

WESTERN BALKANS

# EXTREMISM RESEARCH FORUM

MONTENEGRO REPORT

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# CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	5
METHODOLOGY.....	7
1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH.....	7
1.2. RESEARCH SAMPLE.....	7
1.3. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES.....	8
1.4. DEFINING EXTREMISM AND RADICALISATION.....	8
2. FORMS AND THREATS OF EXTREMISM.....	9
2.1. MUSLIM IDENTITY WITHIN THE MONTENEGRIN CONTEXT.....	9
2.2. MAIN EXTREMIST THREATS.....	11
2.3. LEADING SALAFI IDEOLOGUES.....	13
3. DRIVERS OF RADICALISATION.....	15
3.1. CASE STUDIES: UNEXPECTED EXTREMISTS.....	16
4. 'AT-RISK' COMMUNITIES.....	18
5. LINKS TO ORGANISED CRIME.....	23
6. TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION.....	23
7. CONCLUSION.....	24
7.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS.....	26
ANNEXES.....	27
ANNEX 1: SAMPLE DATA.....	28
ANNEX 2: AT-RISK COMMUNITIES.....	30

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like all countries in the region, the recent foreign fighter phenomenon that emerged after 2012 brought the issues of radicalisation and violent extremism into the focus of Montenegrin officials. In 2015, they responded by developing a Countering Violent Extremism Strategy, followed by an associated National Action Plan. Yet, respondents in this research noted that a key problem with the Strategy was that it only loosely defined responsibilities for implementation. One interviewee from the police told researchers that police agencies cannot be expected to bear the burden of prevention alone and emphasised the need for an interdisciplinary approach, saying that “this is a problem for all of society, and a partnership between the state and civil society is crucial.” Officials who were interviewed also stressed the need to differentiate between non-violent and violent extremism; acknowledging that there is “radicalism in Montenegro” but asserting there is little risk of violence.

Still, though Montenegro has fewer obvious problems with extremism and radicalisation than some neighbouring countries, Montenegro did see some citizens depart as aspiring fighters to ISIS territory in Syria and Iraq, as well as to Eastern Ukraine – but those who have returned are not viewed as a significant threat by officials, though their activities are monitored. Our researchers found that unofficial *parajamaats* – which operate outside the authority of the Islamic Community of Montenegro (ICM) and tend to preach radical ideologies<sup>1</sup> – have been established in four towns in Montenegro, but intelligence officials claim they are not associated with extremist groups or sleeper cells. When asked about forms of extremism in Montenegro, interviewees mostly identified three main forms: violent takfirism,<sup>2</sup> non-violent Salafism, and pan-Slavism and Orthodox extremism.

There are positive indications that non-violent Salafists in Montenegro are less conservative and fundamentalist than those in BiH. The popularity of Sufi preacher Hafiz Sulejman Bugari, who moved from BiH and was quickly accepted by Salafists across Montenegro, signals that Montenegrin Salafists may be ideologically flexible. Bugari’s popularity is also evidence that certain charismatic leaders could play an important role in de-radicalisation efforts. Bugari has openly distanced himself from “any individual action or any project which is not for the common good.”<sup>3</sup> Though he has never openly challenged Salafi ideology, his messaging that Islam is a tolerant and inclusive religion, and his innovative approach

<sup>1</sup> The word *jamaat* means “assembly” or “congregation.” Muslim congregations that operate outside the purview of the official Islamic Community have come to be known as *parajamaats*, wherein “para” means “irregular.”

<sup>2</sup> Takfirism is an extreme interpretation of Islam, even within the radical context of Salafism. Takfirists view any non-Salafists as *kafir* (non-believers) and often view non-Salafist Muslims (such as traditional Balkan Muslims) as most heretical for practicing what they view as an “impure” version of Islam.

<sup>3</sup> CDT Crna Gora. (2017) *Put bez Povratka*. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqnx6hT66RU>.

to religious leadership – which includes a strong internet presence and comfort with media appearances – makes him very appealing to young people who are interested in Islam. Indeed, he is well-liked even beyond the youth demographic, and was hailed by interviewees across the spectrum, even Salafists, as a figure they respect.

Salafists who were interviewed indicated that they view the secular Montenegrin state, inclusive identity, and Western imperialism as threats; and the antidote for the most extreme of these believers is an Islamic State. Further research that draws on framing theory, which “focuses on how movements and social collectives construct, produce and disseminate meanings,”<sup>4</sup> would be valuable in Montenegro, particularly to analyse how the political context or links between the most influential extremist figures can account for this framing. The small population size of Montenegro also offers ideal conditions for research on extremism in the context of social network theory. Several key actors clearly play a significant role in Salafi proselytising in Montenegro, for example, and it is obvious that their influence goes beyond religion to serve broader political aims; examining this further would be valuable moving forward.

Some of the factors at play in radicalisation across the globe are also factors in Montenegro. And, with a youth unemployment rate over 40% (twice the overall rate of 18%<sup>5</sup>), policymakers must address unemployment and other structural factors with an appreciation for links between these factors and the vulnerability of certain communities to extremist influences. This is especially important because economic marginalisation appears to be a driver of radicalisation in Montenegro (see section 3: “Drivers of Radicalisation”) and other research has concluded that extremist groups sometimes “recruit from the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed.”<sup>6</sup> What’s more, government actors must form alliances with women’s organisations that place government-NGO/CSO partnerships at the centre of efforts to prevent radicalisation among young women in Montenegro, who were identified by respondents as an at-risk group. Finally, charismatic but moderate figures like Hafiz Sulejman Bugari should be viewed by policymakers as potential crucial allies in P/CVE. Voices of moderation should be amplified and engaged as part of educational components in both P/CVE and de-radicalisation initiatives.

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<sup>4</sup> Randy Borum. (2011) Radicalisation into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories. *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4, 18.

<sup>5</sup> International Labour Organization. (29 April 2016) *More needs to be done to create jobs for young people*. Available from: [http://www.ilo.org/budapest/information-resources/press-releases/WCMS\\_476060/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/budapest/information-resources/press-releases/WCMS_476060/lang-en/index.htm) [Accessed 2 April 2018].

<sup>6</sup> Allen, H. et al. (2015) *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review*. RUSI. Available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0899d40f0b64974000192/Drivers\\_of\\_Radicalisation\\_Literature\\_Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0899d40f0b64974000192/Drivers_of_Radicalisation_Literature_Review.pdf) [Accessed 6 January 2017].

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The Extremism Research Forum is a UK government funded research project<sup>7</sup>, examining drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism in the Western Balkans – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

The research commenced in 2017, exploring a range of themes and topics with key stakeholders within communities, civil society and government, in order to build a coherent picture of the specific situation in each country. This research seeks to inform and assist in the development of CVE policies and programming, offering key findings that could be relevant to practitioners and policymakers working in the field of countering violent extremism.

Each country study: 1) maps out the forms of extremism; 2) examines drivers and contributing factors of radicalisation (global, regional, national and local drivers, political and socio-economic); 3) develops a profile of at risk communities.

Taking into account the multifaceted nature of extremism, the research also; 4) identifies any potential links with organised crime, money laundering, links to terrorism; and; 5) analyses trans-national co-operation of violent extremist groups.

This study forms one of the six contextual research pieces, presenting findings from in-depth primary research conducted with communities and wider stakeholders with knowledge of the violent extremist threats specific to the country. The findings are based on primary, and where credible, secondary data sources in order to create an informed and nuanced picture of the violent extremist activity or potential threat within the country. Importantly, it is intended that this research usefully informs policy development, providing practical recommendations, while also feeding into an overarching regional report, where broader linkages and key transnational issues that have been identified from the research will be examined.

It is expected that this project will result in an increased understanding of the size of extremist threats emanating from the WB region, and ultimately increased ability of the UK and Western Balkan partners to address radicalisation based on increased understanding of the issues and the problem.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Like all countries in the region, the recent foreign fighter phenomenon that emerged after 2012 brought the issues of radicalisation and violent extremism into the focus of Montenegrin officials. In 2015, they responded by developing a Countering Violent Extremism Strategy. The total number of Montenegrin foreign fighters who departed for ISIL battlefields was 18, along with 5 women and 4 children who accompanied them, with departures peaking in 2014 and dipping to

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<sup>7</sup> Implemented by the British Council, in partnership with the International Conflict and Research Institute (INCORE), Ulster University.

their lowest in 2016. This trend follows that of other regional countries, and one can argue that the cessation of departures was partly a “result of legal and operational mechanisms implemented by the Montenegrin government in 2015.”<sup>8</sup>

From 2012 to 2016, during the time that aspiring foreign fighters from the region were departing for Syria and Iraq, Montenegro faced a growing political crisis that diverted the attention of officials from the foreign fighter phenomenon and contributed to neglect of the issue in society. They were more focused on the divisive political climate; and the fact that there has not been a single terrorist attack in Montenegro inspired by Salafism allowed the issue of Salafi extremism and radicalisation in Montenegro to barely enter the focus even of regional analysts. As the news of deaths of Montenegrins on the battlefield in Syria made its way home, and some fighters began returning, the issues of radicalisation and violent extremism could no longer be ignored.

Recognising the broad threat of radicalism and violent extremism and “the need to give appropriate response to [this] growing problem,” and under growing pressure from the EU – along with all Western Balkans countries – to react to the foreign fighter phenomenon, the Montenegrin government developed its Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Strategy in December 2015. An associated Action Plan was subsequently developed as well, but officials admit it has been difficult to implement the initiatives it envisions. And, with a rate of unemployment over 40% among 15 to 29-year olds – twice the overall rate of 18%<sup>9</sup> – policymakers are right to focus their attention on what some have called “the youth employment crisis.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, addressing this and other structural factors is crucial in the context of extremism, especially because economic marginalisation appears to be a driver of radicalisation in Montenegro (see “Drivers of Radicalisation”) and other research has found that some extremist groups “recruit from the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed.”<sup>11</sup> Economic and social marginalisation particularly impacts the Roma community in Montenegro, and government and ICM officials who were interviewed, as well as other interviewees, expressed concern that this community may be especially at risk of radicalisation.

While Montenegrin security respondents note that Montenegro has some of the lowest levels of both violent and non-violent Salafism among Western Balkan countries, it is clear that the country features political dynamics and internal divisions that are worth exploring as push factors in the context of radicalisation. And yet, with the exception of rare academic papers that appear in edited volumes or policy papers with a comparative regional perspective, it is difficult to find reliable academic sources that can serve as a baseline for follow up research. Thus, this study aims to establish a baseline for research on violent and non-violent Salafi extremism in Montenegro, and as a jumping off point for future research in Montenegro on radicalisation more generally.

This research was designed to examine Salafi extremism specifically, but it is important to emphasise that Montenegrin officials routinely expressed concern to researchers about other radicalising influences. For example, when researchers raised the issue of foreign fighting – which was criminalised by the Montenegrin Parliament in 2015 – sources discussed the potential threat posed not just by fighters who have returned from Syria and Iraq but also by those who

<sup>8</sup> Azinović, V. (2017) “Montenegro” in *Between Salvation and Terror: Radicalization and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in the Western Balkans*. Atlantic Initiative and the School for Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo.

<sup>9</sup> International Labour Organization. (29 April 2016) More needs to be done to create jobs for young people. Available from:

[http://www.ilo.org/budapest/information-resources/press-releases/WCMS\\_476060/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/budapest/information-resources/press-releases/WCMS_476060/lang-en/index.htm) [Accessed 2 April 2018].

<sup>10</sup> International Labour Organization. (19 December 2016) *How to boost youth employment in Montenegro? – A White Paper presented*. Available from:

[http://www.ilo.org/budapest/information-resources/press-releases/WCMS\\_542373/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/budapest/information-resources/press-releases/WCMS_542373/lang-en/index.htm) [Accessed 2 April 2018].

<sup>11</sup> Allen, H. et al. (2015) *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review*. RUSI. Available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0899d40f0b64974000192/Drivers\\_of\\_Radicalisation\\_Literature\\_Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0899d40f0b64974000192/Drivers_of_Radicalisation_Literature_Review.pdf) [Accessed 6 January 2017].

have returned from Ukraine. So far, authorities say eight Montenegrin former fighters are known to have returned from ISIS battlefields, and at least five have returned from fighting alongside pro-Russian forces in Ukraine.<sup>12</sup>

# METHODOLOGY

## 1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

This research was led by the same thematic research questions as the other studies presented in this volume, which guided the field work. The research was focused in areas of Montenegro with a majority Muslim population, and specifically with Salafists of Bosniak and, to some extent, Roma ethnicity. The Bosniak community and elements of the Roma community were identified in preliminary interviews by security officials and experts and other interviewees from the ICM as most affected by the spread of Salafism in Montenegro; while among ethnic Albanians, they rated the influence of Salafism as insignificant. Our researchers did nonetheless attempt to access Salafists of Albanian ethnicity but were refused interviews. The one ethnic Albanian journalist/analyst who did agree to participate was uncooperative when interviewed and minimised the issue of Salafi proselytising among Albanians in Montenegro.

Research questions that guided this effort were centred on the following themes:

- Forms of extremism in Montenegro, specifically from adherents of Salafism, and the threat they pose
- Drivers and factors of radicalisation
- At-risk communities in Montenegro
- Links between extremism and organised crime
- The role of transnational links in inspiring or supporting extremism

Data was collected via interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders and experts, who were chosen for their professional knowledge of or experience with Islam or Salafism specifically, or security and extremism generally (see Annex 1). Despite the focus of this research on forms and threats of Salafi extremism, interviewees often brought up extremism inspired by Orthodoxy. Due to the design and scope of this study, it was not possible to follow up on some of the assertions made by respondents on this topic.

### 1.2. RESEARCH SAMPLE

Research participants were selected using a purposeful sampling technique, and later, through snowball sampling. Purposeful sampling was used in order to select participants who are representative of the population being studied; but as Sandelowski argues, the ultimate goal of

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<sup>12</sup> Azinović, V. & Bećirević, E. (2017) A Waiting Game: Assessing and Responding to the Threat from Returning Foreign Fighters in the Western Balkans. Sarajevo: Regional Cooperation Council.

purposeful sampling is to obtain cases that can provide rich information.<sup>13</sup> Snowball sampling was used when participants who had already participated in the research recommended other participants, especially foreign fighter and their families and friends, the family members of radicalised youth, or individuals with local knowledge of community-level risks. On several occasions, researchers also employed convenience sampling, for example if an opportunity arose to interview members of a mosque they were visiting.

Research was conducted in the municipalities and settlements of Ulcinj, Bar, Podgorica, Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja, Rožaje, Plav, and Berane. These locations were selected because of the documented presence of Salafists and Salafi-oriented NGOs, and because foreign fighters originated from these places. But researchers approached and interviewed a wide range of Salafi adherents – from individuals who may be reasonably seen as ‘mainstream’ or ‘moderate,’ to a husband and wife who returned to Montenegro from ISIS territory. The fieldwork phase of this study lasted from June to November 2017.

Interviews were conducted with government officials, police and intelligence officials, journalists, representatives of NGOs, imams and Islamic community officials, members of local populations, Salafists, proponents of takfirism, traditional local Muslims, Orthodox believers, and representatives of political opposition parties (see Annex 1). Interviews and focus group data was either audio recorded or recorded via copious note-taking and was analysed using a combination of thematic and discourse analysis.

### 1.3. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Because there has been research indicating a rise of radicalisation among women in Montenegro, three focus groups were conducted with young women – one in an official Islamic Community madrassa and two in a madrassa run by a ‘rogue’ imam, both in in Rožaje. Participants were selected and approved for participation by the men running the madrassas. This approach had its downsides and brought into question whether participants were instructed to communicate specific ideas or advocate certain positions. Furthermore, it excluded the likelihood of capturing the opinions of anyone who opposes the practices within these madrassas. However, in order to reach young women who are controlled by men of authority, researchers had to accept certain less-than-ideal approaches to ensuring research participation. For instance, the young women in attending the ‘rogue’ madrassa were interviewed in most cases with their male guardians present; yet an attempt has been made to place the opinions of these participants within the context of the various influences and pressures they may face.

### 1.4. DEFINING EXTREMISM AND RADICALISATION

Researchers adopted the definition of *violent extremism* offered by USAID, that it is: “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic, and political objectives.”<sup>14</sup> Radicalisation is the process of developing

<sup>13</sup> Sandelowski, M. (2000) Whatever Happened to Qualitative Description?. *Research in Nursing & Health* 23, no. 4: 338.

<sup>14</sup> USAID. (2011) The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency, p. 2. Available from: [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pdacs400.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacs400.pdf) [Accessed 6 January 2017].

the beliefs that underlie violent extremism.<sup>15</sup> For the purpose of this paper, it is also important to keep in mind the distinction Schmid makes between ideologies that are non-violent and “not-violent.” He describes non-violence as always “principled and absolute” and “radical but not extreme,” but explains that being not-violent is merely a pragmatic and temporal avoidance of violence that may just as well be viewed as “not-*now*-violent” because it lacks a principled component.<sup>16</sup> Yet, it is difficult to apply this spectrum in the Montenegrin context. Though Salafism is stigmatised in the country, most Salafists who do not belong to *parajamaats* strongly reject the use of violence and, despite the fact that most see themselves as anti-establishment (i.e. anti-ICM), they still pray in official ICM mosques and maintain social and family ties with traditional Montenegrin Muslims.

Still, the majority of interviewees in Montenegro, including journalists, NGO representatives, and government and ICM officials, expressed a growing concern about *non-violent* extremism in general, and identified this as the primary security challenge in the country. In the words of one NGO activist, “for a country as divided as Montenegro is, spreading ideologies intolerant toward other religions or ethnic groups is very dangerous. We must do everything in our power as a society to work toward inclusive and tolerant discourse.”

All imams interviewed for this research noted that Montenegrin Muslims, who follow the lead of the ICM, have long practiced an inclusive interpretation of Islam that is tolerant of other communities and ethnicities, and is in harmony with democratic values. As a religious minority in Montenegro, ICM officials who were interviewed expressed the need to maintain the integrity of traditional Islam and were frustrated that more decisive measures had not been taken to prevent the spread of Salafism in the country. As one ICM official told researchers, “the majority of Muslims in Montenegro respect the Montenegrin state and are loyal citizens. We don't need extremism associated with the Muslims of Montenegro. The spread of Salafism and its ultraconservative teachings contributes to the animosity of society toward *all* Muslims, not just toward Salafists.” For this reason, non-violent extremism is the greatest concern to these officials. Thus, this research focused on non-violent as well as violent extremist forces in Montenegro.

## 2. FORMS AND THREATS OF EXTREMISM

### 2.1. MUSLIM IDENTITY WITHIN THE MONTENEGRIN CONTEXT

During the early stage of this research, the team focused on making a distinction between non-violent and violent extremism, but also on identifying links between the two. The fact is that almost all violent extremists have passed through an earlier, non-violent stage of extremism in the process of radicalisation; and this complicates how and where this line is drawn. This was a challenge for research participants as well. However, an imam from the official ICM indicated that in-person proselytising by both violent and non-violent extremists is in decline in Montenegro; noting that “both...have moved their activities to the Internet.” Other interviewees, including intelligence officials and security experts who follow social networks and have spoken with some

<sup>15</sup> See: Borum, R. (2011) Radicalisation into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 4, no. 4: 9.

<sup>16</sup> Schmid, A. P. (2014) Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague, p.14. Available from: <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Violent-Non-Violent-Extremism-May-2014.pdf> [Accessed 6 January 2017].

radicalised young people and their parents, linked some cases of youth radicalisation into non-violent extremism to online influences.

The assessment of most Montenegrin security officials who spoke with our researchers is that Montenegro does not face any considerable terrorist threat from adherents of Salafi extremism. A small number of Montenegrins (18) joined the ISIS cause as combatants (of which, six have been killed in battle) and security and police sources say the eight fighters who have returned pose no considerable security threat to the country.<sup>17</sup> Though, they do admit that their capacity to monitor returnees comprehensively is limited. As one explained, “If you want to properly put someone under surveillance, it is necessary to put 30 operatives on one individual. We don’t have those capacities, so we’re doing what we can.” Another source noted: “Montenegro is a small country. They may not be under surveillance in a classic way, but thanks to informants in the field, we know they are not organising.”

Our researchers found that unofficial *parajamaats* – which operate outside the authority of the ICM and tend to preach radical ideologies<sup>18</sup> – have been established in four towns in Montenegro, but intelligence officials claim they are not associated with international extremist groups or sleeper cells. These officials all stressed the need to differentiate between non-violent and violent extremism; acknowledging that there is “radicalism in Montenegro” but emphasising that there is little risk of violence. Security experts, journalists, and imams interviewed for this study also mostly expressed that they view Salafism as a form of *non-violent* extremism and said it has been slowly trickling into Montenegro from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) for nearly two decades. One journalist, who has followed this issue closely, explained that “the Wahhabi [Salafi] influence emerged after the war. First it was imported from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and then to some extent from Kosovo. We also had a couple of students that returned from Medina in the early 1990s [with Salafist views] and began proselytising, which was completely new for Muslims from Montenegro, who have long been practicing the Hanafi *madhhab*, with some elements of Sufism.”<sup>19</sup> (See more in “Transnational Cooperation”)

A high-level official from the ICM told researchers, “We had a policy of advising students in madrassas not to go to Saudi Arabia or other Gulf countries to study, because we’re aware that if they accept ultraconservative Salafi teachings, they can begin proselytising in Montenegro upon their return.” Still, in recent years, 10 students have returned from Saudi Arabia, none of whom have converted to Salafism or engaged in Salafi proselytisation. In fact, six are now employed by the ICM and, despite their Saudi education, practice traditional tolerant Islam. The other four, who officials say *have* been affected by Salafi dogma, are employed outside of the religious sphere. This ICM official also explained that these 10 graduates received their scholarships to attend university in Saudi Arabia through a rogue imam in Rožaje, when he was still a member of the ICM (See “Leading Salafi Ideologies”).

Among youth, one interviewee said that in the majority Muslim towns of northern Montenegro, non-violent extremism is almost “a kind of fad. It seems that being a Salafist is now somehow modern among the younger generation.” But two respondents from intelligence agencies and

<sup>17</sup> Given the Muslim population in Montenegro, which is approximately 119,000, the rate of recruitment of foreign fighters from this population is similar to the rate in BiH and lower than the rate in FYROM, all of which are considerably lower than the rate of recruitment in some Western European countries, such as Belgium. For figures, see: Azinović, V. & Bećirević, E. (2017) *A Waiting Game: Assessing and Responding to the Threat from Returning Foreign Fighters in the Western Balkans*. Sarajevo: Regional Cooperation Council; and Azinović, V. & Jusić, M. (2016) *The New Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters’ Bosnian Contingent*. Sarajevo: Atlantic Initiative.

<sup>18</sup> The word *jamaat* means “assembly” or “congregation.” Muslim congregations that operate outside the purview of the official Islamic Community have come to be known as *parajamaats*, wherein “para” means “irregular.”

<sup>19</sup> While some experts (and extremists) make distinctions between the terms “Wahhabi” and “Salafi,” they are used interchangeably by many people in the region, and for the purposes of this research, should be viewed as one in the same. A *madhhab* is a school of Islamic jurisprudence, which defines how certain aspects of the religion are practiced, how rituals are observed, and how social issues are legislated.

two from the police expressed worry about the effect of Salafism on youth. As one of them commented, “even youth from secular families are attracted to [Salafism]. Their parents are devastated.” It seems that these contradictory perceptions regarding the threat of non-violent Salafism are linked to concerns about broader social radicalisation that even non-violent extremism may bring about. In secular families, when youth accept Salafism, the dramatic changes young people undergo as far as their appearance and lifestyles understandably cause alarm, even if these youth do not exhibit signs of radicalisation into violence. The knowledge that the 23 Montenegrin citizens who joined the ISIS cause were at one time also radicalised into non-violent Salafism adds to these fears.

According to the 2011 Montenegro census, 45% of the population identifies as ethnically Montenegrin, 29% as Serb, 9% as Bosniak, 5% as Albanian, 3% as Muslim, and 1% as Roma. If we assume most Bosniaks to be Muslim, at least culturally, as well as two-thirds of Albanians and most Roma, the rate of Muslims in Montenegro appears to be around 16%. Yet, interestingly, the 2011 census found that 19% of respondents identified their faith as either “Islam” or “Muslim.”

The way people in the former Yugoslav space define their nationality, ethnicity, and religion can sometimes be perplexing; especially because individuals born outside of BiH, and with few ties to modern BiH proper, may nonetheless identify as “Bosniak” – a term that has re-emerged in the last decades and was only introduced as a census option in Montenegro in 2003. As is true across the region, there is a strong correlation between ethnicity and religion in Montenegro. People who identify as ethnically Montenegrin or Serb are generally affiliated with Montenegrin and Serbian Orthodoxy, ethnic Bosniaks with Islam, ethnic Albanians with Islam or Catholicism, and ethnic Croats with Catholicism.

In Montenegro, the emergence of a Bosniak identity was partly related to two important factors: political developments in the early 1990s, when parties that were first established in BiH in a climate of heightening ethno-nationalism began operating in Serbia’s Sandžak region and then in Montenegro; and historical links between all Slavic Muslims in the larger Sandžak region, which extends across the Montenegrin border into Serbia, to Ottoman Bosnia.<sup>20</sup> Still, one interviewee said that even Montenegrin Muslims, are “confused and divided by this choice between being Muslims or Bosniaks,” but acknowledged that those that continue to identify as Muslims “are under different influences, from Bosnia and Sandžak” (See section 6: “Transnational Cooperation”). Some interviewees dismissed this assertion, though, noting that “those who identified themselves [in the census] as Muslims in the national sense...refused identification as Bosniak simply because they feel no connection to Bosnia, but also don’t feel that the Montenegrin identity in a national sense is inclusive enough to account for their distinct Muslim identity.” Census results seem to confirm this latter interpretation; yet, many Slavic Muslims, especially in the northern part of Montenegro, do now identify as ethnically Bosniak.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2. MAIN EXTREMIST THREATS

When asked about forms of extremism in Montenegro, interviewees mostly identified three main forms: violent takfirism,<sup>22</sup> non-violent Salafism, and pan-Slavism and Orthodox extremism. Yet, this

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 161-163.

<sup>21</sup> For the most part, Slavic Muslims are those who do not identify as ethnically Albanian or Roma.

<sup>22</sup> Takfirism is an extreme interpretation of Islam, even within the radical context of Salafism. Takfirists view any non-Salafists as *kaafir* (non-believers) and often view non-Salafist Muslims (such as traditional Balkan Muslims) as *most* heretical for practicing what they view as an “impure” version of Islam.

research was focused on the question of Salafi extremism and the issues of pan-Slavic and Orthodox extremism were not explored. Salafism in Montenegro appears to be concentrated in a handful of municipalities along the country's eastern and northern borders (see "At-risk' Communities"), though security officials stressed to researchers that their primary concern in these areas is *non-violent* radicalisation, not radicalisation into violent extremism.

Still, in Plav, near the border with both Albania and Kosovo, an extremist group known as El-Bejan – which sources say operates its own *parajamaat* – has been linked to all the fighters who left this part of the country for Syria and Iraq. While the group is not thought to have attracted any new members since 2015 and has been rather isolated since their ideological leader, Bosnian Nusret Imamović, departed for Syria himself, they are closely monitored by authorities. The continued presence of the group, along with that of another similar group in Plav as well as a rather notorious rogue imam in nearby Rožaje, were cited by some officials interviewed for this research as reasons that youth in these places are considered susceptible to Salafi radicalisation. (See "At-Risk Communities") Yet, these concerns regarding the attraction of youth to *parajamaats* appear to be unfounded, given that intelligence and police respondents, as well as ICM officials and even ordinary citizens in these towns, told researchers that the size of *parajamaats* remains static.

While Montenegrin police claim that returnees from Syria and Iraq do not pose a security threat, they do believe these former fighters have maintained their adherence to radical religion; a religion that many imams contend they fail to truly comprehend. One imam in Plav told researchers that many of these former fighters "entered religion overnight. They do not understand the basics of Islam, they do not understand Sharia, and they do not understand the environment in which they live." This opens the door to the potential that religious education initiatives directed by the ICM could play a role in preventing radicalisation into extremism.

Interviewees from the security sector routinely characterised former fighters as having "criminal histories and drug addiction," or "dysfunctional families," and noted that they often hail from the economic margins. This is further explored in case studies, detailed later in this report. Nonetheless, these respondents described members of *parajamaats* in Plav, Rožaje, Ulcinj, and Podgorica as few and benign. "They are not organised or connected, like in BiH," one interviewee told researchers, "and we have no indication that they are dangerous." Like their colleagues across the region, though, security officials in Montenegro are concerned about 'lone wolf' scenarios, in which sole actors – who may be self-radicalised and have no previous affiliation with known extremists – are inspired to commit terrorism. This concern extends beyond the threat of Salafi extremism. Indeed, Montenegro's accession to NATO was seen as an affront to the anti-Western stance of pan-Slavism, and the February 2018 attack on the US Embassy in Podgorica was carried out by a man who, according to his brother, "could not get over Montenegro becoming a member of the Alliance."<sup>23</sup> As U.S. Ambassador to Montenegro Margaret A. Uyehara recently remarked in the wake of that attack, "isolated individuals represent certain risks. This problem is not limited to one religion or one ethnic group. We now know that extremists are being inspired by each other's actions. They feed one another and follow the same path to violence."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Kadić, V. & Dragović, S. (24 February 2018) *Brat Napadača na Ambasadu SAD u Podgorici: Nije mogao da preboli ulazak Crne Gore u NATO*. Novosti online. Available from: <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/planeta.300.html:713405-BRAT-NAPADACA-NA-AMBASADU-SAD-U-PODGORICI-Nije-mogao-da-preboli-ulazak-Crne-Gore-u-NATO> [Accessed 24 March 2018].

<sup>24</sup> *Problem radikalizma i nasilnog ekstremizma nije limitiran na jednu religiju*. (19 March 2018) Oslobodjenje. Available from: <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/region/problem-radikalizma-i-nasilnog-ekstremizma-nije-limitiran-na-jednu-religiju-349148> [Accessed 2 April 2018].

The war against ISIS has so destroyed the group and its “caliphate” that fighters from the Western Balkans are no longer attempting to reach battlefields in Syria and Iraq. In the past two years, there have been no more departures to Syria by intended foreign fighters. According to officials, a total of 23 adult Montenegrin citizens (18 men and 5 women) are known to have departed to Syria from 2012 to 2015, along with three minors. Only male departees are assumed to have been combatants, and 6 were killed in Syria. So far, 10 Montenegrins have returned – 8 men, 1 woman, and 1 minor. Despite Montenegro’s recent experience with the foreign fighter phenomenon, many research respondents – including 7 citizens with no professional expertise in this field, 12 ICM officials, 4 NGO activists, and 1 psychologist – expressed greater concern about the radicalisation of youth into non-violent extremism than into violent extremism. Some of these concerns will be discussed in the “At-Risk Communities” section.

### 2.3. LEADING SALAFI IDEOLOGUES

A prominent but rogue imam from Rožaje – who operates outside the ICM and is under the influence of a rather infamous mufti-turned-politician from Serbia – is thought to be the key promoter of Salafi extremism in Montenegro. This imam is not the only radicalising influence on individuals from Montenegro, who also follow radical clerics from BiH and the diaspora (see “Transnational Cooperation”), but his authority is significant given that he was once an official imam of the ICM. An NGO representative told researchers that this rogue imam’s promotion of Salafism led the ICM to refuse to advance him “unless he rid himself of the Salafi ‘virus’ [but] he was unwilling to compromise and established parallel religious institutions.”

Most of the official ICM imams interviewed for this research agreed that this rogue imam and the former mufti from Serbia to whom he is linked have both played key roles in attracting traditional Montenegrin Muslims to Salafism. A journalist who was interviewed said that “Salafism is gaining ground among youth in Rožaje, Plav, and Bijelo Polje,” and noted that “these young people want to rebel against tradition. There is not much else they can do around here.” Indeed, these northern Montenegrin municipalities, compared to the rest of the country, are lagging significantly behind in economic development, and rural areas are experiencing a population loss due to migration, with many citizens leaving for cities such as Podgorica or other countries, including the U.S. and Western Europe.<sup>25</sup> This especially affects youth opportunities for employment.

According to an interviewee, “Salafists have not been as active as they used to be in organising lectures, but even occasional events are enough to initiate new adherents. Then, they have a vast online Salafi community to turn to in order to maintain their beliefs. Preachers from Bosnia are especially popular among youth. They used to come and lecture more in person, but lately they are more reliant on online lectures. Preachers such as Safet Kuduzović and Elvedin Pezić stream their lectures live, and people watch these instead of official Islamic Community lectures.” Kuduzović and Pezić are the most popular *da’is* in BiH, but also hold great influence among Salafists across the region, partly because they maintain a constant social media presence. Pezić is particularly appealing to youth, because he is rather humorous and intentionally directs his message toward a younger audience. Monitoring by the Atlantic Initiative team of the Facebook pages of both Kuduzović and Pezić offered insight into their online influence in Montenegro. In

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<sup>25</sup> Katnić, M. (2017) *(Ne)zaposlenost Mladih u Crnoj Gori*. Podgorica: UNDP.

November 2017, Kuduzović had 700 followers from Montenegro, accounting for just 3% of his followers; while Pezić, who is followed mostly by youth, had 2,164 followers from Montenegro, constituting less than 2.5% of his following.

Though most respondents from the ICM say that Salafists in Montenegro look to Sarajevo for guidance, some said that Sarajevo Salafi leaders do not prioritise person-to-person contact with Montenegrin Muslims and confirmed the comments of the journalist above that Montenegrin Muslims rely on the internet to access the lectures of Bosnian Salafists. “For some reason,” as one ICM official explained, echoing the other 11 interviewed for this research, “they have decided it is not worth investing their time and resources here. We are lucky, because if they were as focused on us as they are on the Serbian Sandžak, or on BiH, I am sure we would have far more problems.” Notably, the ICM has always been hostile to Salafi ideologues and yet, has not been confrontational with Salafi adherents, keeping the door open to potentially influencing them and attracting them (back) to traditional teachings.

Some interviewees also mentioned that Montenegro lacks a charismatic domestic figure, such as Kuduzović or Pezić, and said that “members of the Salafi movement...are connected among themselves, but in Montenegro, they do not have a centre or a strong personality to revolve around.” This may weaken the potency of both violent and non-violent Salafism in Montenegro compared to BiH or the Serbian part of Sandžak region. While some respondents did point to the rogue imam in Rožaje as a central figure in Salafi proselytisation in Montenegro, others noted that he lacks the online presence and charisma of Bosnian Salafi leaders.

Perhaps this is why one imam told researchers that he does not find the attraction to Salafism among Muslim youth in Montenegro so worrying and in fact views it as a trend. He believes many young people adopt the lifestyle and practices of Salafism “not because they are convinced it is the right path, but simply because they want to be different.” According to this imam, the youth he knows are not necessarily deeply indoctrinated and often drift in and out of Salafism. To illustrate the point, he told the story of one teenage boy who had claimed to become a Salafi adherent but then shaved his beard a few days before an uncle came to visit during a summer holiday. “His uncle strongly opposes the Salafi lifestyle and the boy knew that if he did not shave his beard, the uncle would not let him drive his expensive car.” Many other imams who were interviewed also told researchers that they regularly witness young men or boys seemingly accepting Salafism and adhering to the lifestyle prescriptions of the ideology, before giving up on it after only several months. As one young imam from the ICM in northern Montenegro explained, “I was a Salafi myself for a couple of months. It was too difficult to maintain that lifestyle... There are simply too many restrictions. If you really want to follow the ideology completely, then you can’t even listen to music. I’m a graduate from the Islamic Faculty in Novi Pazar, and I was offered a job shortly after I left Salafism. I think my personal experience is the reason I sympathise with those young boys when they are attracted to Salafism, and I often speak with them. I find that many are not actually very firm in their beliefs and that they were bored. They have nothing to do and are feeling rebellious and angry – at society, the state, and their parents.” This may indicate that some youth who have apparently accepted the tenets of Salafism are not as deeply radicalised as appearances imply and could potentially be easily incentivised to move away from extremism, or to de-radicalise.

### 3. DRIVERS OF RADICALISATION

The role of structural factors, alongside individual motivations, are increasingly emphasised as drivers of radicalisation. A now commonly referenced USAID model refers to these structural (macro) drivers as “push” factors because they reflect broad socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions that push someone toward choices or behaviours; and individual or community-level drivers are referred to as “pull” factors because these things – such as personal relationships, adoration for a religious leader, or the draw of social networks – pull, or attract, a person to choices or behaviours.<sup>26</sup> It is the impact of pull factors that helps explain why only some people exposed to the same push factors become radicalised; meaning, push factors can create underlying conditions that enable radicalising forces, but pull factors “are necessary for push factors to have a direct influence on individual-level radicalisation and recruitment.”<sup>27</sup>

Montenegrin foreign fighters who have departed for Syria or Iraq all appear to have been driven by similar factors as fighters from other countries across region. For each individual, the specific factors at play and the influence and dynamics between them varies, but include: mental health issues, an unstable family background, economic marginalisation, disenchantment with the West, and a history of criminality. While research on drivers of radicalisation indicates that many of these factors cannot be viewed as motivations for radicalisation on their own, in combination with certain pull factors – such as the growth of religious and ethnic identities, especially when instrumentalised by charismatic leaders, and the increase of political conflict – they can serve as push factors.<sup>28</sup>

As a recent RAN report noted, “there is no one-size-fits-all profile for [foreign fighter] returnees. Their stories, experiences, traumas and skillsets differ substantially. Any effective approach to dealing with returnees must take this into account.”<sup>29</sup> This reflects other international research that indicates “there is no one profile” for foreign fighters and “warns against sweeping generalisations.”<sup>30</sup> Still, some of the motivations respondents indicated were at play in Montenegro are similar to those identified in other studies, which found that individuals may be susceptible to radicalisation due to “earlier personal difficulties [...] that left them feeling stifled and ill at ease. Frequently, they express feelings of exclusion and absence of belonging, as if they didn’t have a stake in society. For a significant number of them, drugs, petty crime and street violence have been part of their former life ...one gets the impression of solitary individuals, sometimes also estranged from family and friends.”<sup>31</sup>

Three family members of one fighter who was killed in Syria were interviewed by researchers and cited his history of drug abuse and petty crime as factors in his radicalisation. They said he was introduced to Salafism by a friend, and that his adherence to the ideology helped him to end his drug use. His family, who are traditional Montenegrin Muslims, were surprised by his adoption of Salafism, because he had never expressed interest in practicing Islam previously. His uncle, who has a strong background in religious education, explained, “from his early days of conversion, he was very passionate about attempting to argue with me over religious issues, telling me that I

<sup>26</sup> According to USAID, push factors – which may also be thought of as “root causes” – include: high levels of social marginalisation and fragmentation, poor governance, government repression and human rights violations, perceived cultural threats, and endemic corruption. See: Denoeux, G. (2009) *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*. USAID, 8. Also see: USAID. (2011) *The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency: Putting Principles into Practice*. September 2011, 3.

<sup>27</sup> USAID. (2011) *The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency: Putting Principles into Practice*. September 2011, 4.

<sup>28</sup> See: Allen, H. et al. (2015) *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review*. RUSI.

<sup>29</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network. (2017) *Responses to returnees: Foreign terrorist fighters and their families*.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. (2017) *Enhancing the Understanding of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon in Syria*.

<sup>31</sup> Van Ginkel, B. and Entenmann, E. (2016) *The Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies*. The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 26.

pray incorrectly, asserting that we do not strictly follow Islamic rules, and judging us and the way we practice religion. Yet, we were so happy he had given up on drugs that we did not push back. Eventually, he gave up on trying to convert us to Salafism and we managed to have a friendly relationship, despite our differences in belief.” Another relative said this fighter’s “knowledge of religion was very shallow, yet his beliefs ran very deep.” This reflects similar findings in the region and around the world, including those of Thomas Hegghammer, who has noted that “ongoing debate about how knowledgeable jihadis are about religion...is not very helpful because you have to distinguish between the depth of knowledge and intensity of belief.”<sup>32</sup>

Interviewees from the police force confirmed that there is “reliable information” about the role of unofficial religious figures in ideologically indoctrinating extremists – a network some referred to as “the rogue Islamic Community of Montenegro.” But several other respondents commented that even if such a rogue network exists, any official intervention would be tempered by the sensitivity of the issue of minority and religious rights. According to an interviewee close to government, “Muslims are a minority in Montenegro, and a very important minority for political balance. So, any stronger repressive measures against Salafists would be understood as Islamophobia.”

Interestingly, members and imams of the official Islamic Community of Montenegro took the state to task in 2017 for not intervening in this so-called rogue Islamic Community, which they say is under the influence of a cleric who is not only inspiring the adoption of Salafism but is eroding their legitimate authority. This rogue imam has especially been condemned by official ICM authorities for the madrassa he runs for young women in Rožaje, where one ICM source said, “radical ideas are being taught and radical ideas are being spread.” Security sources and journalists told researchers that the curriculum there does in fact promote Salafism, and one security official called the madrassa “dangerous for society.”

### 3.1. CASE STUDIES: UNEXPECTED EXTREMISTS

The following profiles of two Montenegrins who attempted to or did join ISIS illustrate how drivers of violent extremism can overlap and function in ways that lead to radicalisation in individuals who may not, at first glance, appear vulnerable – an imam and a girl from an upper middle-class family. Our researchers spoke with friends and family members of each, seeking to understand how they had been radicalised and what may have driven their radicalisation.

Adem Mustafić, from Bar, a tourist town on the Montenegrin coast, was killed in Syria in 2016. Mustafić defies stereotypes of foreign fighters from the Balkans, who are often unemployed or from the margins of society, and many of whom are poorly educated former addicts. Mustafić was an imam of the official Islamic Community. He was respected, married with three children, and well-known in Islamic circles across Montenegro. All of the people who spoke to researchers about Mustafić shared the opinion that he was a sensitive and good man.

As to why Mustafić joined ISIS, one imam described him as having had “a very developed empathy regarding the suffering of Muslims around the world, from Palestine to Chechnya.” He explained that Mustafić had once tried to go to Chechnya but had been arrested in Bulgaria. Yet,

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<sup>32</sup> Anthony, A. (23 July 2017) *The art of making a jihadist*. The Guardian. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/23/the-culture-that-makes-a-jihadi-thomas-hegghammer-interview-poetry-militancy> [Accessed 9 January 2018].

after that, in the ten years he worked as part of the ICM, Mustafić had behaved moderately and placed himself at the service of his congregation. Then, in 2013, his behaviour suddenly changed – seemingly overnight, he dressed and prayed differently, resigned from his position as imam, and travelled to Syria for the first time. By the time he returned home several months later, a friend said he was “behaving as a real takfiri. He would not even greet me when we unexpectedly met [in the street]. And then he left again. Shortly afterward, we received the news that he had been killed.” The motivations that drove Mustafić strongly reflect two of the three drivers identified in a 2017 report by the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism to have had a “particular influence over the decision of [foreign fighters] to go to Syria.” These were: the atrocities carried out by the Syrian government; and faith and ideology, including the duty to support fellow Muslims.<sup>33</sup>

The narrative of Mustafić’s death – which allegedly occurred when he tried to stop ISIS soldiers from raping young girls – corresponds to the image of him as kind and honourable that was portrayed to researchers.<sup>34</sup> His wife also referred to him as “a good man, but shy.” Though she says she never adopted his political views and never accepted the radical dogma he had begun preaching, she felt theirs was a good marriage. When he told her that he wanted to go to Syria, she was openly opposed to the idea and tried to dissuade him. So, the second time he went, he did not share his plans with her. She said she “noticed changes in his behaviour, and I suspected he was getting ready to go, but he did not say so openly. He never asked me to go with him.” She lives with their three children in Bar and survives with the help of family.

Sometimes, of course, wives follow or walk alongside their husbands down a path of radicalisation. This was the case for the wife of convicted foreign fighter Hamid Beharović, who was as deeply devoted as her husband to an extreme interpretation of Salafism and was inspired to depart for Syria by the prospect of living under Sharia law. But when only one member of a family is radicalised, it is generally very difficult for their non-radicalised family members to understand and contend with their extremism. One father who spoke with researchers in Montenegro feels his parental influence was undermined and usurped by the Salafists who radicalised his daughter, remarking that these extremist forces “don’t allow parents to be parents.” This father, whose daughter attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIS, is one of a growing number of parents of young women in Montenegro facing a similar dilemma. Yet, this family and this daughter do not fit the profile one may expect. By Montenegrin standards, they are upper middle class – her father is a doctor and her mother a hospital administrator. But Plav, the small town they live in, has been identified by Montenegrin security officials as a one of the places where youth seem to be most susceptible to radicalisation. (See Annex 2)

According to the girl’s father, theirs was “just a normal family.” Their daughter, a talented student, began acting strangely very suddenly. She then withdrew from engaging with her parents, who were unable to explain her behaviour until a family friend told them that he heard she was socialising with Salafists and had expressed a desire to wear hijab. When she admitted this to her parents, they were shocked. They determined that she had been radicalised by a cousin and her husband, both of whom ended up going to Syria. After attempting to reach ISIS territory herself, the daughter was returned to Montenegro from the airport in Istanbul. Eventually, she married a Salafist and now wears niqab, and has stopped communicating with her parents. Once a very ambitious and intelligent person, she is known by security sources to be radicalising other young

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. (2017) *Enhancing the Understanding of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Phenomenon in Syria*.

<sup>34</sup> Mustafić’s death was reported in Montenegrin media in both local languages and English. For example, see (in English): Former imam from Bar killed because he opposed raping girls. (14 March 2017) CDM. Available from: <https://www.cdm.me/english/former-imam-bar-killed-opposed-raping-girls/>. [Accessed 26 January 2018].

Montenegrin women. These security officials monitor her activities, and yet, as long as those activities remain within the bounds of her legal religious rights and do not incite violence, there is little they can do to intervene, even if she is effectively radicalising other individuals away from traditional “Balkan Islam” and toward Salafism. This highlights the dilemma authorities face in preventing and responding to extremism in democratic societies that uphold the right of ultraconservative and fundamentalist believers to freely practice their religion.

This case also reflects the fact that “women demonstrate a higher tendency to join extremist groups via personal relationships.”<sup>35</sup> A policy brief by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security analysed the specific characteristics of radicalisation in women and found that family ties can also “have significant implications for how they exit groups, since familial and social ties may be difficult to break, even in cases of disillusionment or cognitive shift.”<sup>36</sup> This highlights the need for whole-of-society deradicalisation programmes that involve community actors and family members in preventing and countering extremism, and which “investigate how relationships and networks can be leveraged to support women’s rehabilitation.”<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. ‘AT-RISK’ COMMUNITIES

Based on the departure of foreign fighters from these places, five Montenegrin municipalities or towns have been identified as vulnerable to Salafi extremism: Plav, Rožaje, Podgorica, Bar, and Ulcinj. These locations each feature *parajamaats*. Still, sources underscored that it is primarily radicalisation into non-violent, instead of violent, extremism that is a concern in these locations. Of course, anyone who has been radicalised to violence was at one time non-violent, which is why it is important to understand not just who is radicalised but what ideologies and influences serve as forces of radicalisation. Schmid’s distinction between ideologies that are truly non-violent and those that are merely “not-violent,” explained above, reflects that the choice to be not-violent is not rooted in principle but in pragmatism, and thus may be viewed as a choice to be “not-*now*-violent.”<sup>38</sup> This presents a significant challenge to both security officials and law enforcement actors in the field, who must balance the rights and freedoms of citizens with the mandate of prevention – a mandate that presumes intervention *before* violence occurs.

**Plav** is among the most economically disadvantaged municipalities in Montenegro; and though the community is ethnically mixed, over half the population identifies as Bosniak.<sup>39</sup> The town is atop the list as far as intelligence service monitoring and has seen the highest number of departures for Syria. Intelligence sources told researchers that this small town in eastern Montenegro, near the border with Kosovo on one side and Albania on the other, has two *parajamaats*, as well as two operational extremist groups – El-Bejan and Takfir Group. All the individuals who have departed for Syria from this area have been connected in one way or another with El-Bejan. One security official told researchers that the group has its own *jamaat*. “They are totally isolated from the rest of community. They are not present in public spaces, they don’t communicate with people outside of their own circles. One of them has a 12-year old daughter who wears hijab and is not allowed, even in school, to communicate with other

<sup>35</sup> Turkington, R. & Christien, A. (2018) Women, Deradicalization, and Rehabilitation: Lessons from an Expert Workshop. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Schmid, A. P. (2014) Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague, p.14. Available from: <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Violent-Non-Violent-Extremism-May-2014.pdf> [Accessed 6 January 2017].

<sup>39</sup> Montenegro Statistical Office. (2011) *Census of Populations, Households and Dwellings in Montenegro*, 8.

children.” Another respondent said that members of the group stopped attending the local mosque in 2015, because “they objected to the IC’s good relations with state institutions and because the IC refused to accept Salafi dogma [as legitimate].”

The Muslim community in Plav is unique in that the ICM imam in the town identifies as Salafist; and yet, he is actually the only imam in the whole of Montenegro, according to ICM respondents, who identifies that way. Our researchers could not assess the specific influence of this imam on the spread of non-violent Salafism in Plav, nor the religious dynamics he brings, and local citizens are remiss to discuss the issue. During an interview with our researchers, this imam spoke against departures to Syria, against violence in general, and promoted tolerance and inclusivity. Overall, he appeared conservative, but not extreme. However, further research in Plav may be interesting and valuable, but would require a longitudinal ethnographic study.

Lately, interviewees told us, the group has kept a low profile, but El-Bejan is believed to have around ten male members. In many respects, they are very much ‘stereotypical extremists’ – most are from the social margins, some are former addicts. They are agricultural workers, beekeepers, or small shop owners. Their wives wear cover. Though obliged by law to send their children to state-run schools, teachers report that the children of El-Bejan member are under unique pressures, especially girls, who don’t socialise with other children and don’t participate in extracurricular activities. The researchers made numerous attempts to organise interviews with member and were unable to do so; but interviewees from the intelligence sector claim the group has comprised the same ten men and their families since 2015. It is worth noting that these respondents also believe that the strongest extremist influence on this group was that of Nusret Imamović, a Salafi leader from Gornja Maoča, in BiH. Since the departure of Imamović to Syria, the group has been even more isolated.

Members of the Takfir Group were more accessible to researchers, and two accepted an invitation for an interview. These Salafists isolate themselves from all of Montenegrin society, including from other Salafists, and believe that they adhere most closely to the tenets of Sharia. This isolation also prevents them from proselytising to any significant degree. Two local police respondents and two local citizens who live in the vicinity of their *parajamaat* told us that the number of members in the group remains static and has for some time, simply because they are so judgemental toward the rest of society in general, and even toward Salafists they view as less rigorously dedicated to their ideology. Police and intelligence officials also told researchers that this group has moved its activities to the Internet. One member explained that “we have Sharia in the privacy of our homes. That is something the state cannot regulate.” He believes that the imposition of Sharia in Montenegro would “mean the end of prostitution and homosexuality, the end of indecent behaviours in public, the end of drug abuse,” and asserts that “nobody would force Christians and Jews to accept Islam.”

The presence of extremist groups as well as multiple *parajamaats* is among the reasons that youth in Plav and **Rožaje** were most often cited by sources as at risk of radicalisation. But structural conditions appear to underlie their vulnerability. Social exclusion is thought to be a factor, but research participants also cite boredom as one of the most important factors of radicalisation in these remote places. In the absence of entertainment choices, youth sometimes turn to radical religion.<sup>40</sup> According to citizens of Plav, during the Yugoslav era, the town was a

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<sup>40</sup> Various studies on radicalisation have found boredom to be a potential driver. A study in 2016 therefore tackled this question head-on and confirmed that “extreme political orientations are, in fact, a function of boredom’s existential qualities.” See: Van Tilburg, W. A. P. & Igou, E. R. (2016) Going to political extremes in response to boredom. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 46, no. 6: 687-699.

tourist draw due to Lake Plavsko and Hotel Plavsko, which sat on the lake. Now, this community serves no tourists and the economy is failing. Interviewees said the lack of opportunity for youth is linked to their boredom. Rožaje also suffers from poor economic conditions, as a result of the closure of a number of factories and the businesses that supported them. This has been a significant factor driving migration out of these areas.<sup>41</sup>

One specific community of young girls in Rožaje, who attend the madrassa run by the rogue imam considered the leading figure in Montenegrin Salafism, was brought to the attention of researchers as at particularly high risk of radicalisation. Our researchers interviewed this imam, who said Madrassa Isa Beg was opened in 2002, when Montenegro was still part of rump Yugoslavia, and operated “within the framework of the Sandžak Muftiate of the IC.” He claims the madrassa follows the “plan and program accepted by the IC in BiH,” and dismissed media reports, and even the claims of the ICM Reis-u-ulama, that girls in the madrassa are being prepared for marriage to Salafi men.

But our team also spoke with seven girls who attend his madrassa, as well as with six girls and four boys who attend official madrassas of the ICM and found the difference between these groups in attitudes and worldviews rather striking. The girls attending the ‘rogue’ madrassa are educated in a rigid and conservative manner, and though they did not openly espouse Salafism, they frequently referred to “imitating the life of the first three generations of Muslims,” or mentioned “Islamic purity.” They all aspired to be “housewives and mothers,” and any of them who wished to seek further education were willing to do so at the Islamic Faculty in Novi Pazar, Serbia, or the International University there, but were contemplating going nowhere else. These girls spoke of their futures in terms of raising “new generations of Muslims” and said they would be “proud to spread the faith and proud to call people to Islam.”

Researchers noted that these girls all seemed tightly controlled during the initial group interview, and many of their answers seemed rehearsed; so, they attempted to speak with some of them separately. When asked about future plans, one said she wanted to be a journalist and that she would like to visit Amsterdam, but notably, when her older brother joined the interview, her responses became more abrupt and nondescript. When asked about the music she likes, she said, “nothing special;” when asked again about her life plans, she again replied, “nothing special;” and when asked about books she enjoys reading, she claimed she “didn’t read much before, but now I read books about the first generation of Muslims.” This girl’s brother studied in Medina for two years and, based on remarks he made about women’s rights in Saudi Arabia, researchers gathered that he holds conservative religious views. It was quite clear that his expectations strongly influenced his sister’s responses in his presence. In fact, all the girls from the rogue madrassa mentioned in interviews that a male family member had influenced their decision to attend.

Girls who attend the official madrassa in Rožaje were decidedly more liberal in their worldviews and future plans. They spoke of traveling and attending university abroad, and studying architecture, economics, and medicine. Their roles as wives and mothers did not dominate their vision of the future. And while religion is important to these girls, it is not necessarily more so than for Montenegrin girls who attend secular high schools. Only two said it was a factor in their choice to attend the madrassa. Indeed, a number of girls who attend both madrassas live in rural areas that lack local high schools. They would be forced to travel to attend a secular school but

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<sup>41</sup> Katnić, M. (2017) *(Ne)zaposlenost Mladih u Crnoj Gori*. Podgorica: UNDP.

have the option at the madrassa to live on site, and for many families, this provides a comforting level of security.

While the radicalisation of youth is considered most worrisome in Plav and Rožaje, respondents also expressed concern about the number of students from **Ulcinj** who are currently studying Islamic Studies in Saudi Arabia. According to intelligence and police officials, there are a number of Salafists living in Ulcinj, yet only one *parajamaat* currently interests security services, due to its takfirist orientation and discourse that is allegedly radical even in the context of Salafism. Still, interviewees told researchers that no one from this *parajamaat* departed to Syria and, while “they do have some connections with the *parajamaat* from Plav, just like the one in Plav, [the congregation] is a small group. We are talking... between five and eight people.” Another *parajamaat* that used to be active in Ulcinj seems to have been inactive for at least two years, since two of its members, Damir Muratović and Hamid Beharović, did depart to Syria. And though Beharović returned, an interviewee told researchers that the departure of some of the most extreme members of some *parajamaats*, such as this one in Ulcinj, appears to have halted their growth or resulted in their disbanding. Overall, the number of *parajamaats* in Montenegro is small, and their members few, because the country has not faced certain influences from the Gulf region that some Western Balkan countries have contended with, particularly those which experienced conflict and opened the door to Gulf-funded humanitarian organisations in the wake of war.

In **Bar**, another town where an active Salafi community was considered a security risk in the past, respondents from the intelligence sector report that there are currently no active *parajamaats*. Since the death in Syria of Adem Mustafić, who had a group of followers that joined him in “going rouge” from the ICM, his followers have reportedly joined a local Salafi-oriented NGO that is connected to an international Salafi organisation based in Germany. They are also thought to cooperate with some leading Salafi figures from BiH. Intelligence sources say they cannot track exactly from where this group receives their financing but claim that they organise frequent humanitarian events and regularly donate food to marginalised communities, neither of which are illegal. Indeed, researchers interviewed the head of this NGO and heard nothing to indicate that the organisation promotes violence. Further, an imam from the ICM said that Mustafić’s followers have moderated their discourse over the past two years, and now pray in the mosque without displaying any hostility toward local imams.

Respondents were united in their assessment that problems with radicalisation and violent extremism are not as pronounced in **Podgorica** as they have been in the past. ICM interviewees said, for instance, that the activities of the Salafi-oriented NGO, Islamic Center Karabuško Polje – which used to invite extremist Salafi lecturers from BiH – have been “toned down,” remarking that “one could say they are moderate now.” According to respondents from the intelligence community and the ICM, the group was previously led by an individual who was very active in organising lectures for *da’is* from BiH, including a tour by Bilal Bosnić through Montenegro. After the arrest of Bosnić, the group’s leader stepped down, and the group has since taken on its more moderate stance. Instead, both security officials and representatives from the ICM cited Salafi members of the Roma community of Vrela Ribnički as a concern in Podgorica. Yet, it was difficult for researchers to properly assess the seriousness of the problem of radicalisation in that community. Respondents told researchers that a *parajamaat* exists in Vrela Ribnički and that members “are mainly refugees from Kosovo,” explaining that “it was difficult to establish trust between the ICM and the Roma community from Kosovo, and the IC imam stopped going there.” It is unclear how deeply indoctrinated Salafists in Vrela Ribnički are, and while they do organise

some lectures, they are also known to deliver humanitarian aid to marginalised people (though they themselves live in a community that is undeniably marginalised).

While Salafi radicalisation has generally been viewed as a problem of the Muslim/Bosniak community in Montenegro, the radicalisation that has been observed of late among the Roma minority has raised the attention of authorities. Just over 8,000 individuals declared themselves as Roma in the latest census, but some analysts claim that “it is difficult to estimate how many Roma live in Montenegro. Assessments vary, and some are as high as 20,000.”<sup>42</sup> Roma in Montenegro tend to be highly stigmatised and exist on the margins of society, with an almost absolute unemployment rate and poor education levels, which makes them collectively very susceptible to radicalisation.<sup>43</sup> These socio-economic disadvantages have actually made Roma citizens a specific target of some radical preachers. And Hamid Beharović – who was convicted to six months prison sentence for his participation in ISIS units in Syria – is of Roma origin.<sup>44</sup> According to security sources, prior to his departure to Syria, Beharović played a role in promoting Salafism in some Roma circles.

Some participants in this research nonetheless assert that Salafism appears to be losing its appeal in Montenegro, pointing out that Hafiz Sulejman Bugari, formerly an imam in the IC of BiH, has recently moved to Montenegro. Bugari is a Sufi, and though this has not been officially confirmed, it is thought that he left Sarajevo because of pressure and online mobbing he was exposed to from Salafi preachers and adherents in BiH. In lectures and online posts, Salafists have often attacked Bugari for “apostasy,” “*bidah*,” and for “spoiling Muslim youth with his poisonous teachings.”<sup>45</sup> Bugari was the only imam in BiH considered a real buttress to Salafi discourse in online spaces but did not receive the protection he needed from the IC there; the IC in Montenegro was happy to offer it to him.

One interviewee remarked that “unlike domestic Salafi preachers, [Bugari] is very charismatic and popular. Plus, he is constantly in contact with young people and is social media savvy.” To the surprise of researchers, this view was also shared by some Salafi adherents in Montenegro, who expressed pride that a popular Hafiz had chosen Montenegro over BiH. One Salafist in Bar even alerted researchers that he had to hurry his interview, because “Hafiz Bugari is leading prayer tonight [and] I don’t want to miss that.” This appears to separate at least some Montenegrin Salafists from those in BiH, where Sufis like Bugari are viewed as apostates. It is also a reminder that the role of a charismatic leader in religious proselytism can sometimes be even more important than dogma. Salafists in Montenegro interviewed for this research were largely happy to accept Bugari as a role model due to his charisma and interest in their needs. The example of Bugari, who has managed to offer a serious alternative to the Salafi narrative in only a couple of months of working with the ICM and lecturing throughout Montenegro, demonstrates how little it may take for alternative narratives to effectively take hold.

It is also worth highlighting a town where the issue of radicalisation is relatively non-existent, such as Gusinje, near the Albanian border. When asked why radicalisation seems to have bypassed some places, ICM interviewee explained that towns with “a tradition of trade... are

<sup>42</sup> *Romi u Crnoj Gori i dalje socijalno isključeni*. (7 April 2017) CDM. Available from: <https://www.cdm.me/drustvo/romi-u-crnoj-gori-dalje-socijalno-iskljuceni/> [Accessed on 2 April 2018].

<sup>43</sup> A December 2017 ruling of the European Court of Human Rights found the Montenegrin police had not provided required protections to a Roma Muslim family that suffered racial and religious threats, actual attacks on their property, and an incident of a gun fired into their apartment, due to intersectional discrimination. For more, see: European Roma Rights Centre. (6 December 2017) *Muslim Roma Win Discrimination Case Against Montenegro*. Available from: <http://www.errc.org/article/muslim-roma-win-discrimination-case-against-montenegro/4614> [Accessed 24 January 2018].

<sup>44</sup> Lakić, O. (16 January 2018) *Osuđen Beharović: Šest mjeseci zatvora zbog pridruživanja ISIL-u*. Available from: <http://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/osuden-beharovic-sest-mjeseci-zatvora-zbog-pridruzivanja-isil-u-971760> [Accessed 2 April 2018].

<sup>45</sup> See, for instance, YouTube videos at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kax1E088JcQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq1xlx7dKU>.

diverse and have a number of different nations and religions. They are resistant to radicalisation because of their multinational and multicultural tradition.” Several interviewees compared Gusinje and Plav, which are only 12 km apart. “Gusinje was a stopping point for trading caravans. It is on the border with Albania, with a majority Bosniak population, and yet there is no Salafism there. Plav, on the other hand, does have a problem with Salafism.” Research that maps radicalisation in Montenegro with a comparative eye for the historical and structural factors at play may be very instructive.

## 5. LINKS TO ORGANISED CRIME

When interviewees were asked about organised crime, they shared just one case in which radicalised individuals have been linked to these activities. In April 2015, Montenegrin authorities carried out Operation Track (*Kolosjek*), in which 18 people were charged with the smuggling of 138 asylum seekers, mostly from Syria.<sup>46</sup> One source explained that the smuggling route ran from Albania into Serbia and told researchers that, “among the arrested was a returnee from Syria, Haris Lukač and his brother Harkan.” The accused in this case, including the Lukač brothers, brokered a deal with the prosecution and received a symbolic sentence of 11 years and 2 months in prison. According to our sources, Haris maintains radical religious beliefs.

## 6. TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

Salafi groups from Montenegro are linked with regional groups, divided by ethnicity and language; meaning, Albanians are under the influence of Kosovo, and Bosniaks/Muslims are under the influence of groups and preachers from the Sandžak and BiH. Both of these strains of Salafi extremism have links with diaspora, mainly in Sweden, but also in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, though respondents indicated that the influence of diaspora on ethnic Albanians is less significant. According to intelligence sources, the most radical *parajamaats* in Montenegro are associated with takfirism and have connections to the diaspora in Austria. Nedžad Balkan, the takfiri preacher from Vienna who was arrested in January 2017, is known to have visited *parajamaats* in Montenegro in the summer of 2016. His arrest, as well as the sentencing of Salafi leader Bilal Bosnić from BiH, seems to have contributed to a decline in the influence of the most radical *parajamaats* in Montenegro. An imam from Bijelo Polje told our research team that Salafists “are not as loud as they used to be. We cannot even say they have a community, though some groups stick together, but it is noticeable that their organisation of lectures, humanitarian actions, and other outreach activities has fallen off in the past couple of years.”

Yet, research participants also regularly discussed links between the “rogue imam” from Rožaje with “politicians and donors from Gulf countries.” Respondents said this imam “skilfully uses his radical image to fundraise among Gulf country donors,” even “writing letters to donors... claiming that Muslims in Montenegro are discriminated against.” This rogue imam is also linked to extremist elements in the Serbian area of Sandžak region through his mentor, a former imam himself, whom Montenegrin security experts have painted as a predatory figure who oversaw a

<sup>46</sup> Montenegro Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (9 December 2015) *Contribution for the participation of the Montenegrin delegation at the fifth meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Committee*, 14. Available from: <http://www.ujn.gov.me/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Contribution.pdf> [Accessed 24 January 2018].

youth radicalisation effort in Sandžak that “operated like a multilevel sales scheme” and involved financial incentives, first to convert and then to attract new members.<sup>47</sup> Though this one rogue imam may himself be linked to Gulf donors, two intelligence officials and three high-level ICM officials confirmed that Montenegro has rejected this influence. While it was at one time in the sights of Saudi investors, one ICM official told researchers that when “Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries were really pushing to invest in projects that would benefit the ICM, we said no because we knew there were strings attached.” Government officials told researchers that, after Montenegro achieved independence, they actually encouraged links between the ICM and Turkey to prevent the Salafist influence of Saudi Arabia. This appears to be one of the key reasons that Salafism has not been as popular among Muslims in Montenegro as it has been among Muslims in BiH, and also a reason that majority of Montenegrin Salafists are relatively more moderate in their practice and rhetoric.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Researching violent and non-violent extremism in Montenegro, which has fewer obvious problems with the issue than some other countries in the Western Balkans, may at first seem rather straightforward. The country has only relatively few departures of aspiring fighters to Syria, only a handful of returnees and a very small number of home-grown Islamist extremists. What’s more, non-violent Salafists in Montenegro appear to be less conservative than those in BiH. Indeed, the case of Sufi preacher Hafiz Sulejman Bugari, who moved from BiH – allegedly under pressure from Salafi circles – and was quickly accepted by Salafists across Montenegro reveals that a more extreme Salafi dogma has not taken root in Montenegro. Bugari appears to have softened Montenegrin Salafi discourse on Sufism in just months, which may indicate that Salafists in Montenegro remain ideologically flexible. The insight of a number of interviewees that many Salafists lack any previous religious education prior to adopting the ideology may be one reason that they appear to be open to Bugari’s tolerant Sufi teachings. His popularity is also further evidence of the importance of charismatic leaders, who are often viewed only in the context of their potential negative influence but may be figures associated with de-radicalisation and religious re-education as well.

Montenegro has adopted a Countering Violent Extremism Strategy and in April 2016, also adopted an Action Plan for implementation. However, a late 2017 assessment of the Strategy’s implementation by the Centre for Democratic Transition in Podgorica was critical of the government’s work thus far.<sup>48</sup> According to the Centre, for instance, 27 law enforcement agencies were tasked with implementation measures but almost all failed to fulfil their obligations. These findings were compatible with the comments of some interviewees who noted that a key problem with the Strategy was how loosely it defined responsibilities for its implementation. A police respondent also stressed the importance of an interdisciplinary approach, saying that police agencies cannot be expected to bear the burden of prevention alone. “This is a problem for all of society, and a partnership between the state and civil society is crucial.” These officials all emphasised the need to differentiate between non-violent and violent extremism; acknowledging that there is “radicalism in Montenegro” but asserting there is little

<sup>47</sup> Azinović, V. (2017) “Montenegro” in *Between Salvation and Terror: Radicalization and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in the Western Balkans*, 127. Atlantic Initiative and the School for Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo.

<sup>48</sup> Koprivica, D./Kovačević, M. *Kako poboljšati sprovođenje strategija suzbijanja nasilnog ekstremizma*. Centar za Demokratsku Tranziciju and Regional Cooperation Council. Available from: [https://www.cdtmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/RCC-Policy\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.cdtmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/RCC-Policy_FINAL.pdf) [Accessed March 30, 2018].

risk of violence. This presents a challenge to both security and law enforcement actors, who must balance the rights and freedoms of citizens with the mandate of prevention – a mandate that presumes intervention *before* violence occurs.

Though this research was focused on Salafi extremism in Montenegro, research participants repeatedly pointed to radical Christian Orthodoxy and pan-Slavism as potential radicalising influences that could be linked to future violence. Further research that explores the intersectionality of extremisms in Montenegro in greater depth could surely be valuable, particularly analyses of the frame of extremist messaging and whether political context or linkages between the most influential Salafi and Serbian Orthodox figures can account for this framing. This draws on framing theory, which “focuses on how movements and social collectives construct, produce and disseminate meanings.”<sup>49</sup> Montenegro could also offer a good case study of extremism within social network theory. The small population size of Montenegro makes it especially ideal for this. Several key actors identified in this research clearly play a significant role in Salafi proselytization in Montenegro, and researchers were able to uncover only the first layers of their involvement; though it became obvious that their influence goes beyond religion and serves the purpose of a broader political context.

Another dynamic which appears to separate Montenegro from other countries in the region and which deserves further exploration is how microradicalisations occurring within several different identity groups and within politics react and combine in a process of reciprocal radicalisation. These microradicalisations are akin to small earthquakes that weaken the structural integrity of each of these identity groups, creating openings that external forces appear to be taking advantage of to serve their own interests. Better understanding the ideological overlap between certain seemingly disparate groups, as well as how various sociocultural and socio-political conditions may shift the ground underneath these groups would be particularly interesting given the experience of researchers, who found the rhetoric of the most extreme adherents of Salafism and Serbian Orthodoxy notably similar.

Finally, in light of the fact that many research respondents expressed concerns about pan-Slavist extremism, that the 2018 U.S. Embassy bombing was carried out by a man described by his family as anti-NATO, and that disturbing media reports have recently emerged about some children from Montenegro joining excursions to ‘military-patriotic camps’ in Russia,<sup>50</sup> further research on the pan-Slavist and Russian influence in Montenegro is warranted. This need is further reflected in the results of public opinion research conducted by the International Republican Institute in October 2017, which indicated that voter support for NATO membership had declined, with only 43% of respondents expressing support and 51% expressing opposition. That survey also found that 55% of respondents said they view Russia as a legitimate partner in European security. IRI Deputy Director for Europe Paul McCarthy noted that this research “raises significant concerns about the prevalence of anti-Western sentiment in Montenegro and the country’s apparent tilt towards the Kremlin.”<sup>51</sup> As the Atlantic Council has detailed, “Moscow has built up diplomatic, political, and sometimes financial ties to violent organizations in Central and Eastern Europe.... The goal is to exploit weaknesses inherent to the Central-Eastern European region: bitter memories of past territorial disputes, nationalist-secessionist tendencies, and the

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<sup>49</sup> Borum, R. (2011) Radicalisation into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories. *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4, 18.

<sup>50</sup> *Djeca Srbije u ruskim kampovima*. (4 April 2018) RTCG. Available from: <http://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/region/199190/djeca-srbije-u-ruskim-kampovima.html> [Accessed 4 April 2018].

<sup>51</sup> *Montenegro Poll Reveals Anti-Western Tilt; Widespread Dissatisfaction with Country’s Trajectory*. (4 December 2017) International Republican Institute. Available from: <http://www.iri.org/resource/montenegro-poll-reveals-anti-western-tilt-widespread-dissatisfaction-country%E2%80%99s-trajectory> [Accessed 2 April 2018].

haunting sceptre of chauvinist ideologies promising to make these nations great again.”<sup>52</sup> Whether and how Russia may be mechanising such factors in Montenegro as well as in the region should be explored.

### 7.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

This research highlighted several areas where policymakers can affect the dynamics of extremism through structural interventions and messaging initiatives:

- NGOs focused on women’s issues must be engaged in *prevention and de-radicalisation programmes targeting young women and girls*, through alliances forged between these organisations and the government.
- *Moderate figures in Islam*, such as that of Hafiz Sulejman Bugari, must have their voices amplified and their message incorporated into *broad educationally-driven prevention efforts*.
- *Unemployment must be understood not only in the context of economic stability but in the context of extremism*, and interventions must be particularly aimed at lowering rates of youth unemployment.
- *A whole-of-society approach to the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism should be employed*, engaging not only the security sector but healthcare and education professionals, religious leaders, local communities, and families as well, and should also harness the multinational traditions of Montenegro.

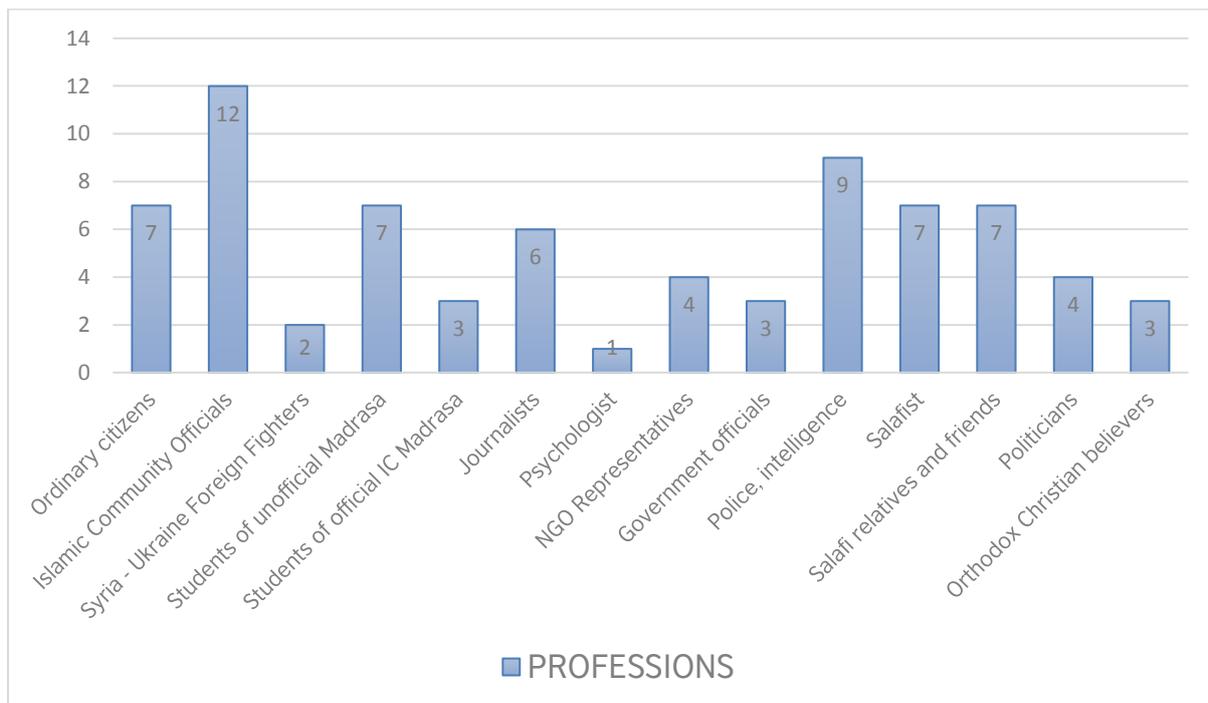
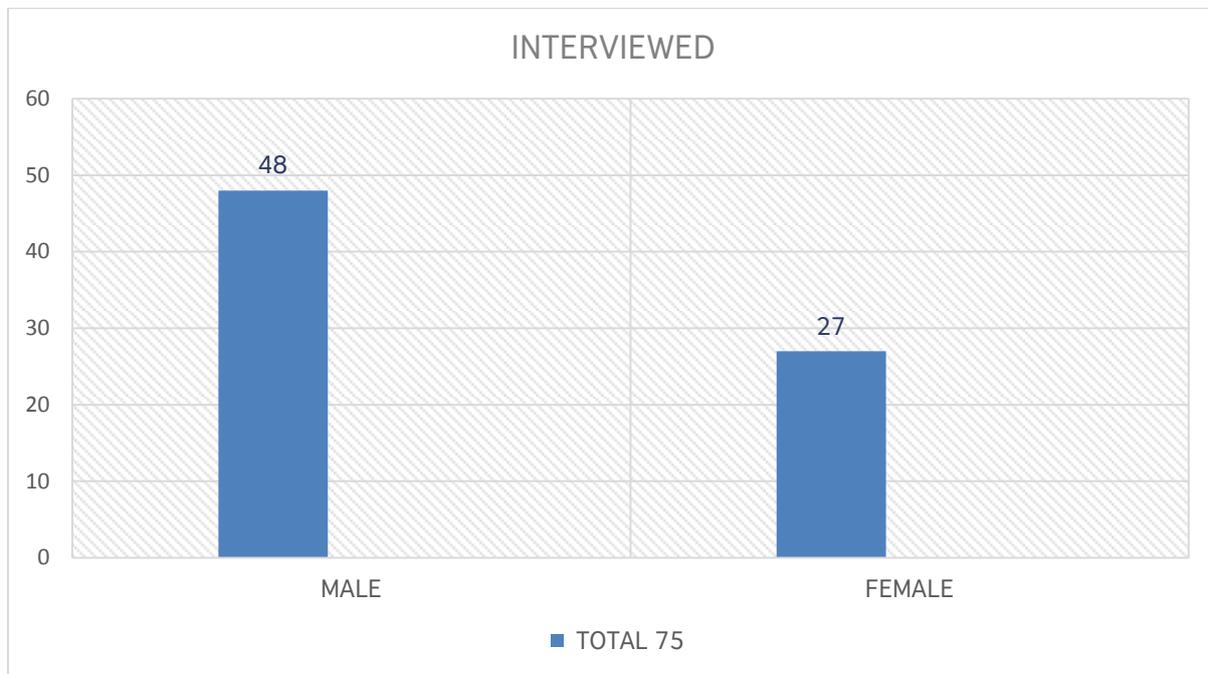
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<sup>52</sup> Krekó, P. & Györi, L. (17 May 2017) From Russia with Hate: The Kremlin’s Support for Violent Extremism in Central Europe. *UkraineAlert*. Weblog. Available from: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/from-russia-with-hate-the-kremlin-s-support-for-violent-extremism-in-central-europe>.

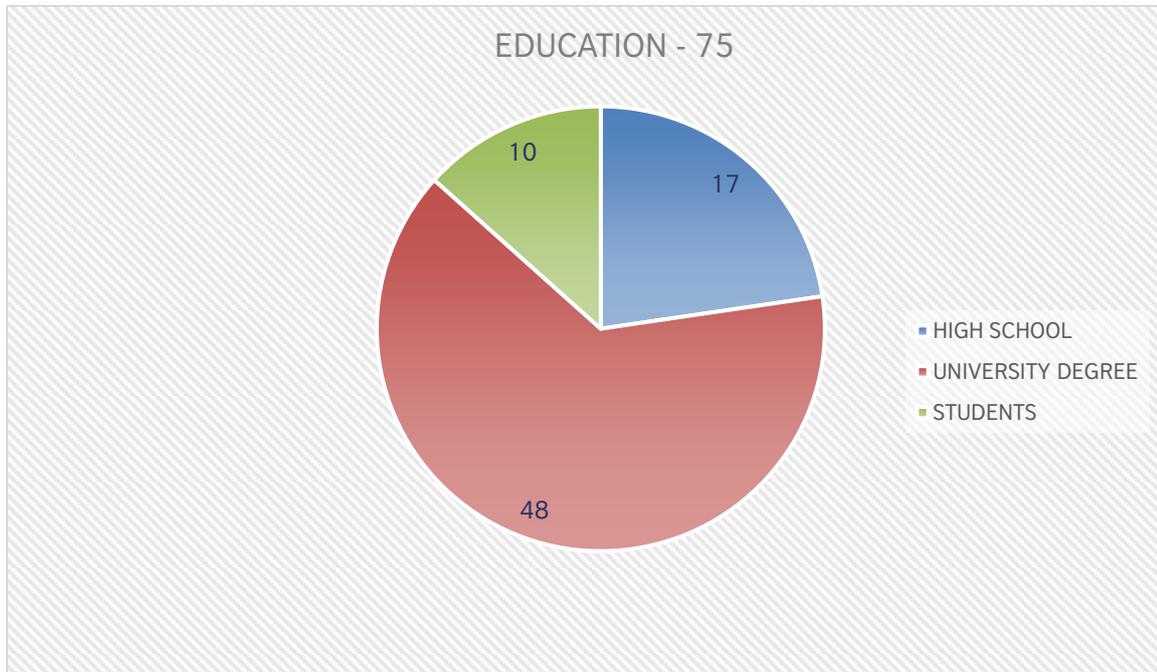
# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1: SAMPLE DATA

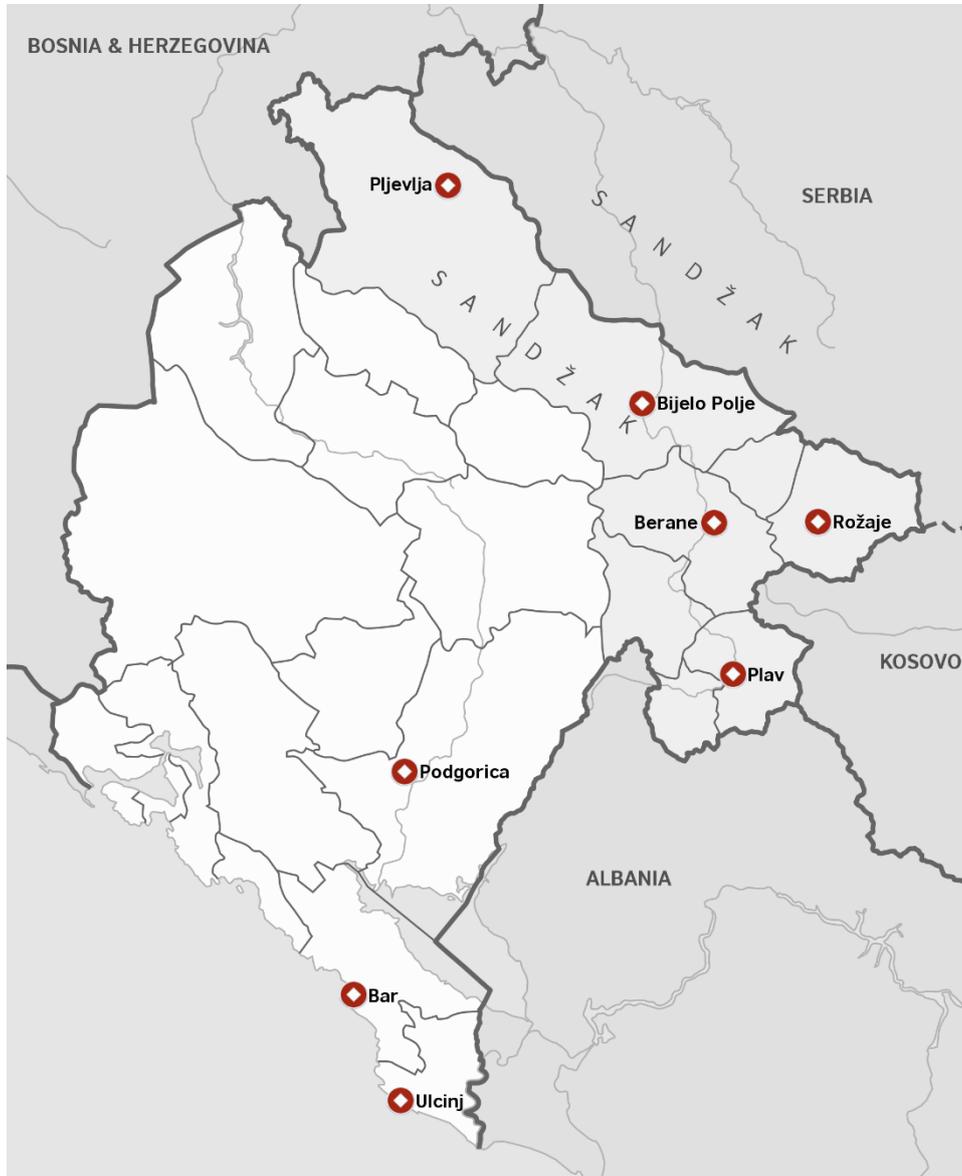
The total number of interviews was 75. Of those, 48 (64%) interviewees were male and 27 (36%) were female.



Of the 75 interviewees, 48 (64%) had a university education, 17 (22%) had a high school education, and 10 (13%) were students.



## ANNEX 2: AT-RISK COMMUNITIES





Western Balkans Extremism Research and Policy Analysis Forum  
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