



Community Perspectives on the Prevention of Violent Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sead Turčalo & Nejra Veljan

Country Case
Study 2

About this report

This country case study on Bosnia and Herzegovina was produced, alongside three others covering Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia in the framework of a participatory research project on “Opportunities for Preventing Violent Extremism in the Western Balkans”. Together with four local research partners, we explore why some communities are particularly affected by individuals inspired by and/or joining the Islamic State (IS) or other similar violent extremist groups, while other communities may show greater resilience to the same phenomenon. Based on the research findings, the project partners will conduct policy outreach and local dialogue initiatives, in cooperation with local stakeholders and affected communities, in order to explore and develop strategies to prevent violent radicalisation in the Western Balkans.

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List of Abbreviations

AIO	Aktivna Islmaska Omladina (Active Islamic Youth)
BPC	Bosnian-Podrinje Canton
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
FTF	Foreign Terrorist Fighter
FB	Facebook
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
US	United States
UN	United Nations
RS	Republika Srpska (one of the two entities in BiH)
IC of BiH	Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
IS	Islamic State (note: ISIS, ISIL, and IS are all the same organisation)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SC	Sarajevo Canton
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
VE	Violent Extremism
ZDC	Zenica-Doboj Canton

Executive Summary

The purpose of this research was to identify common and distinct factors of resilience or vulnerability to violent extremism in Bosnian communities as well as the influence of key actors on those factors. Cantons selected as case studies had the highest number of parajamaats and foreign fighter departures, such as Sarajevo Canton (SC) and Zenica-Doboj Canton (ZDC), or had no parajamaats or departures, such as Bosnian-Podrinje Canton (BPC). The research sought to answer three main questions:

- 1) What are *key factors of community resilience or vulnerability*, and what factors are linked to the development of violent extremist beliefs by individuals and groups and the choice to join foreign violent extremist groups?
- 2) *Which key actors influence community vulnerability or resilience* to violent extremism, and how do they shape such dynamics?
- 3) What is the *impact of existing PVE programmes* and initiatives in BiH on factors of community vulnerability or resilience to violent extremism?

Researchers also wanted to determine: What are the primary entry points for PVE programming and response in BiH? And what crossover exists between PVE activities and peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in BiH?

This research identified several factors and actors that contribute to the degree to which certain communities in BiH have been affected or unaffected by radicalisation. The history of the 1992–1995 war has especially played a decisive role in shaping post-conflict radicalisation processes. This is true both in terms of how wartime actors and activities sowed the seeds of the Salafist movement in BiH and how wartime networks in certain communities increased the likelihood of investment by specific foreign actors in the post-war period. While researchers found that *all* these communities share some characteristics, including a lack of trust in institutions and a sense of uncertainty about the future, the main differences between affected and unaffected communities are linked to the war.

1 Introduction

The dissolution of Yugoslavia led to a number of bloody wars in the Western Balkans, throughout the 1990s. The most brutal of these occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), where devastating mass atrocities were committed, including genocide (Glenny, 1996; Becirevic, 2016). Though the war in BiH ended in November 1995, its legacy of division still impacts Bosnian citizens and has made Bosnian society especially vulnerable to ethnonationalism, political radicalism, and ideological extremism.

The polarising ethnonationalist narratives that continue to burden post-war society in BiH are promoted by political elites, and in the immediate post-war period, the focus of the country was on this top-down political radicalisation and extremism. Yet, the rise of a new form of violent extremism – that of groups like the so-called Islamic State (hereinafter, ISIL) – has shifted attention to Salafist recruitment networks and the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). Indeed, both ISIL and the al-Nusra Front¹ attracted a significant number of recruits from across Europe, including from BiH. Using cleverly-framed messaging and high-end online media, these terrorist organisations shaped an image of an Islamic state and society that fulfilled the desires of jihadists seeking to accomplish religious aims or achieve redemption.

The first departures of FTFs from BiH to Syria and Iraq were registered in 2013. Since then, several studies have analysed the foreign fighter phenomenon in the country (Azinović and Jusić, 2015; Azinović and Jusić, 2016; Azinović, 2017). However, despite the fact that all the FTFs who left BiH for Syria and Iraq originated from the Bosnian Salafi community – which has existed only since the 1992-1995 war – just a few studies have examined the Salafist movement in BiH (see Bećirević, 2016).

Before the war, Bosnians used the term “Salafism” as nothing more than a religious descriptor to identify the practices of the first three generations of Muslims. The Salafist interpretation of Islam, characterised by rigidity and reductionism, was almost completely unknown to Bosnian Muslims, who had long practiced an inclusive, localized form of Islam. Yet, as foreign mujahideen started arriving in central BiH in August 1992 to fight in the conflict, they brought this more conservative interpretation with them. Exploiting the impoverished, war-torn society they encountered, these mujahideen spread their religious doctrine, and in doing so, questioned and undermined the centuries-long tradition of tolerance that had marked Bosnian Islam. By the time the war in BiH ended, Salafism had taken root in central BiH, and gradually began to reach other more populated areas of the country.

The climate that has marked the post-war period in BiH – featuring widespread socioeconomic deprivation, the manipulation of collective grievances by elites to promote “otherism”, a fragile state in the grip of corrupt politicians, and feelings of defeatism among the citizenry brought on by a sense of perpetual social injustice – has combined with the activities of various Salafist humanitarian organisations to create an opening for Salafism, especially among certain swaths of Bosnian society. By taking advantage of structural and financial weaknesses in the official Islamic Community (IC) of BiH, and through support from individuals and organisations in the diaspora and in Gulf countries, Salafists in BiH began establishing parallel congregations, or so called parajamaats, as an alternative to the existing mosques of the IC. Salafi missionaries claim that true believers must avoid following religious leaders who practice *bid’ah* (by importing novelties into Islam) – an accusation they have levied against IC imams. Still, certain communities have been particularly affected by the proliferation of parajamaats and by the FTF phenomenon, while others remain unaffected even if radicalisation drivers, known as push and pull factors, exist. Thus, our research attempted to explore the interplay of factors and actors that contribute to whether respective communities are affected or unaffected by violent extremism.

¹ Since its establishment, the al-Nusra Front has undergone several name changes; and in 2017, the group merged with several others to form *Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*.

The body of this report, excluding the Introduction and Methodology, consists of three main sections. In the first, background information on key historical events that have shaped violent extremist movements in BiH is presented. The core section of the report then explores factors related to community-level susceptibility to Salafism and establishes links between programming to prevent or combat violent extremism (P/CVE) and peacebuilding activities. The final section offers a discussion of findings and some policy-related recommendations on how best to introduce new P/CVE programming in BiH.

2 Methodology

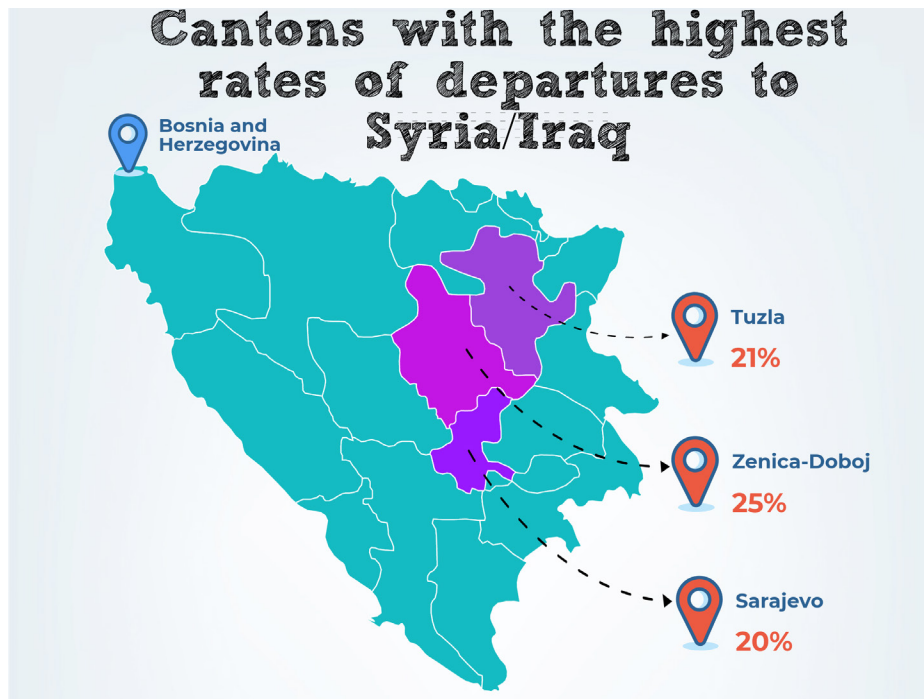
The purpose of this research was to identify common and distinct factors of resilience or vulnerability to violent extremism in Bosnian communities as well as the influence of key actors on these factors. To this end, researchers analysed not only the data derived from focus groups, individual interviews, and observation notes but also the findings of other recent radicalisation research in BiH. This allowed researchers to partially map individual and community patterns that are linked to radicalisation and to highlight the specific characteristics of communities that have remained unaffected by violent extremism. So far, no research efforts have focused exclusively on examining and comparing particular Bosnian communities in this way. In determining what constitutes an affected or unaffected community, researchers used two criteria:

- 1) the number of individual departures to Syria and Iraq from a respective community; and
- 2) the number of *parajamaats* that exist in a community (meaning, Salafist congregations that operate outside the purview of the official IC of BiH).

Based on these combined criteria, three cantons were selected as case studies: Sarajevo Canton (SC), Zenica-Doboj Canton (ZDC), and Bosnian-Podrinje Canton (BPC, where the city of Goražde is located). It should be noted that these case studies include entire cantons, for three reasons. First, there are no municipalities, except isolated places like Gornja Maoča in Tuzla Canton or Ošve in ZDC, that could be singled out based on the criteria used to define affected communities. Second, Salafists, especially those who departed to Syria and Iraq, are highly mobile and frequently visit *parajamaats* in different cantons. Third, many Salafists do not adhere to the Law on Residence, meaning that they are registered in one municipality but live in another (see Azinović and Jusić, 2016:36).

In counting FTFs who have departed from BiH, there are no accurate official statistics, and some counts include children. Initially, researchers used data that showed Tuzla Canton had the highest number of departures; but later, the decision was made to exclude children from this count. Using this approach, ZDC featured the highest number of individual (adult) departures (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Cantons with the highest number of departures to Syria and Iraq



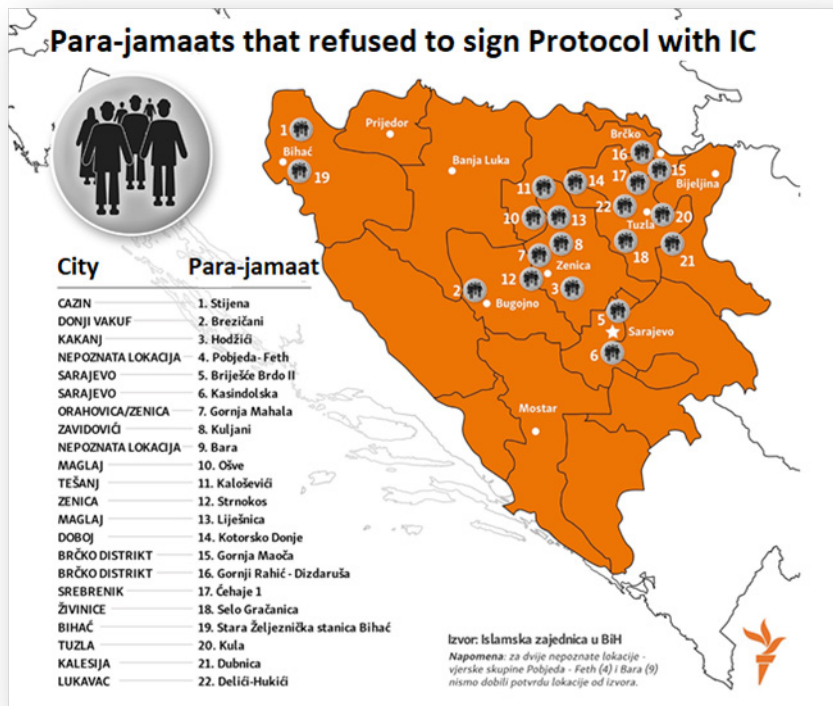
Source: Atlantic Initiative, 2018

The rationale behind using the presence of *parajamaats* as a second criterion for an affected community is the fact that FTFs who left for Syria and Iraq seeking to join ISIL or the al-Nusra Front were required to have a so-called *teskija* (recommendation) issued by recruiters Nusret Imamović or Bilal Bosnić, respectively. Both Imamović and Bosnić operated *parajamaats* in their communities and were linked through other *parajamaats* to the wider extremist Salafi movement in BiH. And, though not all *parajamaats* are linked to violent extremism, all Bosnian FTFs attended *parajamaats*. The cantons with the highest number of Salafist *parajamaats* at the time research began were Zenica-Doboj (13) and Sarajevo (12), which thus serve as case studies of affected communities.

On the other hand, Goražde (which constitutes the bulk of the population in BPC), has seen no departures to Syria or Iraq and has no *parajamaats*, and was therefore selected as the case study for an *unaffected* community. Given the socio-demographic data in the Canton (the unemployment rate, education levels, etc.) and the violence experienced there during the 1992-1995 war, this predominantly Bosniak community could have been a perfect target for Salafi recruiters, but it has demonstrated a resilience to both non-violent and violent radicalisation.

Even after the inclusion process that brought some *parajamaats* under the umbrella of the official IC of BiH, several congregations in both of the affected communities under study remained “rogue” and refused to join. In SC, three *parajamaats* did not agree to inclusion; but the majority that rejected inclusion are in ZDC, where eight “rogue” *parajamaats* still operate (see Figure 2).²

² An initial report by the IC of BiH found that 64 *parajamaats* existed in the country, but this number was later reduced to 38. After the process of inclusion, 14 of those 38 congregations signed the Protocol to join the IC.

Figure 2. Geographical distribution of *parajamaats* that refused the Protocol of the IC of BiH

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

This research sought to answer three main questions:

- 1) What are *key factors* of community resilience or vulnerability, and what factors are linked to the development of violent extremist beliefs by individuals and groups and the choice to join foreign violent extremist groups?
- 2) Which *key actors* influence community vulnerability or resilience to violent extremism, and how do they shape such dynamics?
- 3) What is the *impact* of existing PVE programmes and initiatives in BiH on factors of community vulnerability or resilience to violent extremism?

Further, researchers sought to answer:

- 4) What are the *primary entry points* for PVE programming and response in BiH?
- 5) What *crossover* exists between PVE activities and peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in BiH?

For the purposes of data collection, three questionnaires were developed and an open-ended interview protocol was employed; but in most interviews, it was necessary to ask follow-up questions to elicit additional information and/or gain a better understanding of the perspectives of interviewees. The first questionnaire, which consisted of seven sets of questions, was meant for radicalised persons and Salafi preachers. The first set of questions related to identity and to interviewees' attitudes towards society; the second set to Salafism and interviewees' personal transformations in that regard; the third drew out the opinions of interviewees on the IC; the fourth and fifth related to their views on local government in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the sixth to their geopolitical worldviews and their opinions on the position of Muslims in the world; and the last set related to interviewees' attitudes towards ISIL, and toward FTF returnees and their families. The second questionnaire was designed for focus groups. The third, employed in interviews with other actors,³ comprised a first set of questions related to their understanding of radicalisation, violent

³ This included local imams and muftis; youth leaders; CSO representatives; and local CVE experts, international CVE experts based in BiH, law enforcement officials, local government officials, etc.

extremism, and related terminology; a second set dealing with the extent and causes of radicalisation; a third set delving into how the causes of radicalisation should be addressed; and a fourth inquiring about their experiences with radicalised persons as well as P/CVE projects and activities.

Researchers conducted 11 focus groups, 44 interviews, and consulted with 68 individuals. Interviewees that represented a diversity of gender, age, and education were sought within each subgroup of research participants (i.e. members of the Salafi community, experts, etc.). However, among social workers, psychologists, and teachers, the main criterion was that they were familiar with their respective communities (SC, ZDC, and BPC).

To access participants for this research, both purposeful and snowball sampling were used. Data saturation was attained in most cases after just four interviews in a given community, so that all additional interviews offered no new perspectives. To access individuals from the Salafi community through snowball sampling, which revealed aspects of the social cohesion of this community, researchers relied on informal networks or on interviewees directing them to other participants.

A combination of methods helped researchers gather diverse views. In-depth interviewing allowed researchers to capture opinions on sensitive topics and to understand a community from the perspective of individuals (Byrne, 2004). Focus groups, which empower participants through group dynamics, were useful in facilitating the expression of views by some respondents who would otherwise have held back. Consultations with individuals then helped researchers understand seemingly vague data or the roles played by various research participants. All focus groups and 16 interviews were audio-recorded, while the remaining interviews were carefully recorded in research notes.

Researchers wore many hats, so to speak, not only conducting interviews – which proved the most effective mode of gathering relevant data – but also using participation as well as non-participatory observation to fill gaps. This included attending eight public lectures by (male) Salafist preachers and several lectures by female preachers. Further, one researcher regularly visited private lectures by the same Salafi preacher from a single *parajamaat* over the course of three months, with the intent of tracking the group dynamic and assessing the interest of members in religious questions, their attitudes towards their leaders, and their behaviour towards outsiders. This researcher participated in post-lecture gatherings to discuss current events and religious issues with some group members.

Researchers also undertook a content analysis of 22 court cases related to FTFs, including the proceedings involving one of the main ISIL recruiters in BiH. Four (4) Webpages and ten (10) Facebook pages that promote a Salafist interpretation of Islam were also analysed, which helped researchers understand the online behaviour of Salafists by examining their comments on videos and posts. This also revealed narratives that were sometimes not disclosed during interviews and in focus groups, and exposed or confirmed the existence of networks among and relationships between radical actors.

Aware of their potential biases and personal perspectives on radicalisation and violent extremism as well as regarding the communities and groups under study, researchers sought to maintain a high degree of integrity throughout the entire research process, remain as objective as possible, and avoid any misrepresentation of the data or biased identification of patterns. To achieve this, and ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative research, a triangulation of both sampling methods and data collection methods was used, and follow-up consultations were undertaken to validate findings. Triangulation strategies such as these are frequently employed in qualitative studies to overcome bias and increase the representativeness of the research.

In conducting field work, researchers faced certain limitations and challenges. First, accessing interviewees from the Salafi community was difficult. Members of this community have shown an increasing distrust of researchers in general.⁴ Sensationalist reporting by various domestic and foreign media outlets additionally decreased the willingness of Salafists to participate; but it also posed a second

⁴ One interviewee called the approach of both researchers and journalists toward the Salafi community “predatory” (interview, 1 Feb 2018).

challenge, by leading some imams from the Islamic Community to refuse to participate as well. These interviewees were all most constrained in discussing the issues raised by researchers when they were being audio recorded. A third limitation was the lack of baseline data at the community level, from which researchers could infer levels of trust in public institutions and politicians, for example. Researchers had to rely instead on countrywide surveys.

3 Country Background

Any examination of radicalisation and violent extremism in BiH that does not delve into the 1992-1995 war and the wartime history of the country would be incomplete and could lead to misconceptions about the origins of these phenomena. Thus, to clarify how events from that period contributed to the emergence of Salafism in BiH, we must place the advent of this radical interpretation of Islam in the broader context of the war, which led to ethnic cleansing and genocide against Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). When news images of the atrocities that were committed against Bosniaks were broadcast internationally, they prompted different reactions in different parts of the globe. In the so-called Islamic World, a series of fatwas, issued by Islamic authorities in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, activated a response from various individuals and Islamic humanitarian organisations.

According to a former Bosnian military official, some 700 individuals from Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Egypt, Syria, and other Middle Eastern and Asian countries arrived in BiH as fighters during the war (interview, 20 Sep 2017). But many of those mujahideen were less interested in fighting than they were in converting Bosnian Muslims to Salafism (see Karčić, 2010:526). Of course, there were exceptions, and it later became clear that several mujahideen had worked for foreign intelligence agencies, some had only pretended to be Muslim (interview, 24 January 2018), and some were “members of terrorist or criminal groups.”⁵ Still, most of these foreign fighters joined a single unit known as El-Mujahid, and many were persistent and successful in persuading Bosnian Muslims who joined the Unit to abandon their traditional understanding of Islam. It is important to note that traditional understanding of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina is related to hanafi school of thought. As Bećirević (2016:10) noted, Bosnian Muslims are known for their tolerance and acceptance of religious diversity. Their practice of Islam could be seen as a model for an Islamic tradition that meshes well with the secular notion of separation between religion and state.

These fighters considered many of the practices of Bosnian Islam to be “novelties” in Islam and encouraged Bosnian Muslims to return to “uncompromised sources” of the faith. After the war, several foreign members of the El-Mujahid Unit who were permitted to remain in BiH became employees of humanitarian organisations based in or funded by Gulf countries. These organisations used their financial clout to continue what the mujahideen had started, spending bountifully to promote their version of Islam (see Antunez Moreno, 2010:24).

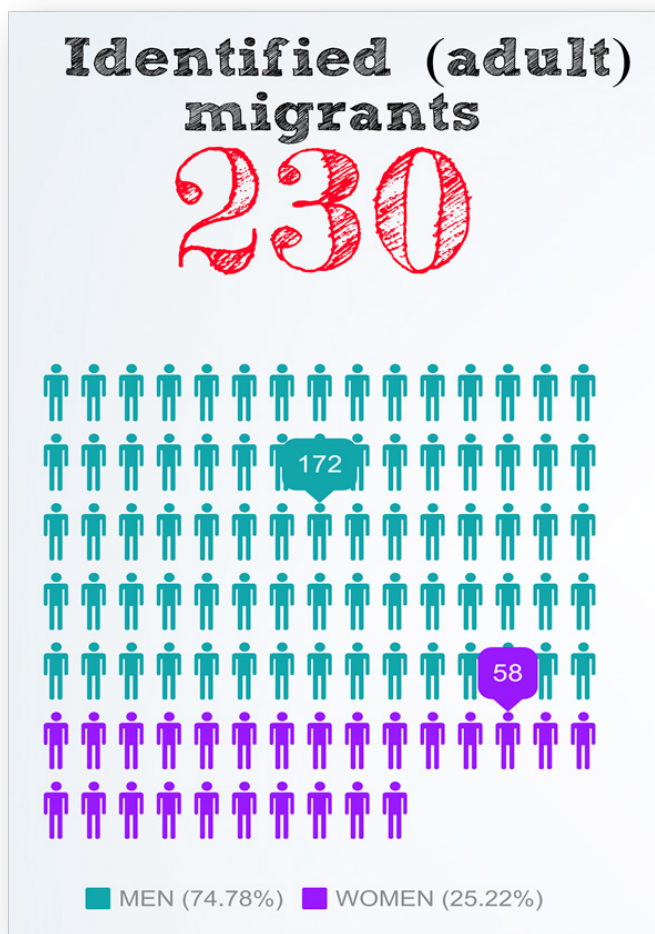
Several new Salafi leaders emerged in BiH in the post-war period. Security officials told researchers that, at the time, all their activities were directed from Gornja Maoča, a Salafi stronghold established in 2000 and linked to Salafists in the diaspora, mainly in Austria but also in other European countries and the US. One respondent explained that “from [Gornja] Maoča, money was distributed to other local Salafi communities, so that Maoča’s leaders had a pivotal role in the Salafist movement in Bosnia” (interview, 7

⁵ The Dutch Intelligence Service (*Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, BVD) claimed in a report that members of the El Mujahid Unit had not been under the “full political and military control of the Bosnian government, but their actions were directed by respective governments of their countries of origin as well as some terrorist and criminal groups” (see Azinović, 2007:52).

December 2017). Indeed, Gornja Maoča has been in the spotlight many times for its connections to extremist activity. Mevlid Jašarević, who attacked the US Embassy in Sarajevo,⁶ spent some time there, and security officials told researchers that most FTFs from BiH had a direct connection with the community, even if they were not registered as residents there (interview, 8 December 2017). From Gornja Maoča alone, 52 people (38 males and 14 females) are known to have departed for Syria.

The Bosnian contingent of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq has been thoroughly explored by Atlantic Initiative researchers Vlado Azinović and Muhamed Jusić, who published two studies on this topic, investigating key trends and patterns by surveying open sources as well as law enforcement and intelligence sources. They concluded that up to 950 individuals from the Western Balkans are believed to have travelled to Syria and Iraq from the end of 2012 through the end of 2016, and among them, 230 men and women of Bosnian origin (see Figure 3). In this study, the term “migrants” will be used, instead of “foreign terrorist fighters”, when speaking generally about the adults who departed to Syria and Iraq, since it cannot be proved that all these adults (particularly women) joined the battle as fighters (2016:10).

Graphic 3. The number of adult migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Syria and Iraq



Source: Atlantic Initiative, 2018

⁶ Jašarević, a member of the Salafi community in the Serbian town of Novi Pazar, attacked the US Embassy in Sarajevo on 28 November 2011. He had a previous criminal record, having been sentenced to three years imprisonment in Austria for stealing 100,000 EUR. Before the attack, Jašarević spent some time in Gornja Maoča. The State Court of BiH convicted him in 2012 of terrorism and issued a sentence of 18 years; which was reduced in 2013 to 15 years.

Azinović and Jusić noted many difficulties in accurately determining numbers of FTFs, much less the number of family members who accompanied them to Syria and Iraq. First, there is no consolidated database of FTFs, and many who left and later returned are not registered but are only assumed to have been in ISIL territory. Second, many FTFs hold dual citizenship, or possess residence or work permits from other countries (2015:31; 2016:22). Azinović and Jusić assert that the mobility of these FTFs “makes them harder to monitor and register, and one can conclude that they have not been recruited by coincidence” (2015:31).

4 Data and analysis

4.1 Factors of community vulnerability and resilience

In trying to determine what factors influenced the decision of men and women to depart for Syria and Iraq from BiH, most researchers point first to the fragile Bosnian state and a prevailing institutional anomie that strengthens already existing feelings of victimisation by an unjust system. Azinović and Jusić have highlighted this dimension, stating that “the post-conflict society of BiH, which is gradually losing the ability to manage itself, is another contributing factor to the trend of departures of BiH citizens to foreign war theatres” (2015:42). But social and economic circumstances are also driving factors. Most of the individuals who departed were unemployed or had only occasional work, and most emerged from the same ideological circles (of Salafists).

Although this research focused on factors at the community level, it is important to note that individual push and pull factors often diminish the importance of group dynamics and can significantly affect the way grievances are expressed. The unique interplay of factors at work in any one person make it impossible to develop a dependable profile of an individual most susceptible to radicalisation; and likewise, of a community most vulnerable or resilient to radicalisation and violent extremism.

4.1.1 Ideological factors shaped by foreign influence

For any movement to succeed in attracting and motivating new adherents, ideology plays a critical role. In the Bosnian context, examining how the most radical streams of Salafism – which promote *takfir* ideology (the excommunication of a Muslim by accusing him/her of apostasy) – have developed in affected communities requires some historical framing. During the 1992-1995 war, the entirety of Zenica-Doboj Canton, which features particularly mountainous terrain and isolated villages, even for BiH, became a stronghold of the *mujahideen*. The El-Mujahid Unit used the city of Zenica as its base, not only for military activities but also for proselytising, and leaders of the Unit saw these as equal obligations (see Hećimović, 2009:57). In fact, as a precondition for Bosnian volunteers to join the Unit, they were required to attend a 40-day Islamic school organised by foreign *mujahideen* and mostly led by Imad al Misri, an Egyptian cleric who was deported to his home country in 2001, where he was convicted of terrorism and served eight (8) years in prison. A 1992 Bulletin issued by the Unit explained:

In addition to defending the Muslim honour in Bosnia and liberating the occupied territory, the Detachment has taken it upon itself to revert the people, instruct them and bring them back to authentic Islam. Therefore, since its inception, the Detachment has opened a Sharia school, where

a volunteer can learn proper devotion, fiqh, the biography of the prophet and the [laws of] jihad. In addition, there is an approximately two-month long lesson on how to study the Quran and general lectures on spirituality and Islamic morality. In addition, during this period, the volunteer receives education through association with his faithful Arab or Bosnian brothers – who joined previously – in an atmosphere of brotherhood and loyalty. He is educated in accordance with the Islamic code of behaviour and conduct, and in the spirit of religious morals. Once this course is completed, the majority of the volunteers will have already been profoundly transformed.

(Bulletin of El Mujahid Unit, 5 May 1992, p.4)

The missionary work conducted by foreign *mujahideen* during the war in BiH was largely directed by a pamphlet entitled “Conceptions we need to correct,” written by al Misri. Published in 1993 with financing by a Kuwaiti organisation, the pamphlet served as core, introductory literature for the proselytising undertaken by members of the El-Mujahid Unit. According to al Misri, Bosnian Muslims had to be converted (or as he said, “reverted”) to “true” Islam. And, despite his deportation and imprisonment in Egypt, al Misri remains an influential figure in the Salafist movement in BiH. In recent years, a number of Salafi web portals have shared an extensive interview with him, he has been a guest of the Association of Bosniak students in Medina (Saudi Arabia), and his 1993 pamphlet was republished in 2013 by the Swedish Dawa Organization – which is closely linked to Salafi communities across the Western Balkans. The mission of Salafists in BiH continues to be underpinned by the notion that Bosnian Muslims must be “saved” from their own errant religious practices, as was elaborated by current leading Salafi preacher Safet Kuduzović, who has compared Bosnian society to a patient in desperate need of treatment (Kuduzovic, 2016).⁷

The early proselytising of *mujahideen* effectively leveraged the fact that Bosnian Muslims felt abandoned by the West during the war, left to be slaughtered by Serb aggressors. By the time the war ended, Salafism had taken hold among small numbers of people in Zenica, but also in several other parts of the country. In the post-war period, poor economic conditions opened the door to humanitarian organisations from Gulf countries that further promoted Salafism/Wahhabism. Interviewees said that many citizens in Zenica lived under the poverty line at the time and relied mostly on heavy industry, such as steel production and coal mining, for employment. The area was thus particularly affected by the slow recovery of this industrial sector. On top of this, the closure of a steel factory that employed around 25,000 across ZDC, followed by a lengthy privatisation process, contributed additionally to the dire economic conditions many faced; meaning that radicals with money at their disposal found an inroad for attracting people to a new interpretation of Islam and a completely new worldview.

A group of former members of the El-Mujahid Unit who were of Bosnian origin then established an organisation to serve as focal point for Salafi proselytism, meant to “continue the Islamic revival (Sahwa) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Active Islamic Youth (*Aktivna Islmaska Omladina*, or AIO) was initially financed by funds that remained after the El-Mujahid Unit was disassembled, and later by donations from Salafi humanitarian organisations, along with large cash infusions from individual benefactors in Gulf countries (interview with a former Salafist, 20 December 2017; interview with a security official, 24 January 2018; interview with IC official, 11 December 2017). AIO established branches in every canton in the Federation of BiH (the majority Bosniak and Croat entity). The branch in Sarajevo was particularly influential and became a locus of the Salafist movement; not only because Gulf-funded humanitarian organisations were headquartered in the city but also because it offered a large pool of potential adherents.

Salafi preachers in BiH knew they would need to attract significant numbers of followers to achieve their long-term goal of changing the matrix of traditional Bosnian Islam. A key element of this process is *deculturation*. As Olivier Roy (2017:101) has pointed out, the deculturation of religion can lead to its reconstruction in a fundamentalist form; and this has been the pattern in BiH. Salafi leaders promote a

⁷ Safet Kuduzovic, “Zlatan Savjet od Sejh Albanija,” 22 October 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFIH_jVzdYY (accessed 12 February 2018).

reinvention of Islam they purport is “pure” and shape a religious understanding among adherents that erases any of the localized social or cultural traditions of Bosnian Muslims. This has opened the way for Salafists to acquire a new supranational identity as part of the global *Ummah*, supplanting their national identity.

Focus group participants from the Salafi community all stressed in fact that their religious identity takes precedence over their ethnic or national identities. Discussing the recent census, one respondent commented, “Brothers asked me how to declare themselves. I explained to them that it is more important they declare themselves Muslim than to declare they are Bosniaks. For not declaring to be Bosniaks, they will not be responsible before God” (1 December 2017).

This promotion of religious identity as pre-eminent is coupled with anti-democratic discourse that questions various human rights norms, particularly related to women rights and gender equality. In a foreword to the book, *The plan to destroy Islam and annihilate Muslims in the current era* (El-Muhajjis, n.d.) – which was distributed free of charge in the post-war period and still circulates online – Imad al Misri wrote a short guide to Salafi proselytism in which he referred to missionary work as a categorical obligation of Salafism and proclaimed that Salafists must “forget and leave new terms like: nationalism, patriotism, socialism, democracy, since their only aim is to separate Muslims from their faith” (ibid:8). He described post-war relief and democratisation activities as a “conspiracy against Muslims,” and called on Muslims to be cautious about “this new peace, and what the West and America want to achieve” (ibid). The anti-democratic discourse of al Misri was part of a larger aim by proselytisers to decouple the identity of Bosnian Muslims from their culture and connect it to an imagined community of those who see “Truth.”

In Sarajevo, the Salafi movement was emboldened by the construction of the King Fahd Mosque and Cultural Center in 2000, which is a part of the Saudi diplomatic mission in BiH and thus enjoys extraterritorial sovereignty. Although it has been officially integrated into the IC, the mosque is nonetheless a recruitment centre for new Salafi adherents by offering free courses in various subjects, in which it is often other course participants who approach their classmates seeking to introduce them to a new interpretation of Islam. Through 2016, more than 18,000 people had attended these courses (see Bećirević, 2016:67). The mosque also regularly presents the lectures of leading Salafi preachers.

A number of researchers have confirmed that financial support for Salafi proselytism in BiH has been channelled through the King Fahd Cultural Center. A study by Edina Bećirević revealed for instance that the Center had “tried to create some sort of administrative structure for da’is [Salafi missionaries] in Bosnia, by paying their salaries” (Bećirević, 2016:45). But the Salafist movement in BiH has also received the backing of wealthy individuals and organisations from within Gulf countries.

These foreign influences, as well as wartime contact with *mujahideen*, are among the main factors that distinguish the affected and unaffected communities in this study. Indeed, BPC is set apart from affected communities by the limited influence that has been exercised there by humanitarian organisations from Gulf countries. For example, Arab organisations that offered scholarships to the children of fallen soldiers in BPC did not have the impact there that they had in affected communities. A CSO activist told researchers that, as in other cantons, those scholarships came with conditions, including the acceptance of literature that promoted Salafism, “but for some reason, they were not as aggressive in their campaign [here] as in some other places” (interview, 22 February 2018). What’s more, only a single mosque in the Canton, in a suburb of Goražde, has been financed by a private donor from the Gulf Region, in this case from Kuwait. According to Antunez Moreno, across BiH, “the financing of the reconstruction of mosques by these [Gulf funded] NGO’s was a part of a strategy aimed at acquiring the spiritual leadership of the community. The result of this process is the replacement of the Hanafi, the moderate traditional local version of Islam, with a radical and intolerant one and a shift toward more radical activities” (2010: 24).

The unique wartime position of BPC may account for why it has been *unaffected* by both the violent extremism of the foreign fighter phenomenon and the non-violent radicalisation promoted by “moderate” Salafi preachers. During the war, BPC was cut off from the rest of the territory controlled by the legal government of BiH, making it accessible only via dangerous paths controlled by Serb forces. As some

interviewees noted, “the seeds of Salafism were not sown during or immediately after the war” in BPC, explaining that the Canton is not necessarily inherently more resilient than others but that its wartime sequestration prevented the community’s exposure to Salafism, which is reflected now in a very small number of Salafists, an absence of *parajamaats*, and a lack of any departures to Syria and Iraq (interview, 10 November 2017; interview 1 December 2017).

It is important to note that Bosniaks in BPC did suffer mass atrocities during the war; and by all measures, the experience of many citizens there could have made them highly susceptible to narratives that instrumentalised their victimisation. But, having never encountered the messenger, citizens in BPC largely eluded the message of Salafism. Several focus group participants in BPC commented on this, observing that the community’s wartime isolation from foreign *mujahideen* meant that, “even though Podrinje experienced ethnic cleansing,” it was spared from Salafi proselytism and propaganda. Whereas, “in Zenica and other areas they were able to spread Wahhabism” (20 February 2018). Even the branch of the AIO that was established in BPC after the war never came fully to fruition.⁸

Foreign *mujahideen* were obviously instrumental to the spread Salafism in BiH, and this led to the dissemination of especially radical norms (see Austin et al., 2018:74). It is not surprising, then, that the places in BiH that have become infamous for having *parajamaats* are locations where foreign members of the El-Mujahid Unit settled after the war. In some of these places, new members, particularly young adherents, were initially attracted to *parajamaats* by payments made to them for attending Friday prayers (Interview, 16 January 2018). Salafi humanitarian organisations also hosted “mini-madrassas,” which attracted many primary school-aged children. These organisations gave scholarships, sometimes targeting vulnerable individuals (e.g. single mothers, children with disabilities, etc.), and offered a sense of community and belonging. They also provided dormitory accommodations to students at very low cost, thereby expanding the pool of potential adherents. This ability of Salafi organisations to partially displace the official IC of BiH by providing alternative religious services in the post-war period reinforced and built upon the wartime proselytising of al Misri and the mujahideen.

But in BPC, this displacement did not occur, and many interviewees attributed this to the firm stance of local representatives of the Islamic Community.⁹ One local politician remarked that, “if there is no tacit approval of the local IC, then it is difficult [for Salafists] to gain ground, and in Goražde they have faced only rejection.... A few times, imams learned that some of the few local Salafists had tried to persuade other believers to change some of their practices, and they publicly criticized this” (interview, 1 December 2017).

The practices and officials of the IC remain primary ideological targets of Salafi da’is in BiH. This is particularly true of the more extreme preachers who rejected inclusion, but remains the case even among Salafists who signed the Protocol with the IC. This latter group seems to have remained fixed on the goal of supplanting Bosnian Islam, only through new means. An Islamic scholar who spoke with researchers explained that Salafi preachers who acceded to inclusion “saw that they were not able to take over the [Islamic] Community by pressuring it from the outside, so they changed their approach, but are still committed to their previous agenda. Now, they are sending their adherents or even their own children to official madrassas and to the Faculty of Islamic Studies so that they will be eligible to work at official mosques. Once the first few generations are [in place], we will see what happens” (interview, 15 November 2017).

Indeed, the views expressed to researchers about the IC by Salafists – even those who are ostensibly now its members – were mostly sceptical or negative. One Salafi preacher who agreed to inclusion said he considers the IC’s treatment of his *parajamaat* a “rejection” and described it as “stepmother behaviour” (interview, 1 December 2017; interview, 26 December 2017). Some of these preachers also accused the IC

⁸ It should be noted that the AIO branch in BPC was not established until 2000. In other cantons, their offices opened as early as 1995. While AIO had been the main bearer of missionary activities in the post-war period to that point, soon after 2001, it came under the scrutiny of various national and international security agencies and lost some key funding streams.

⁹ Another factor that may be relevant to the resilience of the community in BPC to Salafism, but which remains unexplored, is the impact of a long history of Sufi Islam in the region. This was mentioned to researchers by an IC official as well as by a professor of Islamic Culture from the University of Sarajevo and deserves further research.

of seeking a monopoly on interpreting Islam, and said the IC's official rejection of Salafism has forced the establishment of *parajamaats* (interview, 14 January 2018). This cynicism was common and was fully reflected in the comments of one da'i who did not sign the Protocol, who remarked, "Why I am going to deliver today's lecture in a sports hall, and not in a mosque? I have proposed that they let me speak at a mosque, record the lecture, and if I say anything that is not in line with our tradition, I will never preach again. But they did not agree [to this]. Then, there is this story with the *parajamaats*. I mean, even the most radical *takfiri* jamaats were not closed.... It was a bluff by the Islamic Community. What happened is a great cry and little wool" (interview, 14 January 2018).

Although Salafists appear to have a pronounced negative view of the IC, there is still a significant level of trust in the IC among traditional Bosnian Muslims. As a measure of that trust, researchers examined the level of *zakat* (a form of obligatory tax for those who meet certain criteria of wealth) collected by IC mosques from 2012 to 2016. The data clearly shows an increase in the amount collected each year during that period. And while focus group participants very often pointed out that the IC remains too tied to politics, this involvement has lessened in recent years and is more associated with the administration of the previous Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić. In the end, respondents continue to view the IC as one of the most important institutions for preserving the identity of Bosniaks (1 December 2017).

4.1.2 Socio-political factors

Institutional anomie

As noted in the Introduction, BiH is characterised by fragile institutions and high levels of corruption (see the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2017), as well as by a society that is deeply polarised along ethnic lines. This societal polarisation, along with real and perceived inequalities and the inability of institutions to address these issues, has led to institutional anomie¹⁰ – which in this case refers to the tendency of institutions to reproduce existing inequalities instead of acting as a factor of social cohesion, resulting in a loss of trust in institutions generally and in the entire system as such.

A public survey conducted in BiH several years in a row, from 2013 to 2015, demonstrated a sustained distrust in institutions by Bosnian citizens. Political parties enjoy the least trust, followed by government at all levels (Survey Results, *analitika.ba* December 2015; accessed 20 April 2018). This lack of trust in institutions is closely connected to a generally low level of interpersonal trust in Bosnian society. In fact, Whitt (2010: 274), who conducted surveys in the communities analysed in this research and coupled his data with results from the World Values Survey (Wave 3 1996-1998 and Wave 4 1999-2001), found that BiH and neighbouring countries exhibit the lowest interpersonal trust scores in Europe. This is important because interpersonal trust builds a basis for political trust, and when interpersonal trust is high, it stimulates the establishment of social networks or associations that contribute further to increasing trust in political institutions and authorities (see Putnam, 1995).

Focus group participants in this research reported almost no engagement in voluntary activities or active membership in networks or associations. Only four respondents from all the focus groups that were held could cite charitable activities they had been involved with in the previous two years, beyond making small monetary donations. This minimal engagement in community networks is linked to low social trust and civic awareness among respondents, and to a lack of confidence in institutions.

Generally, researchers noted that Salafi adherents displayed even less trust in institutions than other research participants. This echoes a recent survey among Salafists in BiH (Puhalo, 2018) that also found they have very low levels of trust in institutions, especially political parties. Interestingly, in that survey,

¹⁰ The concept of institutional anomie was originally developed to explain high rates of crime in the United States.

the Islamic Community enjoyed the highest level of trust among respondents.¹¹ Nonetheless, this means that other focus group participants in this research held institutions in only *relatively* higher regard, and still expressed a great deal of suspicion and criticism of them. All respondents – in affected and unaffected communities – ultimately exhibited considerable distrust in both institutions and politicians, based largely on their personal experiences but also on their perceptions of the individual politicians who occupy leading positions in specific institutions. And it is important to highlight that respondents did not just lack confidence in the capacity of institutions to perform effectively but questioned the commitment of politicians and officials to serve the citizens of BiH. Research participants attributed the unsatisfactory performance of institutions and politicians to corruption, and said that instead of acting in the interests of Bosnian society, these institutions have been “taken hostage by [corrupt politicians] and their families and friends”.

Respondents in ZDC and BPC exhibited slightly more distrust in entity- and state-level institutions than in local institutions, which could be linked to the sense often felt in communities outside the capital that they are being “exploited by Sarajevo”, and may not indicate that local institutions actually perform better. Indeed, the services of local institutions were not ranked as satisfactory by any research participant, many of whom particularly emphasised the lack of a reliable social safety net in BiH. Interviews with social workers and representatives of the Centres for Social Work confirmed that public social services and welfare institutions are unable to respond to many needs of the most vulnerable, due to a lack of capacity and funding. In some municipalities in ZDC, for instance, there are no social workers at all; and the entire social welfare system in the Canton employs just 143 people. One social worker told researchers that at current capacity, the system is “not even able to satisfy the minimal requirements that we are obliged by law to offer to our users” (interview, 15 Jan 2018).

The conditions of social welfare are very similar in Sarajevo Canton, where the Centre for Social Work serves around 40,000 users but employs just over 50 social workers. Furthermore, social workers lack the training to deal with issues related to radicalisation. As the former director of the Centre explained, “There is no standardised approach in the cantons; we do not have training for employees and have no capacities to deal with the phenomenon [of radicalisation]. We should pay more attention to that group of people [violent extremists and returned FTFs]. Not only because of them, but also for the sake of their children” (interview, 28 November 2017).

Welfare service professionals told researchers that the combination of deficient institutional capacities and deficient training on how to address radicalised individuals has made it difficult to develop mutual trust with some of the users they most need to reach. “How to develop trust, and later maintain trust; how to ensure they seek support... you are on your own and have to act to the best of your ability and knowledge” (Interview, 10 Feb 2018). These professionals recognise that developing this trust is key because, where a lack of trust in institutions exists and legitimacy is consequently lost, a space is created for groups that act against established social norms. Such groups, often described as anti-social groups, exploit the weaknesses of pro-social institutions by promoting ideas that undermine existing democratic order and norms (see Bjerregaard & Cochran, 2008; Messner et al., 2008).

Uncertainty

The weakening of pro-social institutions tends to lead to a sense of uncertainty that very often generates anxiety and defeatism. Even in unaffected BPC, research respondents all described being plagued by a constant feeling of uncertainty, which they said affects them more on a personal level than any other threat. Focus group participants in affected communities also commonly shared feelings of pervasive uncertainty, which stem for all respondents from a sense that their futures are insecure, and for those who

¹¹ Srđan Puhalo, a psychologist living in Banja Luka, undertook a socio-psychological study in which he surveyed 126 Salafists from various communities; though he acknowledged in an interview with researchers that members of some of the most radical parajamaats refused to take part. He found that 69.8% of respondents were members of the IC, and that 65.9% have trust in the organization; while 19.8% said they do not (2016:165).

are younger and unmarried, from the lack of opportunity or reliable social welfare to support building a family. Respondents noted that increasing numbers of Bosnians are simply seeking stability elsewhere, explaining that, “We even see people leaving who had stable jobs and worked in the public sector. They are migrating to European countries... This feeling of uncertainty grows stronger every day when you see the inability of the state to provide security in the long-term; so you can at least ensure that your children will be safe in the future, that they will have a job opportunity and a decent standard of living.”

This kind of defeatism has been a feature of Bosnian discourse for some time now. Research conducted in 2009 by the UNDP on social capital in BiH found for example that “positive expectations about the future are mentioned only by a relatively small share of respondents” (UNDP, 2009:11). And recent public polling (n=1513), from March and April 2018, continues to reflect this scepticism, with 86% of respondents stating that the country is headed in the wrong direction (IRI, 2018). In this research, younger respondents expressed this sentiment particularly strongly, and in unison; meaning there was no difference in this negative perception of the future between Salafi adherents and other research participants of the same age group. These young respondents said they are “unable to plan for the future”, that “lately, someone who has a job can easily lose it”, and that “those who don’t have [a job] are unsure if they can find one in the near future”.

This kind of uncertainty must be viewed in the context of violent extremism as a potential contributing factor to radicalisation into violence, especially through the influence of extremist groups. Several studies show that uncertainty can lead individuals to seek group belonging, which can reduce their sense of uncertainty by offering “clear boundaries, internal homogeneity, social interaction, clear internal structure, common goals, and common fate” (Hogg & Adelman, 2013). And as Hogg et al. point out, “uncertainty can have profound societal consequences by promoting the impact of certainty-promising demagogues of various kinds, discouraging open mindedness to a diversity of viewpoints, and enhancing the appeal of rigidly simplistic, black/white ideologies, and fundamentalist belief systems and practices” (Hogg, Kruglanski & van den Bos, 2013). This aligns with the experience of one interviewee in this study, a university-educated former radical Salafist who has moderated his beliefs, who told researchers that “particularly if they have had a troublesome past, [people] believe the only way to redemption is to follow the most rigid rules or interpretation of those rules” (interview, 12 April 2018).

Uncertainty can also make people unusually receptive to messengers of resolution or salvation. Among radicalised respondents in this research, several were clearly drawn to Salafism by the desire for guidance from a charismatic leader, explaining that they initially followed Salafi preachers and attended their lectures because they offered “advice on how to order your life” (interview, 21 Dec 2017). In their baseline research on the foreign fighter phenomenon in BiH, Azinović and Jusić (2016:73) found that this same need for external regulation had motivated many Bosnian Salafists to join ISIL, noting that, “this guidance may enable them to deal with the uncertainties of everyday life without constantly questioning whether their actions or desires are permitted by God. The ISIL narrative, and its inference that a brutal force of justice is righting all the wrongs carried out against Muslims, has led some young Bosnians to believe that, by belonging to ISIL, their righteousness and eternal life is guaranteed” (Azinović & Jusić, 2016:73).

Such choices and behaviour can be explained by the compensatory control theory, according to which people “embrace ideologies that emphasize personal, societal, or religious control in order to alleviate anxieties they experience when they perceive randomness and disorder in their lives” (Kay & Eibach, 2013). Studies have proven that extremist groups “provide a clear and unambiguous sense of self and place in the world” (Hogg et al., 2013), and can in this way replace previous social structures and influences, including those of friends or even family members. These social shifts were clearly recognisable in the lives of Salafi focus group participants from affected communities, one of whom told researchers, “I never wanted to leave my old friends and I tried to change them... so that they would see what I had learned [about “true” religion], but they abandoned me...”

Education

Education, informal and formal alike, plays a pivotal role in radicalisation as both a factor of resilience and of vulnerability. In BiH, education was instrumentalised by humanitarian organisations from Gulf countries as a part of a post-war strategy to attract Bosnians to more radical religious norms, sometimes through offers of financial and material scholarship aid under the proviso that recipients attend mini-madrassas. Some of these organisations even conditioned their humanitarian assistance, particularly to members of the families of fallen soldiers, on the obligatory attendance by children of Islamic schools that explicitly promoted Salafism. Though not officially sanctioned, these schools were tacitly or even openly supported by many local leaders; and by using education in this way, these organisations were crucial to transforming the way some Bosnian Muslims understand Islam (see Antunez Moreno, 2010).

“After my father was killed in a battle, we were offered help, and a scholarship for me, by an Arab humanitarian organisation. They only requested that I attend *maktab* [Islamic school] every weekend. I went there regularly, and we learned about Islam, and how to practice it. I wasn’t aware of the differences between what we learned back then and Bosnian Islam. But simultaneously, I took part in folklore. When, one weekend, I had to travel with my folklore group abroad, and I said so in *maktab*, the teacher tried to convince me that belief in folklore was a sin, and particularly, for a girl to go abroad without accompaniment by a *mahram*. It was the first time I’d heard that word. As he saw that I was not giving up on traveling with my folklore group, he kept trying to persuade me, and even visited my mother to tell her what a sin I was committing if I continued with folklore and went with the group abroad. If my mother hadn’t been so firm in her stance that I was free to choose what to do – even deciding not to continue sending me to the *maktab* – who knows who or what I would have become in the meantime” (interview, 6 November 2017).

Many of these same humanitarian organisations financed scholarships for young adult Bosnian Muslims, sending several waves of scholars to Islamic universities in the Middle East – mainly in Saudi Arabia, but also in Jordan – through unofficial channels. Two different groups were targeted by these scholarships: youth who had already accepted Salafism and wanted to serve as future Salafi preachers in BiH; and high school students who showed an interest in religion but had not yet adopted Salafism (interview with a former Salafist, 3 Dec 2017; interview with a former member of the El-Mujahid Unit, 17 Feb 2018). This allowed an unknown number of Bosnian Muslims to receive their university education in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and several other Gulf states.

Interestingly, despite these efforts, a clear pattern seen in this research among members of *parajamaats* in affected communities – especially those who follow or are suspected of following *takfirism* – is that most have had limited to no formal religious education, *even those who are preachers and deliver Friday prayers*. One Salafist preacher who regularly leads Friday prayers in *parajamaats* in both the affected communities under study told researchers that his education consisted of attending an unofficial madrassa and listening to hundreds of lectures by “educated da’is” (interview, 17 Jan 2018). Many adherents to Salafism reported receiving a similar education in the process of converting and admitted paying little attention to religion previously.

Interviews with several Salafists from affected communities indicated that most of these converts¹² started their conversion after high school. They offered varied reasons for converting, so that a clear profile of who is most likely to do so cannot be established, but some trends emerge upon analysis. For instance, they often described their previous life in terms *jahiliyyah* (ignorance), explaining that they had frequently behaved “stupidly”, were involved in petty crime, used drugs, or drank alcohol excessively. Most acquired radical norms at a transitional time in their lives, when they were just out of high school, without a job, and were seeking “something new”, or a way out of unhealthy cycles. When they found this

12 The term convert is used here, though Salafists prefer to be described as “reverts.”

in religion, they sought easy-to-understand guidance, since 80% of interviewees had only the most basic or no previous knowledge of Islam. The same trend was observed by Srđan Puhalo among FTFs jailed in Zenica Prison (2018:148), of whom all reported that their interest in religion began in or just after high school and few had ever attended religious classes as children.

A common feature of both non-violent and violent extremist groups in the affected communities under study is the unambiguous role of leadership and fellowship within group dynamics. The decisions of leaders are undisputed and followers are unquestionably guided by them. And these followers are constantly seeking further guidance in every conceivable sphere of their lives, from who to marry, to how one engages in religiously-condoned sexual intercourse, to whether a job is *halal* (permitted by Islamic law).¹³ The range of questions posed by Salafi adherents – including, “Am I allowed to work in a supermarket that sells alcohol?” and “Can I be a hairdresser to a Jew?” – is evidence of the significant gap between Salafist conservatism and secular liberal democratic values, and demonstrates the willingness of Salafists to allow every microdetail of their life to be regulated by religious leaders.

This tendency by Salafists to seek external lifestyle prescriptions was linked by some interviewees to a lack of critical thinking, which was attributed to a lack of education. This reflects the prevalent stereotype of Salafists as poorly educated; a stereotype that Salafi research participants say impacts how they are treated in Bosnian society. One Salafi woman explained, “When I see a doctor or paediatrician with my son, they often speak to me as if I were uneducated or even illiterate. Sometimes I have to be rather harsh so that they understand I am not uneducated, only veiled” (interview, 12 Oct 2017).

There is conflicting data on the correlation between education level and support for or adherence to Salafism. One of the first public surveys (n=431) on the issue in BiH (which used the term Wahhabism) was conducted in 2006 among Bosniaks and found that only 12.9% supported this more conservative interpretation of Islam, but also that the education level of respondents strongly correlated with results, with higher educated respondents expressing more opposition to Wahhabism and lower educated respondents indicating more support (see Muminović, 2006). A low level of education can be linked to a certain extent with violent extremism specifically, as reported by Azinović and Jusić, who found “that a majority of migrants from BiH to Syria and Iraq have only a primary-level education” (2016:44-45). On the other hand, in a recent baseline study of the overall Salafi community in BiH, 52% of Salafi interviewees held a university degree and all were high school graduates (Bećirević, 2016:101).

As was highlighted in some of the interviews conducted for this study, it is the content and nature of education that is most important in terms of equipping an individual to critically approach the ideas they encounter. A high school teacher who spoke with researchers explained that the educational system in BiH “is still based on a restrictive approach, where students are not encouraged to question what they are taught. It starts in primary school, where pupils are robbed of their creativity and free thinking, and it continues through the university level. At the end of the day, you get someone who acquiesces to everything” (interview, 13 Dec 2017). Yet, critical thinking is not the only factor at work when group dynamics and questions of belonging come into play; and one interviewee told researchers that it is a challenge “even for the educated ones to critically observe what they are being told [in parajamaats], since they are afraid of being excluded from the group. Then, the more they follow the same preacher, they acquire an intolerant attitude toward any other interpretation” (interview, 10 Dec 2017).

Unemployment

BiH features the highest unemployment rate among youth between 15 and 24 (60.9%) in the world (International Labour Organisation ILO, 2016), and dissatisfaction among youth who have limited or no

¹³ Researchers analysed the websites and Facebook Pages of some of the most influential Salafi leaders in BiH and observed that a very high degree of engagement by their followers is focused on receiving advice on the appropriate way to address and manage almost every imaginable scenario one may encounter in daily life.

opportunities for social and economic advancement makes them receptive to new doctrines, especially those that offer abstract, utopian solutions to seemingly intractable problems. Indeed, this lack of opportunity could even be regarded as a type of trauma for young people in BiH, who face sometimes-interminable odds just to enjoy a “normal” life. In trying to overcome this, they may seek a guide or life coach and are often prepared to embrace any way out from underneath the burdens they face. The omnipresence of Salafi preachers in online spaces means that some religious seekers are led to the easily accessible lectures of leading da’is, posted on websites and shared across social media platforms.

Through exposure to video lectures and other online engagement, potential converts or new adherents often become loyal followers of specific Salafi figures. A Salafist who was interviewed for this study explained, “As I started to practice, I went first to my cousin, who had some religious knowledge, but very soon he wasn’t able to answer my questions. So, I turned more and more to YouTube before I decided to move to Sarajevo to look for a job. Here, I had the opportunity to learn from different *sheiks* I [already] followed on YouTube” (interview, 14 Feb 2018).

The social and economic inequality that reigns across BiH is especially reflected in the two affected communities under study. In Zenica-Doboj Canton, unemployment is among the highest in the Federation of BiH, and per capita income among the lowest. Furthermore, ZDC and Sarajevo Canton feature the second and third highest rates of *youth* unemployment in the Federation (ages 15 to 24). A pattern of unemployment was also seen in the judgments and court records from foreign fighting cases that were analysed by researchers, which revealed that most returned former fighters had been unemployed or only occasionally employed, mainly in the grey economy.

Conversely, BPC – the *unaffected* community under study – has the lowest rate of youth unemployment (Federal Institute for Development Programming [*Federalni zavod za programiranje razvoja*], 2016:44) in the country, and some respondents there felt quite positive about the economy. One focus group participant in BPC told researchers that “the Goražde of 10 years ago and of today is incomparable in economic terms. Today, if you want to work in industry, you will certainly be able to find a job. The salaries are not high enough, but at least high school graduates have job opportunities.”

Still, while unemployment is an important underlying factor that may make one susceptible to radicalisation, it is not a decisive factor on its own. Other factors, such as feelings of victimisation, the grievances caused by institutional anomie, a sense of social alienation, a below average educational level, and a previous criminal record may combine with an individual’s unemployed status, though, in a potentially toxic blend that can make them vulnerable not just to radicalisation but to violent extremism. As one expert told researchers, “when you begin being radicalised, it isn’t like you wake up in the morning and say to yourself ‘I want to commit a terrorist attack, I want to kill innocent people and myself’. This isn’t what drives them. They are driven by some personal pain or grievance...”

4.1.3 Parajamaats and isolated Salafi communities

The early emergence of the congregations that later became known as *parajamaats* occurred in places where former members of the El-Mujahid Unit settled after the war, and this is also where the earliest offices of Active Islamic Youth (AIO) were established.¹⁴ These locations were particularly concentrated in the ZDC; yet, former members of AIO publicly admitted to establishing the very first *parajamaat* in

¹⁴ In 2002, almost all the organisations connected to financing Salafist activities, including Active Islamic Youth (AIO) – which was established by former Bosnian members of the El-Mujahed Unit – were shut down and/or banned. At the same time, the Bosnian state also revoked the citizenship of most *mujahideen* who had remained after war. In response, AIO changed its name, registering as “Youth cultural centres”, with a stated mission to organise educational activities, including foreign languages courses, computer courses, mini-madrassas, and more. Young Salafi-oriented university graduates who returned from Saudi Arabia drove the group’s activities, and were set to start a new wave of Salafi proselytism in BiH. Police actions and other measures kept the activities of these “Youth cultural centres” contained, but a former intelligence official told researchers that they again simply “took another form and continued to exist under other names” (interview, 8 January 2018).

Sarajevo, immediately after the war. Almost two decades later, as the number of FTFs from BiH grew in Syria and Iraq, these unofficial congregations were forced to step out of the shadows as it became clear that each of these FTFs had links to specific Salafi communities and *parajamaats*.

The *parajamaats* of Salafists are not authorised by the IC of BiH, and yet perform prayers, deliver lectures, and offer religious education. They operate in violation of the Law on Freedom of Religion in BiH, which does not allow anyone who is not appointed by an official religious community (in this case, the IC) to offer religious teaching. In 2005, Salafists associated with *parajamaats* officially registered a new NGO, the “Union of jamaats in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” which could have become a parallel Islamic Community in BiH. But according to one Salafi preacher, “those who strongly supported the establishment of our jamaats with their money were not so supportive of the idea to establish a parallel Islamic Community that could disrupt the [official] IC” (interview, 17 January 2018).

Some *parajamaats* in affected communities transitioned over time from serving one group of Salafists to another, becoming more extreme, or *takfirist*. In general, the Salafi movement can be divided into three broad categories: quietist, activist, and jihadist. In the analysed communities, some *parajamaats* were at first quietist, or more precisely quietist-rejectionist, seeking refuge “from an infidel society”. Some then increased their rejectionism and became totally estranged from society, accepting the ideology of *takfirism* and dismissing democratic values. The Facebook posts of members of these *parajamaats* reflect their dismissal of democracy, which they label “demoncracy,” and of the constitutional system, which they refer to as *taghut* (meaning, to ascribe the rights of Allah to another, or in lay terms, idol worship).

The establishment of Gornja Maoča, an isolated community that drew together radical individuals who wanted to live in a place they saw as the ultimate manifestation of their religious aims, was a decisive factor in connecting all the *parajamaats* across BiH. Leaders of the community (which is in Tuzla Canton) – first, Jusuf Barčić, who died in a car accident in 2007, and then Nusret Imamović, who left for Syria to join the al-Nusra Front in 2014 – became key local links to larger radical networks. Close aides to Imamović established a series of remote communities, including Ošve (in ZDC), from which many FTFs departed. These same recruiters were instrumental in attracting FTFs from *parajamaats* in Sarajevo. Figures like Imamović and Bilal Bosnić held regular lectures in *parajamaats* in both ZDC and SC, along with some public lectures; and all the Bosnian FTFs from both these cantons had direct or indirect connections with Gornja Maoča (interview with an expert, 7 February 2018; interview with a security official, 21 January 2018).

The importance of a leader who frames the intellectual and theological messages that promote and justify radical ideas or actions is clear in the affected communities under study. Besides this, a charismatic leader helps attract new followers. The small group of Salafists in BPC has no such leader and is therefore unlikely to grow (focus group, 29 October 2017); and the relatively small size of the larger community in Goražde and BPC (which is only around 25,000) may also be another factor of resilience against further radicalisation. One local CSO activist in BPC explained that people there feel a sense of mutuality and thus pay more attention to not “crossing the red line” than in larger communities. This can be partially confirmed by low rates of criminality in BPC, which contributes to a collective feeling of safety. In fact, when describing their community to our researchers, focus group participants universally noted that the community is safe, and that it is increasingly prosperous.

In affected communities, interviewees cited the influence of diaspora as another important factor of radicalisation, especially for the most of isolated communities and *parajamaats*. According to experts and security officials, diaspora were instrumental in establishing Gornja Maoča, and several individuals from Austria who were later accused of financing terrorism regularly attended *parajamaats* in Zenica (Interview, 10 January 2018). According to focus group participants, some Bosnian diaspora have only adopted Islam since emigrating during or after the war, but because they have been taught by radical preachers in the West, they view the practices of Bosnian Islam as flawed. One Bosnian Muslim respondent told researchers that when these diaspora visit in the summer, “they always try to convince us how wrong we are in our practice of Islam. They are very stubborn in that sense” (23 March 2018). Even a Salafist who was interviewed for this research asserted that “the diaspora is more radical than any one of us [in BiH]” (interview, 11 November 2018).

This study does not include an in-depth investigation into links between the Salafist movement in BiH and the Bosnian diaspora, and its influence on radicalisation. This would have required access to security data and field work in communities beyond BiH; and so, these links remain to be explored. But given the characterisation of some leading diaspora figures by respondents in BiH, as particularly extreme even within the context of Salafism, future research on this topic is suggested.

4.2 Programming aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE)

A national strategy for preventing and combating terrorism was adopted by BiH in 2015. The strategy improves on earlier strategies on security and terrorism by recognising the issue of radicalisation leading to violent extremism, but it remains without “teeth” because the action plans derived from it have not been implemented, despite the fact that implementation was supposed to begin in 2016. The activities that must be implemented fall into seven key areas: legislation, institutional capacity building, education, prevention, protection, investigation, and response to terrorism (Strategy for preventing and combating terrorism 2015-2020; Action plan for implementation of the Strategy for preventing and combating terrorism). Putting aside the lack of capacities to implement the Strategy and develop effective action plans, one main obstacle to implementation is the absence of official (i.e. state sanctioned) definitions of *radicalisation* and *violent extremism*. This was highlighted in several of the interviews conducted with experts for this study, in which interviewees acknowledged how challenging it is to establish definitions of these terms but expressed that official definitions are an important aid in developing a common understanding of how to structure and implement P/CVE activities.¹⁵

So far, several P/CVE efforts undertaken by non-governmental and external actors do not appear to be widely known even in the communities they have targeted. For example, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) carried out a project in 15 Bosnian communities that aimed to assess drivers and the prevalence of radicalisation, yet none of the interviewees in this study were aware of it, and so researchers were unable to assess its impact.¹⁶ In October 2017, the IOM also initiated a US government-funded project, “Institutional Strengthening: Establishing a Formal Referral Mechanism for Preventing Violent Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” following a pilot in six communities, with the aim to promote engagement and build resilience among youth.

Still, existing initiatives such as this are mostly externally driven. Various UN organizations have focused attention on women and violent extremism, and on changing legislation to make rehabilitation measures for returned FTFs obligatory. And, the OSCE Mission has been mainstreaming CVE into its existing programming on security co-operation, human rights, rule of law, democratic governance, education, and gender issues (OSCE, 2018), through a full spectrum of initiatives to encourage dialogue on violent extremism, empower youth, and offer training to educators and policy makers. Interviewees who participated in OSCE trainings noted that awareness raising is an important contribution and welcomed the opportunity these events provided to network with professionals from other governmental and non-governmental organisations also dealing with the issue of violent extremism.

The Islamic Community is also receiving support from the OSCE, the EU, and the Norwegian Government for a number of projects. In cooperation with the OSCE, the IC has organised trainings for more 1,000 imams and developed an online module on VE, hate crimes, and discrimination. With support from the EU Delegation to BiH, further training was provided for parents and adolescents from

¹⁵ Participants in two focus groups emphasised that a lack of awareness of radicalisation and violent extremism is linked to different understandings of these phenomena (1 December 2017; 8 October 2017).

¹⁶ The project assessed the towns and cities of: Bileća, Brčko, Bugojno, Buzim, Capljina, Cazin, East Sarajevo, Foca, Jablanica, Novi Grad (Sarajevo), Prijedor, Tuzla, Zavidovići, Zenica, and Zvornik.

23 communities, as well as a train-the-trainers workshop for imams. The IC also developed a strategic document regarding the integration of groups and individuals acting outside the purview of official IC structures, which included P/CVE measures focused on the education of imams and religious teachers, to equip them with the knowledge to address concepts like *takfir* and the doctrine of the Kharijites¹⁷. Additionally, the IC has established a youth network, with branches in communities across BiH, and has appointed coordinators for female activism. A multimedia platform for countering extremist narratives in the media is planned as well but is still in the development phase.

What is noticeable in this summary of efforts is the lack of truly locally-owned P/CVE programming in BiH or plans for community-specific PVE projects in the affected communities under study. All programming is currently initiated and directed at the state or entity levels. And because the impact of any such initiatives is difficult or impossible to measure yet, it is hard to assess how well these efforts have adapted to the unique needs of any given community.

Notably, in BPC, where radicalisation is not viewed as a pressing problem and Salafists maintain a low profile, focus groups participants told researchers they would prefer if P/CVE efforts were *not* initiated in their community. They expressed concern that PVE-related activities could put the community in the crosshairs of individuals who seek to politicise the issue of radicalisation and attach the “terrorist” label to all Muslims in general. One respondent remarked that “Croatia tries to cause problems in Bosnia by labelling all Bosniaks as violent extremists”.

4.3 PVE and peacebuilding

Given the recent history of conflict in BiH, a key question is whether it is possible to apply experiences from the transitional justice process to projects related to radicalisation into violent extremism. Yet, first, whether projects that attempted to tackle transitional justice issues actually achieved anything over the past two decades must be addressed. Many researchers and practitioners have argued that the dynamics between democratisation and peacebuilding that emerged in BiH after the war’s end must be better captured; but it is clear that a main challenge has been the fact that both the state and Bosnian society have been locked in frozen conflict since that time. A top-down political settlement has never been reached, which, according to Fischer (2011:406), is required before a bottom-up process can occur. Thus, in the immediate post-war period, peacebuilding work in BiH was mainly focused on reconciliation and on the technical dimensions of state-building, with no recognition that these aims were impossible to achieve in the absence of a common idea of the state.

Instead of inspiring a healthy political process, the country’s constitutional make-up allowed political elites to perpetuate the ethnic divisions that were established during the war and were confirmed by the Dayton Peace Agreement. This negative, ethnically divided political atmosphere has now been trickling down to the citizenry for over twenty years, inevitably affecting peacebuilding activities. These efforts, mainly donor driven, have often been organised without any political buy-in or, when financed by powerful international organisations or actors, have received only formal political consent. A lack of real consent by political elites to reconciliation initiatives and other various peacebuilding projects has made it more difficult for these projects to have any real impact.

There are common drivers of radicalisation in BiH, whether in the context of ethnic or religious extremism; and since the war, the country has experienced an increase in what is known as cumulative radicalisation, wherein one radicalisation feeds another. The many programmes already in place to

¹⁷ The Kharijites were the first identifiable sect of Islam. Their identity emerged as followers of Muhammad attempted to determine the extent to which one could deviate from ideal norms of behavior and still be called Muslim. Their doctrine involves using violence and punishment to those who do not follow pure interpretation of Islam. They are characterized as forerunners of contemporary militant movements. (Sonn and Farrar, 2010)

address transitional justice issues and battle genocide denial in certain communities may thus provide a platform on which to build programming that aims to counter radicalisation and violent extremism. This may also offer an opportunity to undertake initiatives that have been lacking in BiH since the war's end. A survey showed for example that only 12 of 170 NGOs and just 4 of 23 public health institutions have addressed the need to heal trauma as an element of transitional justice and peacebuilding (Funk & Good, 10-11). Yet, analysis of the affected communities under study, and particularly of FTFs who departed, indicates that most cases of radicalism and violent extremism are driven by real or perceived grievances related to individual or group traumas. Hence, Borum (2011:34) argues that trauma healing is a necessity to prevent radicalisation.

Programmes focused on reforming education in BiH could also play a role in reducing radicalisation by introducing themes that help prevent and combat radicalisation and violent extremism, and by enriching curricula with learning objectives that develop critical thinking. And to advance PVE at the local level, a common peacebuilding approach could be employed. As Holmes notes, many peacebuilders “are focused on local implementation, working from existing mechanisms and viewing conflict through an anthropological lens” (2017). Although this approach is sometimes criticised for being *too* local and for avoiding engagement with other sectors, such as security, it may be effective in expanding the scope of PVE in BiH, which is currently very security oriented. While projects aimed at transitional justice have been led by organisations with human rights portfolios, research and activities exploring the drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism in BiH are almost all led by security-focused organisations. It is understandable that donors have focused on organisations that specialise in security matters to research these topics, but it raises the question of whether these phenomena are being *overly* securitised.

5 Final discussion and recommendations

This research distinguished several factors and actors that contribute to the degree to which certain communities in BiH have been affected or unaffected by radicalisation. The history of the 1992–1995 war has especially played a decisive role in shaping post-war radicalisation processes. This is true both in terms of how wartime actors and activities sowed the seeds of the Salafist movement in BiH, and how wartime networks in certain communities increased the likelihood of investment by specific foreign actors in the post-war period.

The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) has also been a factor in weakening the resilience of Bosnians to radicalisation, by creating a constitutional reality that perpetuates the political extremism of the war. The resilience of Bosnian society began crumbling at the dawn of the 1990s, as extremist political discourse dominated the public space in the former Yugoslavia. Then, Bosniaks were exposed to the most horrific forms of extremism during the war, suffering brutal atrocities at the hands of radical ethnonationalists whose goal of a Serb state was in many ways endorsed by the DPA, which made the Serb Republic of BiH (Republika Srpska) an official entity of BiH. In the immediate post-war period, this made it impossible for society to develop any resilience to new forms of radicalisation, which created fertile ground for

many forms of extremism, especially when combined with gloomy prospects at the structural level – such as continued political radicalisation, institutional anomie, and socioeconomic instability. It was important for these reasons that this analysis consider not only the period during which the foreign fighter phenomenon emerged, but also the wartime and immediate post-war periods, to determine what separates the affected and unaffected communities under study.

Researchers found that all these communities share some characteristics, including a lack of trust in institutions and a sense of uncertainty about the future. Until 2014, they all shared very high unemployment rates as well; but BPC has seen a rise in foreign investments in specialist industries like metal processing since that time, reducing this rate, especially among youth. Still, the main differences between affected and unaffected communities are linked to the war. Unlike affected communities, BPC did not experience a wartime influx of foreign *mujahideen* and therefore remained untouched by early missionary activities undertaken during the conflict.

The fact that these actors never gained a foothold in BPC as the war was underway had a domino effect in the post-war period, when it was spared the treatment of affected communities, which were exposed to the influence of humanitarian organisations that zealously promoted Salafism in an effort to continue the religious re-education of Bosnian Muslims started by foreign *mujahideen*. These organisations exploited the dire economic conditions and state vacuum that particularly affected orphans and families of fallen soldiers, but BPC was left almost entirely out of these activities despite suffering comparable wartime losses. Some interviewees in BPC linked the post-war absence of Gulf-funded organisations in the Canton to the same reason they felt *mujahideen* never arrived in the first place, noting that the community is small and fully enveloped by Serb territory. But others also mentioned that local authorities had explicitly refused to accept foreign aid with strings attached, underscoring the role local leadership can play in community resilience.

The geographical location of BPC appears to be among the reasons it has remained unaffected by the spread of both violent and non-violent Salafism to this day. According to respondents there, Salafi preachers are uneasy traveling through the Republika Srpska and are afraid of attracting the attention of law enforcement and intelligence agencies by visiting Goražde. In a focus group, one of these preachers told researchers, “I had an invitation to hold a lecture in Podrinje, but I refused... I weighed the reasons for and against, since I have never been in a Serb-dominated area. This is why I decided not to go.... I felt uncomfortable and thought about the possibility of being stopped by their police and having to answer questions about my beard” (focus group, 1 December 2017).

It is important to note that in affected and unaffected communities alike, research participants largely lacked awareness of radicalisation and extremism or cited it as a potential risk. When asked about the challenges facing their respective communities, respondents highlighted corruption generally and corrupt politicians specifically, unreliable institutions, and the “brain drain” being caused by emigration. Some even discussed the possibility of renewed conflict, but few mentioned radicalisation. All of these issues are in some ways linked, of course, but policy makers and researchers should understand that structural dysfunction far outweighs extremism as a concern in the minds of most Bosnian citizens.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following initiatives and activities are recommended:

- 1) *The establishment of programmes to develop resilience in high school students and young adults.* A way of contributing to building resilience, is promoting school students engagement at community level, such as volunteering, being aware of their positive contribution to society and to encourage students to think critically about taboo themes. Such programmes could be introduced through only small changes to existing school curricula, requiring relatively little additional education for teachers.
- 2) *The development of a collaborative multimedia platform aimed at combatting all forms of radicalisation*

and violent extremism. Among other things, this platform could offer a virtual community of experts from various professional backgrounds (e.g., social workers, psychologists, criminologists, security experts, media professionals, etc.) who work on issues related to P/CVE.

- 3) *The development of radicalisation/violent extremism awareness programmes that are responsive and tailored to the needs of specific communities.*
- 4) *The (re)introduction of community policing programs.* As a first step, this would entail training police officers in resolving community problems. This would help build trust in law enforcement among citizens.
- 5) *The employment of additional psychologists and social workers to strengthen the social safety net.*
- 6) *Further research on cumulative radicalisation in BiH,* which is needed to help shed light on whether and to what extent each form of extremism (political, ethnic, religious, etc.) feeds off others forms and reacts to the state.

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Glossary

Affected community: A community that has been disrupted by human, material, economic, or environmental losses; in this case, a community that has been impacted by radicalisation (measured in the departure of FTFs).

Bid'ah: Innovation (newly invented, without precedence) or novelty in religious matters; heretical religious practice or heresy.

Community: Women, men, social groups, and institutions based in the same geographical area and/or on shared interests.

Community cohesion: The extent to which people bond around shared interests and goals and develop mutual understandings and a sense of collective identity and belonging, resulting in mutual trust.

Community resilience: The ability of a community to withstand, respond to, and recover from a wide range of harmful and adverse events.

Community vulnerability: The inability to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from adverse events or influences.

Counter-terrorism: All measures taken to prevent and combat terrorism before, during, and after hostile acts are carried out.

Counter-radicalisation:

1. According to the United Nations, to “deter disaffected individuals from crossing the line and becoming terrorists”.
2. A package of social, political, legal, educational, and economic programs specifically designed to deter disaffected (and possibly already radicalised) individuals from resorting to terrorism.
3. A policy theme, not a single policy, delivered through multiple channels, with a potentially unlimited range of relevant activities typically involving messaging, engagement and outreach, education and training, and capacity building.

Da'i: A missionary or preacher, one who engages in *da'wah* (though not an exclusively Salafist term, in this research, it is used only in reference to Salafi preachers).

Da'wah: The act of inviting people into Islam, proselytism, missionary work.

De-radicalisation: A process often realised through a system of programmes and measures aimed at radicalised individuals, meant to reduce the extremity of their views and reintegrate them into society.

Disengagement: A process whereby an individual gives up their active participation in a radical group or movement; this does not necessarily indicate changed political or ideological views.

Factors of Resilience: The ideas, institutions, issues, trends, or values that enable individuals and communities to resist or prevent violence.

Fiqh: Islamic jurisprudence, applied by religious jurists (*ulama*) to social and moral questions, based on their scholarly comprehension of complex Islamic sources.

Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF): According to the United Nations, “Individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.”

Hanafi: One of the four Sunni schools of Islamic law (*madhab*), founded by Abu Hanifa (the other three are Hanbali, Maliki, and Shafi’i).

Hijab: A scarf that covers the head, neck, and chest but not the face.

Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina: A single and unique community of Muslims in BiH and of Bosniaks outside the homeland, as well as other Muslims who accept it as their own.

Jamaat: Arabic for “assembly,” denotes a congregation or gathering place for Muslims.

Jihad: A religious duty of Muslims that implies “striving in the path of God;” often incorrectly limited in common usage to refer only to a “holy war” against non-believers.

Madhab: A doctrine or school of thought within Islamic *fiqh*; traditional Bosnian Islam is rooted in the Hanafi madhab.

Madrasa: Arabic for “school;” Islamic religious school.

Maktab: Arabic for “school;” Muslim elementary school.

Migrant/s: A person or a group who travels with the intent to settle elsewhere; in this case, individuals who departed for Syria or Iraq but did not engage in combat.

Namaz: The obligatory prayer in Islam.

Niqab: A face veil that covers the mouth and nose, leaving only the eyes exposed.

Parajamaat: A congregation or gathering place for Muslims that is not officially sanctioned by the Islamic Community of BiH.

Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)/Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): Using non-coercive means to address the drivers and/or root causes of violent extremism.

Radicalisation: A process of adopting extreme views and beliefs, often characterised by a rejection of all alternatives and a willingness to impose one’s own principles on the rest of society, and sometimes leading to violence and even terrorism.

Salafism: A movement that promotes a form of Islam that is purported to emulate the practices of the

Salaf – a term that means “predecessors” in Arabic and refers to the first three generations of Muslims –and rejects later innovations to the religion (*bid’ah*); Salafism emphasises *sunnah* and de-emphasises *fiqh*.

Salafi-jihadism: A religious-political ideology that advocates violent *jihad*.

Shirk: The sin of polytheism; ascribing divine characteristics to anyone but God.

Sunnah: Arabic for “habitual practice;” the exemplary deeds and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.

Takfir: The act of excommunicating or declaring a Muslim an apostate (a sin which is punishable by death); among Sunni Muslims, adherents who discern between “true believers” and nonbelievers, with no shades of nuance, are referred to as *Takfiris*.

Taqlid: Unquestioning adherence to the teachings of *madhabs* and other religious authorities.

Teskija: A written referral issued by designated Salafi leaders to individuals departing as would-be fighters to Syria or Iraq (FTFs were required to present it when arriving in Syria as a proof that they could be trusted as honest fighters, and not spies).

Ummah: The global Muslim community.

Unaffected community: A community that has not experienced radicalisation or the FTF phenomenon (see **Affected community**).

Violent extremism: The willingness to use violence, or to support the use of violence, to further particular political, social, economic, or ideological beliefs. (As with the term “terrorism,” there is no international consensus on the definition of violent extremism, and often, these terms are used interchangeably.)

Wahhabism: A conservative branch of Sunni Islam, named after 18th century Muslim scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who advocated the restoration of the earliest Islamic beliefs and practices; al Wahhab’s alliance with the House of Saud insured the spread and consolidation of his teachings and made Wahhabism the official doctrine of Saudi Arabia.

Jahiliyyah: A conception of the pre-Islamic period in Arabia; often translated as the “Age of Ignorance.”