill some requirements; hence, the country is constantly monitored and evaluated. Even though the entire political establishment states that their goal and the goal of their political parties is the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the EU, progress has not meet expectations. The report of the European Stability Initiative (ESI) for 2009 shows that Bosnia and Herzegovina has not met any necessary condition for a non-visas regime with the EU. Actually, the country received the worst grades and shares the last spot on the bottom of the list. One again the political elite has complicated an already complex situation and divided the population. The country's Croats and Serbs have special relations with Croatia and Serbia, respectively. This means that most of them have dual citizenship and the possibility of holding passports from those countries. Croatia is excluded from the *Schengen*¹⁰³ restriction because of some pre-*Schengen* agreements,

¹⁰¹ Ivan Katavic, "Katastrofalan rad Parlamenta i Vijeca ministara BiH," *Slobodnaevropa.com*, March 6, 2009, http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/centri_civilnih_inicijativa/1505583.html (accessed June 9, 2009).

¹⁰² Katavic.

¹⁰³ The agreement signed between five member states of European Community in Schengen in Luxembourg in 1985. Later the Agreement was supplemented by the Convention. The agreement is named after the city in which it was signed, and it defined removal of the systematic border controls between member states.

which means that Croat passport holders have been allowed to travel all around Europe without visas. Since the election of Borislav Tadic as president, Serbia has made serious progress toward EU membership. Although Serbia is still off the *Schengen* list, it is likely that the visa regime for Serbian passport holders will be removed. If the EU accepts Serbia on the *Schengen* White List, only the Bosnia and Herzegovina Bosniaks would remain under the visa regime. This situation could have a negative impact on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If Bosniaks' travel to European countries involves visa limitations, while Serbs and Croats are able to go wherever they please in Europe, Bosniaks may easily feel frustrated, humiliated and unequal. Facing closed doors in Europe, the Bosniaks might intensify relations with Middle Eastern countries like they did at the beginning of the war. All of this might lead to religious radicalization and deepening divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims in the country.¹⁰⁴

After adopting legislation for Bosnia and Herzegovina police reform, the country fulfilled the necessary requirements for the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union. The SAA was signed in June 2008, and Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians accepted a series of conditions that need to be adopted with political consensus. Since then, not much has been done to insure implementation. By the end of September 2008, only 13 of more than 30 short-term requirements had been met. "Regardless of nearly unanimous declared support for the process of integration with Europe, there was practically no further progress in this regard after the signing itself," according to the UNDP 2008 Annual Report.¹⁰⁵

b. Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been slowing down the reconstruction process. Research shows that "despite some improvement in the environment for doing business, BiH is falling behind other countries in the region,

¹⁰⁴ Vuk Bacanovic, "Bosnjacki geto usred Europe," *BHDani.com*, no 624, May 29, 2009, http://www.bhdani.com/default.asp?kat=txt&broj_id=624&tekst_rb=9 (accessed May 29, 2009).

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Development Programme, Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Early Warning System: Annual Report – 2008*, 2008. <http://www.undp.ba/index.aspx?PID=14> (accessed June 19, 2009).

which are reforming much faster.”¹⁰⁶ So far, three anti-corruption strategies have failed because of a lack of commitment from local institutions, lack of co-operation between the principal agencies and the lack of political will to combat corruption.¹⁰⁷

Year	Country	Political parties	Parliament/ Legislature	Police	Legal system Judiciary	Tax revenue	Business / private sector	Customs	Medical services	Media	Education system	Utilities	Registry and permit services	The military	NGOs	Religious bodies
2004	Europe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	BiH	4.3	4.1	3.9	4.0	3.3	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.1	3.5	2.7	3.1	2.3	2.5	2.5
2005	CE	4.0	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.2	3.5	2.9	3.4	3.1	2.7	2.3
	BiH	4.5	4.2	4.0	4.1	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.1	3.6	2.5	2.9	2.4	2.3	2.6
2007	SE Europe	3.8	3.7	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	-	4.1	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.2	3.5	3.2
	BiH	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.2	-	4.2	4.0	4.1	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.8
2009	WB	3.6	3.5	-	3.5	-	3.7	-	-	3.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
	BiH	4.4	4.3	-	4.3	-	4.2	-	-	3.7	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 1. Impact of corruption on various sectors and institutions¹⁰⁸

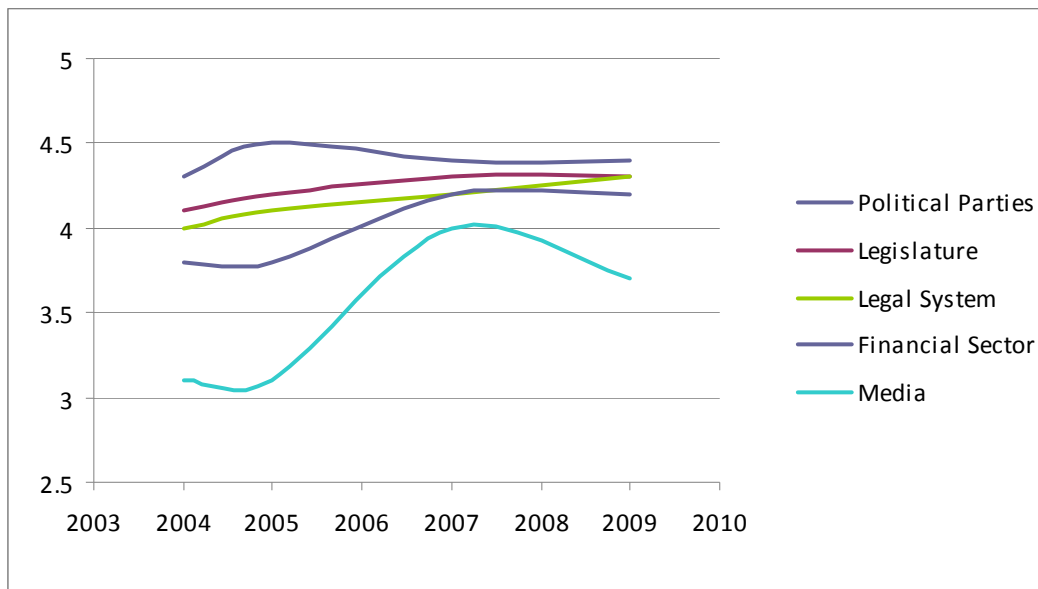


Figure 2. Impact of corruption on various sectors and institutions¹⁰⁹ (lower is better)

¹⁰⁶ “Bosnia: Economic management faces extra test in 2008,” *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service*, January 21, 2008, 1. <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/> (accessed February 25, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Boris Divjak and Michael Pugh, “The Political Economy of Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *International Peacekeeping* (June 1, 2008): 376.

¹⁰⁸ Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer 2005–2009*, <http://www.transparency.org/> (accessed June 22, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

The information provided by Transparency International shows that the impact of corruption on various sectors and institutions has been increasing during the last five years, which might be related to the intensified political situation during this period. In addition, 71 percent of the Bosnia and Herzegovina population believes that the Bosnia and Herzegovina government actions in the fight against corruption have been ineffective, far above the average for other Balkan countries.¹¹⁰

c. Economic Instability

Bosnia and Herzegovina's economic capabilities were significantly damaged during the war. After the war, the economy was reorganized and transformed from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. The process of reorganization is ongoing and the country still has not reached its pre-war level of economic development. In 2007, the official data shows that the economy recovered about 70 percent of the prewar GDP. According to Divjak and Plug, this data is misleading because the prewar GDP level was calculated without considering the service sector, which was included in the calculations starting in 2007. Therefore, the real economic recovery compared to the prewar GDP level is below 60 percent.¹¹¹

The first step of the reorganization was privatization of common property. This process has not been as successful as expected. The total sales value of the enterprise was about six billion U.S. dollars, and privatization provided back only 400 million. In addition, many privatized companies have not rebuilt their production capabilities, resulting in increased unemployment.¹¹² According to Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country's unemployment rate for 2008 was 23.4 percent.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer 2005–2009*, <http://www.transparency.org/> (accessed June 22, 2009).

¹¹¹ Divjak and Pugh, 381.

¹¹² "Kako isplivati nakon propale privatizacije?" *Slobodnaeuropa.org*, August 29, 2005, <http://www.slobodnaeuropa.org/content/Article/856735.html> (accessed June 18, 2009).

¹¹³ Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Basic Indicators*, <http://www.bhas.ba/eng/Default.asp> (accessed June 18, 2009).

The Political Instability Index shows that Bosnia and Herzegovina belongs to the group of countries where social protest poses a very high risk to government. Out of 165 countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina was at 27th position in 2007, with a trend toward increasing risk.¹¹⁴

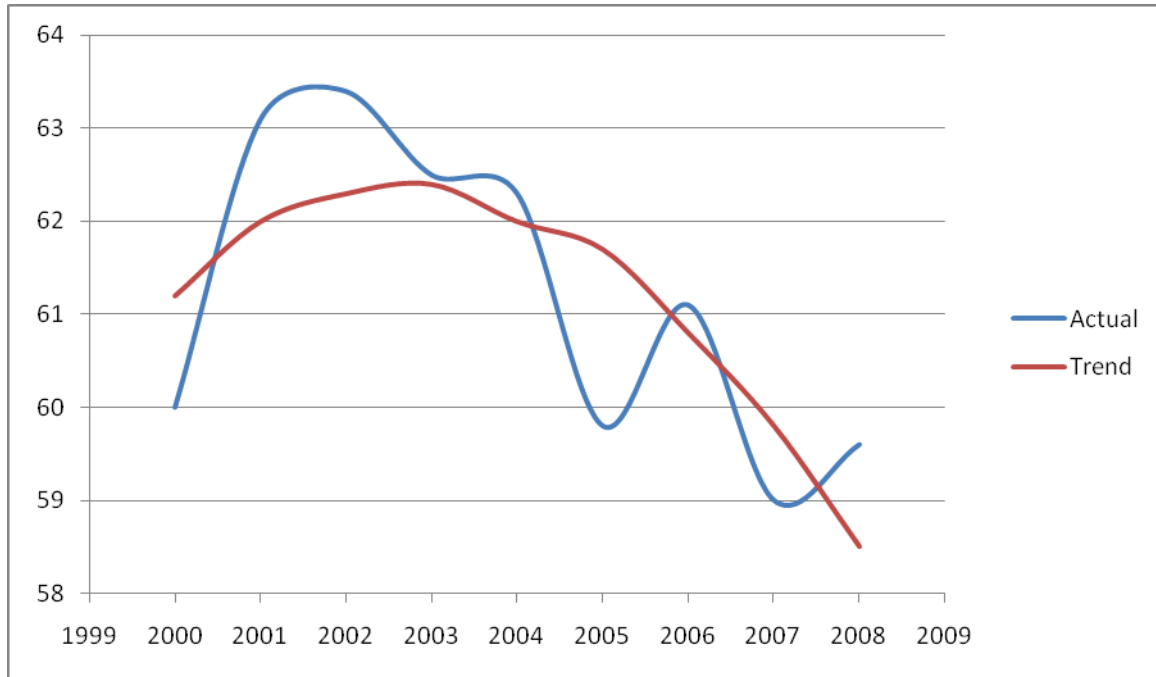


Figure 3. Economic Stability Index (higher is better)

According to UNDP, economic stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina, after initial increases from 1999 to 2002, has fluctuated considerably since then, with a negative trend that might continue.¹¹⁵

d. Judicial Institutions

Judicial reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina is ongoing. According to some analysts, as of 2008 there was still no rule of law, and national politics still have a significant influence on the judicial system. “Positive shifts are rare, and are related

¹¹⁴ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Eiu.com*, http://viewswire.eiu.com/site_info.asp?info_name=social_unrest_table&page=noads (accessed June 19, 2009).

¹¹⁵ United Nations Development Programme, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

mainly to the prosecution of war crimes,” reported *Deutsche Welle* on June 28, 2008.¹¹⁶ The judges and prosecutors in judicial institutions are mostly Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens but international staff helps local efforts to establish independent and efficient systems. Patrick Robinson, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, says that international judges and prosecutors are still needed in the judicial institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that their appointments should be extended.¹¹⁷

According to Transparency International, Bosnia and Herzegovina have not conducted any specific measures to reduce the corruption level. The organization points to political corruption, close relations between politicians and organized crime, illegal processes during privatization and lack of transparency in the work of public institutions as the biggest obstacles to progress. The situation is based in disagreements over laws that regulate conflicts of interest, poor implementation of laws on freedom of access to private information, and the lack of an independent anticorruption body.¹¹⁸

Even though the work of judicial institutions has not been seen as politically influenced, the choice of personnel for appointments is mostly a political process in which political eligibility prevails over individual competency. Recent research by the Center for Investigative Journalism shows that three of nine Supreme Court judge appointments were politically motivated and that those selected had inferior professional qualifications compared to the nominees who were not chosen. The same study discovered that the efficiency of the Supreme Court is low, with the court’s processes taking, on average, more than a year to complete.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ “BiH nema nezavisnog pravosuđa,” *DW-World.de*, June 28, 2008, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,3445751,00.html> (accessed June 19, 2009).

¹¹⁷ “Medjunarodno osoblje jos potrebno pravosudju u BiH,” *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network*, June 15, 2009, <http://www.bim.ba/bh/171/10/20246/> (accessed June 19, 2009).

¹¹⁸ “Poruka TI BiH-a Evropskoj komisiji: Stanje korupcije u BiH dramatično,” *Transparency International: Bosnia and Herzegovina*, June 8, 2009, <http://www.ti-bih.org/Articles.aspx?ArticleId=67fad755-56da-41cd-b9b0-0409287f029a> (accessed June 20, 2009).

¹¹⁹ Ustavni sud Bosne i Hercegovine, Centar za istraživačko novinarstvo, http://reportingproject.net/court/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=1 (accessed June 20, 2009).

C. SUPPORT FOR RADICAL ELEMENTS

1. Islamic Radicals in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Islamist ideas have been present in the Balkans since first half of the nineteenth century. A group of young Muslims, motivated by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, established an organization aiming to create a Muslim society aligned with Muslims worldwide. The Young Muslims organization was established in Sarajevo in 1941. During World War II, many members of the organization collaborated with the Nazis. After the war, the Young Muslims continued to work in Yugoslavia promoting Pan-Islamism and calling for *jihād* through the journal *El-Mudzahid*. The editor of the journal, 21-year-old Young Muslim activist Alija Izetbegovic, was arrested shortly after the journal was published. Izetbegovic received three year prison sentence for his wartime activities. After prison, Izetbegovic operated secretly as a leader of the Young Muslims in Sarajevo. Over time, the organization returned to its original strength and established secret ties with Islamists from Egypt and other Arab countries.¹²⁰

Izetbegovic wrote the Islamic Declaration, a manifesto of Islamists in Yugoslavia, in 1970. The Declaration was not published at that time, but was secretly distributed among sympathizers and those of like mind. The Islamic Declaration is a critical analysis of the position of Muslims in the world order; it sees Muslims as members of a single community that controls the most valuable resources while living in very divided and poor societies. The general idea of the Declaration is “implementation of Islam in every sphere of the individual’s personal life, family and society, through revival of Islamic religious thought and creation of a common Islamic community from Morocco to Indonesia.”¹²¹

Izetbegovic, together with other Muslim intellectuals, was again arrested in 1983 and accused of terrorist activities and collaboration with Iran, at the time an enemy of Yugoslavia. The end of the 1980s has been characterized as the beginning of the end of

¹²⁰ Schindler, 15–55.

¹²¹ Alija Izetbegovic, “Islamska Deklaracija,” *Bosanski alim*, <http://www.bosanskialim.com> (accessed April 23, 2009).

the communist regime in Yugoslavia. In 1988, the presidency released all political prisoners. Izetbegovic was set free after only five years of prison. Just a year later, Izetbegovic and Adil Zulfikarpasihch, an emigrant to Switzerland, formed a Bosniak political party called the Party of Democratic Actions (SDA). Because there was no strong state system, Izetbegovic was free to put his radical ideas in motion. In 1990, he finally published his 20 year-old Islamic Declaration. Obviously, Izetbegovic has held a radical Islamist ideology since his early attempts to establish an Islamic country based on Quran and Shari'a through the SDA.¹²² However, his ideology was never openly promoted through the party's program. For Bosnia and Herzegovina's moderate Muslims and multiethnic population, a party with an Islamist agenda would not be acceptable. Therefore, Izetbegovic and his narrow political leadership carefully manipulated the masses, promoting democratic values. In 1990, Izetbegovic became the first president of Bosnia and Herzegovina. To achieve his hidden agenda, Izetbegovic and the SDA elites needed support; hence, they restored their links first with Iran and later with other Islamic countries of the Middle East. This triggered the arrival of new elements who started shaping Bosniak's national consciousness and identity. Some of these elements with extremist agendas jeopardize Bosnia and Herzegovina's multiethnic society and moderate Muslims even today.

2. Support from the Political and Religious Elite

Izetbegovic was not the only politician who supported Islamizing Bosnia and Herzegovina. Almost all of his close associates were carefully chosen and almost all of them share the same ideology. Those who opposed Islamizing Bosnia and Herzegovina left the party, as Zulfikarpasic did in 1992 after realizing the real nature of Izetbegovic's efforts. In October 2008, Dzevad Galiasevic, a politician and member of an independent expert group on counterterrorism, stated that about 400 persons tied to the terrorist network live in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the protection of Muslim politicians and other powerful people in the country.

¹²² Schindler, 15–55.

I identified their political protectors such as Haris Silajdzic, Hasan Cengic, Alija Izetbegovic, and Bakir Izetbegovic, as well as their protectors in the police such as Semsudin Mehmedovic, who is currently the deputy chairman of the committee overseeing SIPA and police reform expert,” says Galijasevic in the interview for Croatian daily *Vecernji List*.¹²³

In much of the literature, the name of Hasan Cengic is tied to Islamic radicalism and Islamic countries in the Middle East. Cengic was Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Minister of Defense before he was replaced at the request of the international community. Some sources say that Cengic was involved in weapons supply to southern Serbia and Kosovo during the Kosovo crisis.¹²⁴

Bakir Izebegovic, the son of Alija Izetbegovic, has been tied to the donation of land in Sarajevo to Saudi Arabia, where the Saudis then built the King Fahd mosque and recreational center. Reportedly, the land belonged to the Serb Orthodox Church before it was nationalized by former regime. The mosque and recreation center are not under the jurisdiction of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Islamic community, nor are Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities allowed to approach to the property without the permission of the mosque leadership. The mosque is known as a gathering place for Islamic radicals.

Semsudin Mehmetovic was the chief law enforcement officer in the Zenica region during 1996. At the time, diplomats, NATO officers and the United Nations saw him and his negative attitude toward ethnic minorities as a serious threat to peace. Indeed, he was accused of “having sheltered foreign Islamic fundamentalist fighters, of crushing moderate Muslim political forces and of fostering hatred between Muslims and Croats.”¹²⁵

Finally, Haris Silajdzic, the Bosniak member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency, was among Izetbegovic’s core staff. During the war, Silajdzic was the

¹²³ “Bosnian ‘White al-Qaeda’ seen as grave threat to Europe,” *Islam-Watch.org*, January 10, 2008, <http://www.islam-watch.org/Serbianna/Bosnian-White-al-Qaeda-grave-threat-to-Europe.htm> (accessed May 12, 2009).

¹²⁴ “New Balkans Terrorist Weapons Supply Lines Revealed,” *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, November 1, 2003, 20,17, <http://www.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/> (accessed June 20, 2009).

¹²⁵ Mike O’Connor, “Police Official’s Methods Raise Ethnic Fears in a Region of Bosnia,” *NewYorkTimes.com*, June 16, 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/06/16/world/police-official-s-methods-raise-ethnic-fears-in-a-region-of-bosnia.html> (accessed July 18, 2009).

second man in the Party for Democratic Action. Actually, he was Izebegovic's deputy, and one of the persons directly involved in importing foreign fighters in the country. Silajdzic has good relations with Islamic states, and when he was elected as a member of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency, the Iranian government expressed pleasure at his election and promised to continue supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹²⁶ Haris Silajdzic was the driving force on behalf of not only the governments of Islamic countries but also Islamic movements and humanitarian organizations.¹²⁷

These politicians are not the only ones supportive of Islamic ideology, but they definitely represent the top of the Bosniak political elite. This leads to the conclusion that among Bosniak politicians there is strong current support for the creation of an Islamic state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the creation of a Bosniak-dominated state.

While the Bosnia and Herzegovina Islamic community, headed by Reis Ceric, has expressed skepticism toward Islamic radicals and their activities in the country, they never openly tried to prevent the spread of radical ideology. Indeed, the Islamic community seems to provide a permissive environment for the spread of radical Islam with aid received from Saudi Arabia. According to Dzevad Galiasevic, there is ongoing recruitment of new terrorists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and some mosques serve as recruitment centers. He named the King Fahd mosque in Sarajevo as an example. He also claims that the Islamic community knows of these activities, and part of the community supports radicalization by allowing the practice of Wahhabism in some mosques.¹²⁸

3. Neglect by Bosnia and Herzegovina Institutions

Support by some members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina political elite to the spread of Islamism throughout the country causes state institutions to ignore the issue.

¹²⁶ Steven Olujic, "Green Flag over the Balkans," *FAO Journal*, volume X no. 3 (December 2006): 11, <http://www.faoa.org/PDF/pub34.pdf> (accessed April 12, 2009).

¹²⁷ Sara Babic, "Silajdzic je doveo mudzahedine u Bosnu," *Nacional.hr*, daily online, September 14, 2006, <http://www.nacional.hr/clanak/29058/silajdzic-je-doveo-mudzahedine-u-bosnu> (accessed July 27, 2009).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

For this reason, the results of the investigations conducted between 1993 and 2001 regarding relations between terrorists and humanitarian organizations in the country have been ignored, marginalized or even covered up. The first independent investigation on the relationship between terrorists and humanitarian organizations was conducted in 2001, at the strong request of U.S. officials.¹²⁹ Basically, the results have not been published, and major suspects would disappear when they came under investigation or police surveillance. Indeed, the radicalization of Bosniaks and the existence of Islamist and terrorist elements in the country are still avoidable topics among Bosnia and Herzegovina population and political leaders.

The federal prison in Zenica is under strong Wahhabi influence. In the past few years, there are dozens of reported incidents of non-Muslim prisoners' forced conversion to Islam and beatings of Muslims who refuse to pray. Some prisoners openly glorify Osama bin Laden and his fight against coalition forces in Afghanistan. Bosnia and Herzegovina officials and even the media have ignored conditions in the Zenica prison. Initially, the Croat and Serb newspapers reported the incidents, which attracted more attention from Croats and Serbs than from Bosniaks. There are reportedly 50 Wahhabis in the prison, including Muarmer Topalovic, an extremist who murdered three members of a Bosnia and Herzegovina Croat family in the village of Kostajnica in 2002. Even though some prisoners are willing to testify to mistreatment, the director of the Zenica prison categorically denies all incidents and the existence of Islamic radicalism in the prison.¹³⁰

In July 2009, Karray Kamel bin Ali, known as Abu Mali, escaped from the same prison while serving three year and 10 month long sentence for robberies and physical injuries to members of the Kovac family from the village of Brnjice near Kakanj. Karray did not actually escape the prison, but rather did not return from an approved leave.

¹²⁹ Esad Hecimovic, "Vlasti, humanitarci i teroristi: tajne jedne veze," *BHDani.com*, no. 286, December 6, 2002, http://www.bhdani.com/default.asp?kat=txt&broj_id=286&tekst_rb=13 (accessed March 15, 2009).

¹³⁰ G.M. "Direktor KPZ Zenica Nihad Spahić o situaciji u tom zatvoru," *Glassprske.com*, November 4, 2008, <http://www.glassprske.com/vijest/2/novosti/13568/lat/Direktor-KPZ-Zenica-Nihad-Spahic-o-situaciji-u-tom-zatvoru.html> (accessed June 11, 2009).

Karray, of Tunisian origin, was among the Islamic foreign fighters awarded Bosnia and Herzegovina citizenship. He married a Bosnian woman and remained in the country. Karray was a good friend of Jusuf Barčić. Their friendship began while Karray was serving a previous seven-year sentence for a murder he committed in Zenica in 1997, and Barčić was serving a three-month sentence for abuse in the family. In April 2007, the Ministry of Security identified Karray as a threat to national security, due to his ties with terrorist organizations, and canceled his citizenship.¹³¹ Although his temporary visa expired after six months, Karray was prosecuted and sentenced in November 2007. Several days later, he was seen walking through the town of Zenica. The authorities let him walk free while he waited to begin serving his sentence. Since March 2009, the same administration allowed him to take leaves “because of his appropriate behavior in prison.”¹³²

The Zenica prison provides just one of many examples of how radical elements and their supporters are ignored and marginalized by Bosnia and Herzegovina officials. Immediately after reports of Islamization in the prison, some Bosniaks connected the news to Milorad Dodig and the attempts of Bosnia and Herzegovina Serbs and Croats to close the federal prison in Zenica and establish national prisons in Mostar and Banjaluka.

D. DEMOGRAPHIC AND GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a southeast European country in the western part of Balkan Peninsula. Even though its seacoast is only 24 kilometers, it is a Mediterranean country as well. Its location makes it a transit area from the European continent to the Mediterranean Sea, as well as from western Europe to southeast Europe and Asia. Kimberley Thachuk describes Bosnia and Herzegovina as “a regional hub for narcotics

¹³¹ Tanjug, “Abu Hamza pobjegao iz zatvora u Zenici,” *DnevniAvaz.ba*, July 29, 2009, <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji/aktuelno/abu-hamza-pobjegao-iz-zatvora-u-zenici> (accessed July 29, 2009).

¹³² Fena – Onasa, “Karay Kamel od marta koristio vanzavodske pogodnosti,” *DnevniAvaz.ba*, July 30, 2009, <http://www.dnevniavaz.ba/dogadjaji/crna-hronika/karay-kamel-od-marta-koristio-vanzavodske-pogodnosti> (accessed July 29, 2009).

transshipment. It also serves as a transit country for drugs, humans, and cigarettes.”¹³³ Like smugglers, international terrorists can use the country to infiltrate European soil and to penetrate deeper into other European countries. The country’s internal geography also plays an important role in attracting potential terrorist groups. The terrain varies from the lowlands in the north to massive mountains in the south and central parts of the country. Although the infrastructure is quite developed, migrations during the war caused many remote villages to be abandoned. Such rural areas are poorly controlled by local security elements and therefore suitable for the eventual establishment of various non-native communities, perhaps even terrorist camps.

Another feature affecting the spread of Islamic terrorist networks is related to the Muslim population living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. About 43 percent of the state population is Muslim. Except for religion, Bosniaks do not differ in any way from other Europeans. Bosniaks have the same physical appearance, social behavior, clothing, language and in some cases even names; they can fit perfectly into secular Europe. Generally, it is much easier for Islamic terrorists to spread their influence in societies where they can radicalize some of the local population and find supporters for their activities, therefore Bosnia and Herzegovina with its Muslim population seems to be attractive for terrorist to spread their influence.

E. CONCLUSION

Almost fifteen years after the war, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still not a stable country. Constant confrontations and disunity among Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians representing different ethnic groups is serious obstacle to progress. Because of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s social, political and economic situation, the Fund for Peace research places the country among those states vulnerable to failure. Political disunity results in many inefficient and ineffective state institutions. Negative impacts can be seen even in the security sector. Recent events prove that the country cannot efficiently control its borders, resulting in trafficking, smuggling and illegal border crossings.

¹³³ Kimberley L. Thachuk, *Transnational Threats: Smuggling and Trafficking in Arms, Drugs, and Human Life* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007): 90.

Poorly controlled borders, police forces that cannot effectively fight illegal elements and state security institutions unable to carry out their tasks all support the development of destabilizing elements, including elements supporting terrorism and Islamic radicalism. Steven Olujic states that,

The inability of the state to effectively control its territory leaves a certain level of freedom for extremist elements to operate in the “ungoverned” spaces found mostly in the rugged terrain of central Bosnia.¹³⁴

Weaknesses of Bosnia and Herzegovina are not evident—only in its weak coercive abilities. Ethnic tension and political disunity result in a slow and inefficient legislative and executive decision-making. Politicians’ unwillingness to compromise makes the passage of new laws a long and sometimes seemingly endless process. Weak legislative and law enforcement capabilities make the country fertile soil for all kinds of illegal and destabilizing elements. It is no surprise that UNDP research shows that the impact of corruption on various sectors and institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina is greater than the European Union average in 2004 to 2007, and greater than the western Balkan average in 2008.

Besides its weak coercive and administrative capacities, Bosnia and Herzegovina has one characteristic very important for attracting Islamist terrorists—the support of some Bosniak politicians for Islamic radical ideologies. Even if no Bosniak politician publicly expresses sympathy and support for Islamic radicals, one can assume that those who supported Islamist ideologies before the war, were involved in importing foreign fighters and supported radicalization of the Bosniak population during the war, and protect foreign fighters since the end of the war, still supports Islamic radical activities and use Bosnia and Herzegovina’s complicated and inefficient security system to protect them.

In summary, constant confrontations among Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians erode state institutions and the mechanisms for providing citizens with basic goods. The state cannot control its territory or borders, corruption is rampant, bureaucracy is slow and ineffective, the economy is unstable, and the rule of law is not established. With

¹³⁴ Olujic.

political elements that support radical ideologies, Bosnia and Herzegovina can be seen as a sympathetic space for terrorist vanguards to establish bases and recruit followers.

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V. CONCLUSION

Three theories that define the roots and necessary conditions for development of or support to terrorist networks and the radicalization of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Muslim society result in different outcomes. The theory of political grievances is not applicable to the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but its failure does not mean that the Bosniak population is satisfied with the current situation in the country and the Muslim world. On the contrary, Bosniaks are not indifferent toward events in the Middle East and especially toward the slow and inefficient return process and post conflict justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, Bosnia and Herzegovina's democratic system is based on political pluralism and encourages political participation, and the population can express grievances through political institutions or by supporting existing political parties or establishing new ones. Therefore, dissatisfied Bosniaks opt for political participation and nonviolence in bringing their grievances to the attention of responsible authorities, instead of insurgent violence.

Vanguards of politically motivated extremist groups either do not exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina or their existence is weak and unimportant. This is not the case for vanguards of religiously motivated extremist groups. Islamic radical fighters initially came to support the Bosniaks during the 1992–1995 war. After the war, those who remained in country continued operating, mostly in religious circles, attempting to alienate Bosniaks from their traditional Islamic practices and impose a more strict and puritanical form of Islam. Although they did not radicalize the entire Muslim population, they attracted some followers among Muslim youth.

The Islamist current known in the West as Wahhabism was unknown in Bosnia and Herzegovina before it was brought by the *Mujahideen* in the early 1990s and by Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims who attended Saudi sponsored Islamic universities in the Middle East. In less than fifteen years, the number of Wahhabi followers increased to more than 6000 Bosniaks. The majority of them advocates a nonviolent approach to achieving their objectives and operates within legal boundaries, so they cannot be accused of breaking the law or their activities banned. Some radicalized Bosniaks

already act as vanguards of Islamist terrorist networks promoting anti-Western and anti-secular ideologies, demonizing the United States, and calling for *jihād* in support of Muslims in the Middle East. Numerous Web sites promote puritanical Islam and attempt to radicalize Bosniaks to accept violence as a way of expressing their beliefs and achieving their goals. They try to keep the Bosniak population alienated and encourage constant animosity towards Serbs, Croats and non-Muslim societies. Their objectives for Bosnia and Herzegovina include spreading Islamist influence within Europe, mobilizing the Bosniak population as a part of the global Islamic community, and creating an environment where terrorist organizations can mobilize new members for further activities.

The growth of Islamic radical ideologies among Bosnia and Herzegovina's Bosniaks would not be possible without strong foreign sponsorship and the approval of local authorities. Middle Eastern Islamist influences, welcomed by some Bosnia and Herzegovina political and religious leaders, have shaped the environment of Bosnia and Herzegovina for almost two decades. Dozens of Middle Eastern style new mosques were built by Saudi donations, along with several religious schools and universities where classes are taught in the Arabic language. These mosques are mostly used as assembly points for Islamists and centers where the previously unknown puritanical style of Islam is openly promoted. These Islamist activities would not be possible without the acquiescence of local authorities, whose support for radicalization of Muslim society and Islamic terrorists is evident in their provision of new identities, travel documents and hideouts for Islamic foreign fighters who supported the Bosniaks during the war and remained in the country after the war ended. Some of the officials involved in importing *Mujahideen* and supporting various Middle Eastern organizations still play important public roles as politicians, businessmen, religious leaders and university professors. With all these people operating in the public sphere, and weak coercive and administrative capacities caused by constant confrontations between politicians, the country seems to be fertile ground for Islamist extremism.

Petter Nesser provides a chronology of attempted and executed terrorist attacks by violent Islamist radicals in Europe between 1994 and 2007. In 74 incidents, more than

250 people were killed and many thousands affected. However, in all these incidents, only two Bosniaks were involved, in two separate cases. Both cases are classified¹³⁵ by Nesser as

incidents of a more dubious character, in which information about suspected terrorists, targets, and intentions is vaguer, and which the author has not yet been able to verify or adequately substantiate through independent sources.¹³⁶

In addition, “[a]n opinion poll found 70 percent of Bosnian Muslims opposed Wahhabism, while 13 percent broadly supported it. Only 3 percent declared themselves followers.”¹³⁷ Even though Bosnia and Herzegovina has a permissive environment for establishing and supporting Islamist extremist groups and some radicalized Bosniaks act as vanguards of global terrorist networks, most Bosnia and Herzegovina Bosniaks are not so radicalized that they would set up a branch of an existing terrorist network or create their own group, nor would they provide significant support to the global terrorist network. Existing Islamic radicals are still not seen as a threat for Bosnia and Herzegovina and regional security, nor does Bosnia and Herzegovina play an important role in supporting global terrorism.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Islamic radicals have failed to establish a significant presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina despite the country’s permissive environment. The most probable reason for their failure lies in Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslim population, who generally seem unsupportive of radical ideologies that are historically or culturally foreign to their tradition. Therefore, exploring why the Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslim population seems unsupportive of radical Islamic ideologies is a good starting place for further research. Answers may include the fact that the majority of the country’s Muslim population shares a common way of life with Christians in a centuries-old secular society. Further, Bosniaks were less connected to and informed about trends in the Muslim world

¹³⁵ Nesser, “Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994–2007.”

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 926.

¹³⁷ Sito-Sucic.

in highly secular Yugoslavia; hence, they were spared negative influences from the Islamic world. In addition, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslim population practices traditional Islam influenced by Sufism, which is a doctrine more supportive of secularism than Islamic radical ideologies; thus Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims resist radicalization and the association of their own fight with the global war against enemies of Islam.¹³⁸ Finally, a secular multiethnic environment with guaranteed equal rights and high literacy rates can also contribute to the failure of radicalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

1. Common Way of Life

Islam came to Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Turkish invasion in the fifteenth century. Upon their arrival, the Turks started converting the local population to Islam, a process that continued throughout most of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was never entirely completed. Not all of the local population was converted, and those who were converted did not immediately accept the new religion in their hearts. Whether converted voluntarily or forcibly, people generally accepted the new religion just to protect their own interests and to gain benefits such as higher social status. In many cases, families were divided between converts to Islam and those who remained loyal to their old religion. Some converts practiced Islam in public and their own religion secretly. People did not forget old habits and customs overnight. However, Islam eventually became the generally accepted and practiced religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The moderate Islam practiced in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been shaped by long coexistence with other faiths. It incorporates customs that predate Christian Slavs' conversion to Islam in the fifteenth century when the Ottomans conquered the Balkans. Therefore, moderate Muslims, accustomed to religious pluralism, are not eager to accept radical ideologies that are less open to a common life shared with people of other religions.

¹³⁸ Cook, 135.

2. Equal Rights

The socialist regime of the former Yugoslavia may be an important factor in shaping Muslims' religious behavior and customs. Before World War II, the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina was based on *Shari'a* law. After the war and the victory of Tito's partisans, Islam and other religions were drastically limited and their role and importance was minimized. The state became highly secular. Practicing religion became a free choice, but the practicing was allowed only during free time and in private or dedicated locations and objects.

From the beginning, the communists promoted equal rights among women and men. Equal rights and civil law replaced the male dominant society and *Shari'a* law. The regime prohibited gender discrimination, and women started playing an important role in political, educational, social and other spheres of Yugoslav society. Once women reach gender equality, it is very hard for them to accept subordinate positions in society. There are many examples in the puritan interpretation of the Islamic text that put women in inferior positions to men. This view is not supported by Bosniak females, and contributes to animosity towards radical ideologies among Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims in general.

3. Literacy and Moderate Religious Education

Another characteristic of the prewar period that influences the behavior of Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims is high levels of literacy. Basic education is mandatory for everyone, and as a result, the literacy rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 96.7 percent. Some scholars argue that education does not influence the decision to become a terrorist, citing many examples of highly educated terrorists. However, an educated society does not involve only the male population. Education for women opens the door to political participation and creates alternatives and approaches to problem solving that do not usually include extremism and insurgent violence. Islamist ideologies do not support women in political roles and as social leaders. As a result, educated women are less likely to see Islamist societies as an option where they can participate equally in public life.

The religious education offered through the educational institutions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Islamic community is one more reason why Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims practice moderate Islam. There are eight *medresas* in the country. The oldest is Gazi Husrev Begova Medresa, founded in 1537. The educational model of this *medresa* and that of similar schools in the country includes study of traditional and rationalized doctrine that allows students to gain theological, philosophical, legal, philological and scientific knowledge. Beside the mandatory religious courses, students take general courses with linguistic, mathematical and social content. These courses include Bosnian, Arabic and English languages, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, history, sociology, democracy and human rights, philosophy, psychology, pedagogy and sports. This curriculum gives *medresa* graduates the chance to continue their education in one of the three Islamic universities in Sarajevo, Zenica and Bihac, or in any other university in the country or abroad, depending on their interests and inclination.¹³⁹ The teachings in these religious schools are based on traditional and moderate Islam, giving graduates the education necessary to oppose Islamic fundamentalism and motivating them to remain faithful to traditional Islam.

4. Common Motherland

Finally, sharing a common motherland also can be seen as a reason why Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims do not support radical ideologies. Bosniaks have lived with Christians and other religious groups for centuries. They did not migrate to Bosnia and Herzegovina; they occupied the region before the arrival of Islam and Christianity. Even though the Ottomans had a big influence on Bosniak culture and religious beliefs, Bosniaks have never been totally alienated from other local ethnic groups. Even today, Bosniaks are more similar to Bosnia and Herzegovina Serbs and Croats than to the Turks with whom they share a religion. Bosniaks have always considered Bosnia and Herzegovina to be their only motherland, the home of their distant ancestors and their descendants.

¹³⁹ Gazi Husrev-Begova Medresa, home page, <http://www.medresa.ba/index.html> (accessed June 5, 2009).

During the last half century, Bosniaks have enjoyed a lifestyle more like the western European countries than the Islamic countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The majority of Bosniaks sees Bosnia and Herzegovina as a European democratic country and knows that Bosnia and Herzegovina can become wealthy only as a part of modern Europe. Therefore, Bosniaks oppose elements who would like to transform Bosnia and Herzegovina into a state that would not fit into modern democratic surroundings. Bosniaks are aware that any radicalization of their society can negatively influence their common life with Serbs and Croats and jeopardize the country's stability and economic prosperity.

B. AMBIGUITIES AND UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The arrival of the *Mujahideen* in the early 1990s would not have been possible without both the help of other countries with access to Bosnia and Herzegovina's territory across the land border or by air, and the approval of the international community. Many scholars describe Croatia as important for the import of the *Mujahideen*. Some say that during the war, there were many "night flights" supplying Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims. Croat involvement is open to question and should be addressed. The extent to which the international community supported global terrorist networks is still unclear. Al-Qaeda and its network have existed since the late 1980s, and it is quite unbelievable that United Nations and the western countries were unaware of its spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UN peacekeepers were already deployed to the area, and NATO started controlling Bosnia and Herzegovina air space in 1993. With these assets on the ground, the international community should have known what was happening. There is also the question why the UN, with strong U.S. support, imposed an arms embargo on all former Yugoslavian republics early in the war, without preventing the conflict and Serb domination, and why the U.S. administration later started secretly supporting the arming of Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims, thus playing both sides of the fence. On the one hand, the U.S. administration blamed Iran for supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon, referring to Iran as the main source of terrorism. On the other hand, the same administration

allowed the shipping of weapons along with Iranian intelligence agents and *Mujahideen* into Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁴⁰ Was Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the U.S., a mistake similar to the one they made in Afghanistan by supporting the *Mujahideen* during the Soviet-Afghan war?

C. CLARIFICATION OF SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

Prior any further research, some common misconceptions about Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims should be clarified. Bosniaks are often referred to as Western oriented by foreign journalists, diplomats and representatives of the international community, because they rarely practice their religion and enjoy alcoholic beverages and smoking as typical Europeans do. Although nothing negative is meant by this characterization of Bosniaks, moderate Muslims respond negatively, and some become stricter in their religious practice and may even become unintentionally radicalized. Describing a Muslim as Western only because he or she drinks alcohol and smokes is nothing more than a scornful characterization and a mistaken approach to building a multiethnic and multi-religious society. Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims do not need proof that they belong to Europe; they have been living in Europe for centuries. Their tolerance of other religions and readiness to accept everything good for their country's progress as an independent secular country makes them unique in Islamic world.

Sacir Filandra, Professor at the University of Political Science in Sarajevo, says in an interview with the independent magazine *Dani*,

I see Bosniak policy as the application of European political standards, a clear pro-European orientation, long-term work on improving and qualitative strengthening of state institutions, education, health, ordering of relations within Bosnia with the Serbs and Croats.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Arms Embargo in Bosnia (House of Representatives–April 25, 1996), *GlobalSecurity.org*, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/1996_cr/h960425a.htm (accessed June 27, 2009).

¹⁴¹ Eldin Hadzovic, "Tihic je okruzen ispodprosjecnim provincijalcima," *BHDani.com*, May 29, 2009, http://www.bhdani.com/default.asp?kat=txt&broj_id=624&tekst_rb=4 (accessed June 14, 2009).

The majority of the Muslim population supported the secular state structure of the former Yugoslavia, and despite the fact that many of them are very strict believers, a large number still agree that Bosnia and Herzegovina should be highly secular.

D. FIGHTING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Despite Bosniaks' suffering and casualties in the recent ethnic war, they are willing to move on and continue to live in the same society with Croats and Serbs. The multi-ethnic state can help moderate Muslims by opposing and minimizing radicalization. The radicalization of the Muslim population is the issue influencing all ethnic groups living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Actually, it is a serious obstacle to progress. Only Muslims can resolve this issue, and any attempt by other groups would create even more issues that could be used by Islamic radicals to recruit new members. However, there are some basic requirements and adjustments that should be addressed by all three groups. First, the Bosniak political elite should stop seeing Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country dominated by its Muslim population. Even though Bosniaks represent a majority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina population, they are just one of three constitutive nations involved in creating a single society where each nation has equal representation. Second, Bosniaks should develop a clear strategy for their future in light of the cultural and religious differences between them and non-Muslims. Practicing the strict and puritanical interpretation of Islam is acceptable as long as it does not interfere with democratic values and the secular political structure. Bosnia and Herzegovina officials, both political and religious, should face reality and act accordingly. On the other side, the non-Muslim Croats and Serbs should be aware that their country is all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, not only the parts where they are in the majority. Once all three ethnic groups become aware of the necessity of living together in a multiethnic society where all sides will find their own interests satisfied, the space for destabilizing elements will be minimized. The threshold of tolerance and mutual understanding must be very high in order to provide a better future for everybody in the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina's future depends exclusively on the willingness of local politicians to build a stable and self-sustaining country that can challenge radical Islamists and their ideologies.

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