

## Chapter 13

# **Bosnia and Herzegovina and Terrorism 1996-2011: Defining the Threat, Devising Counterterrorism Strategy**

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### **Background**

Following the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington DC on September 11, 2001 and a sudden upsurge in attention to Islamic affairs worldwide, Bosnia and Herzegovina came under scrutiny for alleged links to Al-Qaeda and the so-called global jihadist movement. These allegations were based on the presence and activities of Islamic volunteer fighters (mujahedeen), missionaries, and foreign Muslim charities in the country during the 1992-1995 war and, in some instances, their later affiliation with the Al-Qaeda terrorist network. The fact that more than a million indigenous Muslims live in Bosnia and Herzegovina added in no small measure to the haste and care with which these links were investigated.

It is already a well-documented fact that, as of 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina was indeed a meeting point for members of various militant Islamist groups. Wartime events habitually described by Western media as “the worst atrocities in Europe since World War Two” served as a rallying cry for Muslims around the world. Many of them felt that genocide was taking place, and some believed that jihad was the answer. Those who decided to join the fight began arriving in Bosnia early in the summer of 1992. Some came directly from training camps in Afghanistan; others arrived from the Middle East, North Africa, or immigrant communities in Western Europe, where they had been recruited in mosques and Islamic centers. This effort was bolstered by the arrival of Islamic missionaries and charities that embarked on a spiritual and humanitarian mission to aid the embattled Bosnian Muslims.

The most conservative estimate is that the number of foreign Islamic fighters in Bosnia totaled 600 to 700; while the boldest, and probably most exagger-

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ated, alleges that some 20,000 mujahideen were in the country between 1992 and 1995.<sup>2</sup>

However, their activities in that period were not terrorism related, but rather military, as they fought alongside regular units of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ABiH). They were also involved in a number of war crimes committed against Serb and Croat civilians and prisoners of war. In August 1993, amidst reports of atrocities committed by rogue mujahideen, they were integrated into the Bosnian Army's 3rd Corps as the el-Mujahid Unit.

The real military effectiveness of foreign Islamic fighters in the Bosnian war was by all accounts rather limited; their drive for martyrdom often surpassed the logic of warfare and led to unnecessary casualties. And, they were often used in operations that Bosniak soldiers considered too dangerous and were therefore reluctant to engage in.<sup>3</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, a number of investigations led by international and Bosnian law enforcement agencies established that some individuals who later gained prominence through the rise of militant Islamist fundamentalism, as spearheaded by Al-Qaeda, had indeed been present in Bosnia during the war.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Bosnian Army sources claim that during different phases of the war a total of 3,000 Islamic fighters passed through Bosnia. For more on this, see Sead Numanovic, "Bosnia: Mujahedin Revival Fears," *IWPR Balkan Crisis Report*, No.286 (5 October 2001). Western estimates on this issue differ. Dr. Cees Wiebes cites US officials who believe there were between 1,200 and 1,400 foreign Islamic fighters in Bosnia. Pyes, Meyer, and Rempel cite an American intelligence source who estimates that, since 1992, a total number of around 4,000 Islamic volunteers from Western Africa, the Middle East, and Europe have passed through Bosnia. The same source said they were considered "pretty good fighters and certainly ruthless." Yossef Bodansky claims that by the end of 1995, "the majority of the 15,000 to 20,000 foreign volunteers were already fully integrated into key Bosnian Muslim units." However, there is consensus among experts that this claim is highly exaggerated. For more on this, see Cees Wiebes, *Intelligence and the War in Bosnia, 1992-1995* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003), 207-208; and Craig Pyes, Josh Meyer, and William C. Rempel, "Bosnia Seen as Hospitable Base and Sanctuary for Terrorists," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 October 2001. Yossef Bodansky's *Some Call It Peace* is available at: [http://members.tripod.com/Balkania/resources/geostrategy/bodansky\\_peace/index.html](http://members.tripod.com/Balkania/resources/geostrategy/bodansky_peace/index.html) (accessed 12 January 2007).

<sup>3</sup> In the now famous words of a Bosniak soldier near Travnik, in Central Bosnia, "the foreign mujahideen came here to die for Islam. We desired to live for Islam."

<sup>4</sup> Among the top jihadists who reportedly fought in Bosnia were: Khalid Sheikh Mohammad (KSM), the alleged mastermind of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on New York and Washington, D.C.; two of the 9/11 hijackers, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar; Abu Sulaiman al-Makki, who was wounded in Bosnia and would later appear with Osama Bin Laden in December 2001, as the Al-Qaeda leader extolled the 9/11 attacks; Abu Zubair al-Haili, who would be arrested in Morocco (2002) while plotting to attack U.S. ships in the Straits of Gibraltar; Abu el-Ma'ali (Abdelkader Mokhtari, "The Gendarme"), a member of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and 1994 commander of the El Mujahid unit, described by American intelligence agencies as "little Osama Bin Laden;" and Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi, a founding member

Interestingly enough, a 1999 random survey of Bosniak former members of the el-Mujahid Unit showed that none of the soldiers interviewed had, by that time, heard of either Osama bin Laden or Al-Qaeda.<sup>5</sup>

A few hundred mujahideen remained in Bosnia after the war. Bosniak political elite were uncertain as to whether or not the Dayton Peace Accords would be upheld, so they decided to keep these fighters “on call” in case hostilities should be reignited. In addition, there was always the notion that the presence of mujahideen in Bosnia provided an influx of significant and usually untraceable funds from abroad.<sup>6</sup>

It took years of unwavering international pressure as well as efforts by local law enforcement agencies before a list of some 1,500 cases of foreign mujahideen fighters, and others who had obtained Bosnian citizenship during and after the war, was finally compiled and reviewed by Bosnian authorities in 2007. Eventually, the citizenship of more than 600 people, believed to have been obtained unlawfully, was revoked.<sup>7</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, one can see that the arrival of mujahideen introduced at least two new and important factors into the security and social landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina. One is the physical presence of people trained for, and capable of, committing various terrorist acts. The other is a rather narrow, puritanical, and sometimes confrontational interpretation of Islam, commonly known as Salafism or Wahhabism, which was imported to Bosnia with the wartime influx of mujahideen and Islamic missionaries.<sup>8</sup>

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of Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Righteous), a banned Pakistan-based Islamist group, and alleged mastermind of the November 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai (India), which left more than 170 dead and 300 wounded.

<sup>5</sup> From an interview with a prominent Bosnian Islamic scholar and author who has spoken with former Bosniak members of the el-Mujahid Unit for his own research, and who wished to remain anonymous.

<sup>6</sup> As one potential reason for preserving his bond with Islamic volunteers, the United Nations had assumed even earlier that “[Bosnian President] Alija Izetbegovic appeared to see the [foreign] fighters as a conduit for funds from the Gulf and Middle East.” Wiebes, *Intelligence and the War in Bosnia*, 207-208.

<sup>7</sup> It is believed that the number of these people still residing in Bosnia has been reduced to a few dozen, and that for the most part they have embraced a peaceful life with their Bosnian wives and children. The remainder, considered potentially dangerous, are being closely watched and have thus far not been involved in any terrorist-related activity.

<sup>8</sup> The more appropriate of these terms is often contested. Members of these movements might be called Salafis or Wahhabis, but these are broad and often confusing labels, usually referring to those who reject as reprehensible most of the developments in Islam that have come after the first three generations of Muslims. However, these groups are not inherently violent, and usually choose to live in closed and reclusive communities. The terms were derived from the Arabic word Salaf (“predecessor”), and from the name of an 18<sup>th</sup> century Salafi scholar, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. In the West, particularly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Salafism/Wahhabism has become closely associated with the small minority of Muslims that

This background has provided the filter through which threats of terrorism and ideological radicalization in Bosnia have been assessed over the last decade.

## Patterns of Terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: 1996 to 2011

Terrorism is not mass or collective violence but rather the focused activities of small groups or individuals. Despite the authentic popularity of these groups, and even if they are supported by large organizations or political parties, the number of active militants who engage in terrorism is very small. That reality makes terrorism prevention an enormously complex and demanding task. Following their patterns of recruitment and radicalization and understanding the *modus operandi* of such groups and individuals provides important clues for effective counterterrorism strategies.

The detailed examination of investigated terrorism-related incidents in Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that over the last fifteen years there were two distinct waves of activity and at least two generations of perpetrators, triggered by two sets of underlying motives. Also, there is a clear difference between the state's responses to terrorism before and after September 11<sup>th</sup>.

The first wave was associated with remaining foreign mujahideen and their Bosniak disciples. It included a series of bombings and shootings against mostly Croat ethnic minority groups in Central Bosnia and Herzegovina. Often attributed to this group, but never thoroughly investigated, was also the foiled assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II in April 1997. The targets of this wave included returnee families, Catholic churches, Croat policemen, and a police station in Mostar.<sup>9</sup> These former mujahideen were also behind several armed robberies and murders of other Muslims in Central Bosnia.

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espouse violent jihad against civilians as a legitimate expression of Islam, the so-called Salafi Jihadis(ts) or Global Jihad Movement, spearheaded by the al-Qaeda terrorist network. However, Islamic scholars suggest that a more appropriate term, historically and theologically, should be Kharijites or Neo-Kharijites, a reference to the third major sect in Islam, alongside Sunnis and Shias.

<sup>9</sup> Just hours before the Pope arrived in Sarajevo on April 12, 1997, police discovered a powerful batch of explosives along the route the pontiff's motorcade was scheduled to take. The cache—more than 20 antitank mines and 50-plus pounds of plastic explosives, equipped with a remote-control detonator—was apparently planted under a bridge overnight and would have caused enormous damage. No suspects were ever arrested or tried for this attempt. See: Tracy Wilkinson and Richard Boudreaux, "Mines Found in Sarajevo No Deterrent to Papal Visit," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 April 1997. The car bombing in Mostar that damaged many buildings and injured dozens of people on September 18, 1997 was planned and executed by Saudi-born Ahmed Zaid Salim Zuhair, a.k.a Handala al-Saudi, and two former Arab mujahideen. They placed 4.5 kilograms of explosives, 40 kilograms of anti-tank mines, and 15 kilograms of so-called red explosives in a parked car underneath a residential building in Mostar. Handala was sentenced in absentia by the Supreme Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The essence of this first wave of terrorist attacks was very clearly political – in the immediate post-war years, following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, Bosniak political elite used the “mujahideen factor” to avoid full implementation of Annex 7, namely the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their original homes. Finding themselves in a reluctantly-forged federation, sharing 51 percent of the country with their enemies-turned-allies the Bosnian Croats, Bosniaks used the mujahideen as powerful leverage in a struggle to maintain ethnic majority in previously mixed regions of Central Bosnia and Sarajevo, where they had established their dominance during the war and wished to preserve it.<sup>10</sup>

The second wave of terrorism-related activities in Bosnia has occurred under a very different set of circumstances. With a change of government in 2001, which temporarily sidelined the three nationalist parties around which Dayton was constructed (the SDS, HDZ and SDA), and following the attacks of September 11, the official attitude toward the mujahideen changed dramatically. Their numbers have been rigorously reduced, and many have lost their Bosnian citizenships or have been deported from the country after being declared “a threat to national security.” The authorities also closed the local offices of Islamic charities suspected of bankrolling the mujahideen and supporting transnational terrorism (including Al-Furqan, the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, the Al-Haramain & Al Masjed al-Aqsa Charity Foundation, and more).

However, the elimination of remaining foreign fighters made room for a new generation of “Islamist activists.” Generally, these individuals have, in terms of radicalization, had few (if any) links to the el-Mujahid Unit or to the war itself.

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to 12 years in prison for the criminal act of terrorism. In an earlier ruling, a court in Zenica, where the el-Mujahid Unit had been based during the war and where Handala and his associates planned the Mostar attack and assembled the bomb, sentenced him to 10 years in prison for a “criminal act against security and property.” Handala, who is believed to be associated with the terrorist group *Takfir wal-Hijra* (Excommunication and Exodus), which is connected to the Al-Qaeda network, was later involved in a number of terrorist-related activities, including the planning of the attack on the USS Cole in October 2000. He was arrested by Pakistani officials in Lahore in 2002 and transferred to US custody in May 2002. Handala was detained at JFT-GTMO until June 12, 2009, when he was repatriated to Saudi Arabia.

<sup>10</sup> As a pawn in that process, the mujahideen enjoyed protection and support from among the highest ranks of Bosniak political and intelligence establishments, as well as the judiciary. This co-dependence was revealed in a statement made at the ceremony marking the official disbandment of the el-Mujahid Unit and is usually attributed by the media to Bakir Izetbegovic: “We are going to need you in peace, more than we needed you in war.” Illustrative of this attitude was an episode in 1997, when in the immediate aftermath of the Mostar bomb attack, the then Deputy Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Haris Silajdžić, blamed the Croats from Mostar for the blast, saying that “those who were capable of establishing concentration camps were also capable of doing this.” He was referring to the Croat-held detention camps in which thousands of Bosniaks were incarcerated during the Muslim-Croat confrontation in the 1992-1995 war in BiH.

While the actions of former mujahideen were aimed at addressing issues of a more local nature, this new generation is ideologically inspired by the global jihadi movement and aspires to have impact on local events in Bosnia and Herzegovina in pursuit of wider international goals (such as the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and Iraq).

Except in the case of Mirsad Bektašević, a Swedish national born in Novi Pazar (Serbia) and convicted for a foiled suicide bombing in Sarajevo in 2005, all known terrorist groups are essentially homegrown, with limited ties to transnational terrorist organizations or individuals.<sup>11</sup> One such group (Rijad Rustempašić and his followers) was arrested in Bugojno, in a police operation reminiscent of FBI sting operations in the US, and charged in 2009 with terrorism, conspiracy to commit a crime, and the illegal possession and sales of firearms, explosives, and military equipment. This case, currently being tried before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, began in March 2010. In retaliation, several individuals (led by Haris Čaušević) closely associated with the Rustempašić group detonated an improvised explosive device in front of the Bugojno police station on June 27, 2010, killing one and injuring several police officers.<sup>12</sup> These individuals have been charged with terrorism and, since March 2011, are also being tried before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> While the intended target of the foiled suicide bomb attack was never specified in the indictment, a police source familiar with the investigation claims that Mirsad Bektašević and his accomplice, Abdulkadir Cesur, a Danish citizen of Turkish descent, had planned to attack a bus of German soldiers from the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) on its regular trip to Mount Igman, where the soldiers were engaged in standard fitness training. Bektašević, who on various Internet forums also went by the aliases *Maximus* and *Abu Imad As-Sanjaki*, was connected to other terror cells in Denmark and the UK. He was originally sentenced in 2007 by the Court of BiH to 15 years and 4 months in prison, but an appeals court reduced the sentence to 8 years and 4 months. He was transferred to a Swedish prison in June 2009, and after serving two thirds of his sentence, was released in the late spring of 2011. One of Bektašević's co-conspirators, Bajro Ikanović, who was sentenced to 8 years in prison for supplying Bektašević and Cesur with explosives, is also a free man. Press reports suggest that he was at the center of activities surrounding a recent Salafi gathering at Mount Igman (near Sarajevo) that took place in mid-June 2011. For more on this, see: "Ve-habije Nusreta Imamovića na skrivenom skupu na Igmanu," *Slobodna Bosna*, 16 June 2011.

<sup>12</sup> This motivation fits the three most common incentives for individuals to engage in acts of terrorism through which they either seek revenge, renown, or reaction (of the authorities). For more on this, see Louis Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat* (New York: Random House, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> On Sunday, June 27, 2010, at approximately 5:00 a.m., an explosive device was activated next to the back entrance of the Bugojno police station, killing officer Tarik Ljubuškić and severely injuring officer Edina Hindić. Several others sustained minor injuries; both the station and nearby buildings sustained considerable material damage. Immediately after the blast, in a nearby parking lot, the police arrested Haris Čaušević claiming that he activated the device. Naser Palislamović, who is believed to be the mastermind behind the attack, was arrested shortly thereafter in Sarajevo,

For the last decade, domestic law enforcement agencies have been closely monitoring and recording the activities of individuals in the country who may pose a security risk. While the list of potential suspects may differ from agency to agency, there is clearly an increased awareness as to the whereabouts and conduct of these individuals. A former high-ranking FMUP official interviewed for this study in June 2011 estimates that the number of such “individuals of interest” in the FBiH currently does not exceed 600, and that the combined total with those residing in the RS is around 1,000. Following the Bugojno bomb attack, the director of the Intelligence and Security Agency of BiH (OSA), Almir Džuvo, stated in July 2010 that “there are 3,000 potential terrorists in BiH.”<sup>14</sup>

Police and intelligence sources reveal, though, that the activities of the Bosniak diaspora abroad remain more difficult to track. Thorough surveillance of radicalized Bosnians abroad would require close cooperation with foreign law enforcement agencies, as well as more clearly defined jurisdiction and coordination between domestic security services.<sup>15</sup> The need for such cooperation is well warranted, as the so-called Global Salafi Jihad is a diasporal phenomenon. A recent study shows that some 84 percent of Salafi mujahideen living in diaspora around the world have joined the jihad. Of that number, some 87 percent have joined the movement while living in Western Europe.<sup>16</sup>

The process of radicalization very often takes place in diaspora communities precisely “because radical Islamism itself does not come out of traditional Muslim societies, but rather is a manifestation of modern identity politics, a

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following a widespread police search. The third assailant, who was supposed to spray police and emergency workers with bursts of gunfire from an AK-47 assault rifle when they rushed to the scene of the explosion, “chickened out the night before the attack and withdrew from action,” said a police source familiar with the investigation. Čaušević allegedly confessed to the police that he activated the explosive, but he denied this in his first appearance before the Court. Both men are connected to Rijad Rustempašić and his group, also from Bugojno. Out of 398 pages of the “Indictment against Rustempašić and others,” 21 pages contain references to Palislamović. Three other individuals were arrested and charged as accomplices to Palislamović and Čaušević.

<sup>14</sup> For more on this, see the EUPM in BiH “PPIO Daily Media Summary, 13 July 2010.”

<sup>15</sup> According to estimates of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees from 2008, the total number of people originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina who live outside its borders is about 1,350,000 people, which is about 26% of the total Bosnian population. The leading emigrant-receiving countries are: the US, Germany, Croatia, Serbia, Austria, Slovenia, Sweden, Canada, and Australia. See: *Bosnia and Herzegovina Migration Profile for the Year 2009*, Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry of Security, Immigration Sector (Sarajevo, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> This link between terrorism and the diaspora predates “globalization” and is not specific to religion or Islam. History shows that Russian anarchists, the Irish Republican Army, the ETA, and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) were all diaspora-driven movements. For more on this, see Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

byproduct of the modernization process itself." As such, Islamic extremism is not a new challenge, but one that carries the classic earmarks of 20th-century extremist politics in general.<sup>17</sup>

As the case of Mirsad Bektašević demonstrates, Bosnia and Herzegovina has already been challenged by the results of diaspora radicalization. It was a combination of good fortune and good police work that eventually, in the fall of 2005, prevented Bektašević and his accomplices from carrying out a suicide bombing in Sarajevo. However, in recent years, more Bosnians abroad, namely in the US, have been indicted on terrorism-related charges, making the issue of a radicalized diaspora even more pressing.<sup>18</sup>

Though perhaps not totally reliable, official records show that the number of terrorism-related incidents in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the post-September 11 period remained rather modest. These official numbers could reasonably be contested in some instances, in which cases were tried as acts of terrorism when they were in fact related to organized crime. The reverse is also true, that some cases prosecuted as criminal acts carried all the markings of terrorism-related activities.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "Identity, Immigration & Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 17:2 (April 2006): 5-20.

<sup>18</sup> Adis Medunjanin, 25, a Bosnian-born US citizen and resident of Queens, NY, was indicted on January 8, 2010 on charges of conspiracy to commit murder in a foreign country and receiving military-type training (in Pakistan) from a foreign terrorist organization, namely Al-Qaeda. Along with his two former classmates, Medunjanin was also charged with conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction (explosive bombs) against persons or property in the United States. Specifically, his group is charged with conspiring to conduct an attack on Manhattan subway lines planned for mid-September 2009. For more on this, see "Two Charged with Terror Violations in Connection with New York Subway Plot," U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (25 February 2010), <http://www.fbi.gov/newyork/press-releases/2010/nyfo022510a.htm>. On July 27, 2009, Anes Subasic (33), a naturalized US citizen and resident of North Carolina, was arrested and charged with conspiring to provide material support to terrorists and conspiring to murder, kidnap, maim, and injure persons abroad. He is one of seven men who were simultaneously arrested near Raleigh, North Carolina on these charges. See: "Seven Charged with Terrorism Violations in North Carolina," Department of Justice Press Release, 27 July 2009. Bosnian-born Sulejman Talović (18) killed five bystanders and wounded four others at Trolley Square Mall in Salt Lake City on 12 February 2007, before being shot dead by police. Although Talović is often listed among "Muslim-American perpetrators or suspects in domestic terrorist attacks since 9/11," there is no evidence that his shooting rampage was motivated by any extreme ideology. An FBI agent in charge of the investigation in his case stated that he had no reason to suspect it was an act of terrorism. See: "Trolley Square: A search for answers," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 February 2007. For more on this case, also see Christopher Orlet, "Sulejmen the Mysterious," *American Spectator*, 22 February 2007; Charles Kurzman, *Muslim-American Terrorism Since 9/11: An Accounting* (Chapel Hill: UNC, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> A bomb attack in a shopping mall (FIS) in Vitez, on October 9, 2008, in which a security guard was killed and another sustained life-threatening injuries, was prosecuted

As many scholars of terrorism know all too well, providing an all-encompassing profile of a typical, one-size-fits-all terrorist remains an elusive task simply because there is such a range of factors that eventually determine who becomes a terrorist and why. However, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina—based on investigation and prosecution data from the past decade—we can draw with some degree of certainty a profile of persons prone to joining mostly homegrown, militant Islamist groups and engaging in acts of violence. In the years following the Dayton Peace Accords, terrorist acts were most commonly perpetrated by foreign mujahideen, of whom many already had a history of similar engagement elsewhere. More recently, individuals involved in or associated with terrorism-related activities have overwhelmingly been Bosnian nationals.<sup>20</sup>

Even a cursory look at court files provides enough evidence to support an emerging profile of recent terrorist suspects in Bosnia. They typically exhibit the following characteristics: they are economically deprived and socially marginalized; they often come from dysfunctional families; they are poorly educated; they are usually without permanent employment or any employment whatsoever; many have a prior criminal record, ranging from domestic violence to theft and illegal possession of firearms; they are often psychologically troubled and are usually between the ages of 20 and 35. Their recruitment

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before the Court of BiH as an act of terrorism. For more, see the cases of Amir Ibrahim (X-K-08/591-2) and Suvad Đidić (X-K-08/591-1). However, police sources familiar with the case claim that there was no political motive behind the attack. “It was a “warning message” to the owner of the mall who had repeatedly refused to allow his supply trucks to be used for the smuggling of illegal drugs,” said a high-ranking FMUP official in an interview for this study. A recent bomb attack in Zenica on April 11, 2011, which caused minor damage to a car carrying two HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union of BiH) officials who remained unharmed, probably had more to do with economic or personal motives than terrorism, and was also a case of a mistaken identity, according to a high-ranking FMUP police official with investigative knowledge of both cases. The 2002 Christmas Eve triple murder of a Croat returnee family near Konjic by Muamer Topalović, an individual said to be closely connected to the local branches of the al-Furqan charity organization and Active Islamic Youth, was prosecuted as a hate crime, although it carried all the markings of a lone-wolf terrorist attack, similar to the November 2005 Fort Hood shooting in the US. However, the Prosecutor’s Office made a concerted effort to relieve both organizations of any responsibility for Topalovic’s actions and motives. Al-Qaeda-associated organization al-Furqan was registered in BiH in September of 1997 as “Citizens’ Association for Support and Prevention of Lies – Furqan.” The BiH authorities banned the organization in November 2002. In November 2009, US Major Nidal Malik Hasan, an army psychiatrist, went on another at Fort Hood military base in Texas, killing 13 and wounding 32 at a medical facility.

<sup>20</sup> The Intelligence and Security Agency (OSA) of BiH claims that currently, out of some 3,000 individuals registered in the country as “potential terrorists,” only 3 to 4 percent are foreign born. For more on this, see the EUPM in BiH, “PPIO Daily Media Summary,” 13 July 2010.

most commonly occurs through social networks – by family members and/or friends (a “bunch of guys”), while radicalization typically occurs through close and personal contact with other members of the group or a person of authority, as well as through online and media platforms.

In short, experience demonstrates that these individuals have come from spontaneously self-organized and unaffiliated groups, made up of trusted friends, where social bonds precede ideological commitment. They have been radicalized collectively, from the bottom up, often simply by acquiring the beliefs of their peers. The dynamics of such dense social networks promotes in-group loyalty and a sense of kinship that leads to self-sacrifice for comrades and the cause. These traits were particularly evident in both Bugojno cases (Rustempašić and Čaušević) in 2009 and 2010.<sup>21</sup>

## Current Structure of the Salafi Movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The global Salafi movement has never been homogenous. It is comprised of many different and sometimes rival groups. Gradually, this lack of cohesion was also apparent in the Bosnian Salafi community. Once the core leadership of the el-Mujahid Unit was sidelined by the government, remaining mujahideen and their Bosniak disciples began to fragment.

Rather than a theological dispute, the breakup of the Bosnian Salafi movement was mainly due to competing leadership ambitions and increasingly limited access to the financial resources that had funded their operations before September 11. A number of different Salafi groups emerged to public view in the process. They were mostly autonomous or loosely linked at best, often opposed, and sometimes confronted.

Initially, it was the Active Islamic Youth (*Aktivna islamska omladina* – AIO), a group of former Bosniak members of the el-Mujahid Unit, and their magazine *SAFF* that became the chief purveyors of Salafi doctrine. For almost a decade, the AIO was engaged in awakening Bosniaks to original Islamic teachings while rejecting “novelties” in Islam, which AIO attributed to ignorance resulting from

<sup>21</sup> This pattern, however, is not uniquely Bosnian – it closely mirrors psychological and sociological profiling proposed by Michael Taarnby, Gyorgy Lederer, and Marc Sageman, respectively. Namely, friendship-kinship- or discipleship-based groups of previously introverted, isolated, frustrated, alienated, “born-again” Muslims, who are spiritually comforted by socializing with each other. Emotionally conditioned and mentally manipulated by their ringleaders, the recruits pledge allegiance to them and to an imaginary world community (Umma), finding their purpose in life, their place in history, and the vanguard of Jihad against the common enemies they share with God. Martyrdom may be viewed as the ultimate reward, the promise of personal fulfillment and the restoration of dignity. See: Michael Taarnby, *Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe: Trends and Perspectives*, Research Report funded by the Danish Ministry of Justice, Submitted 14 January 2005; Gyorgy Lederer, *Countering Islamist Radicals in Eastern Europe*, CSRC discussion paper 05/42, September 2005; Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*.

decades of Communist repression. People associated with the organization were involved in a number of public protests and often used inflammatory rhetoric against other ethnic groups as well as Muslims who did not share their views. In the wake of a post-September 11 police crackdown on Saudi and Middle Eastern charities operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the AIO came under close scrutiny by domestic and international law enforcement agencies. Their premises were raided several times and their finances thoroughly audited. As a result, the influx of money received by the organization from abroad severely dropped off, forcing AIO leadership to close down because of a lack of funds in the fall of 2006.

Over time, other Salafi groups have come to light as well, both in Bosnia and among the Bosnian diaspora. A recent study, confirmed by interviews with both Bosnian and foreign intelligence sources, indicates that the Bosnian Salafi movement is currently comprised of at least three main streams, differing mostly in their attitudes toward the official Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as toward terrorism, namely the global jihadi movement.<sup>22</sup>

One of three significant rogue groups is led by Nusret Imamović and is based in Gornja Maoča, in Northeastern Bosnia. The group—hostile toward the Islamic Community, which it considers apostate and corrupt—is the fastest-growing in both Bosnia and the diaspora, and is said to be vehemently opposed to the concepts of secular state, democracy, free elections, and any rule of law that is not based in Sharia. Imamović himself has made numerous statements in support of the global jihadi movement.<sup>23</sup>

The second largest of these groups is led by Muhamed Porča, a Vienna-based cleric usually associated with the al-Tawhid mosque in the Austrian capital's 12<sup>th</sup> *Bezirk* (District).<sup>24</sup> Members of this group argue that only their

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<sup>22</sup> For more on this, see Juan Carlos Antunez, "Wahhabism in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Its Links to International Terrorism" (paper presented at the *Islam in South East Europe Forum*, 2008), available on line at <http://iseef.net>.

<sup>23</sup> A high-ranking Bosnian intelligence officer, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, maintains that over the last two years Imamović's group has been growing, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in neighboring Serbia, Croatia, and Montenegro, as well as in Slovenia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and other Western European countries. According to this source, his followers are said to be well organized and disciplined, while Imamović's leadership and religious authority remain undisputed. He is the only one in the group with an exclusive right to interpret the Koran and Sharia, and controls the distribution of money. Imamović's sermons and other religious instructions, as well as news, a download zone – with audio and video content, and online forum and chat rooms are all featured on the group's website, called *Put vjernika* (Path of Believers), <http://www.putvjernika.com>.

<sup>24</sup> After his studies in Saudi Arabia, Porča arrived in Austria in 1993 to serve as an imam. From the moment he was denied a job at Sarajevo's Faculty of Islamic Studies upon his return to BiH, Porča started developing the idea of creating an Islamic community parallel to the official one led by Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić. Porča has not succeeded in this, but he has managed to strengthen the Wahhabi movement, especially in the Bosnian diaspora and to an unprecedented level. Bosnian police sources

communities—in Austria, Germany, Denmark, Serbia, Montenegro, and elsewhere—are following what they refer to as “authentic Islam.” Porča made a name for himself when he broke off ties with the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2007. He has been trying ever since to exert influence on Salafi groups like that of Nusret Imamović, which, disgusted by a world rife with what they see as overwhelming apostasy, ignorance, and corruption, have instead embraced seclusion.

The third and most extreme Bosnian Salafi group is also operating out of Austria. It is led by Vienna-born Nedžad Balkan (a.k.a. Ebu Muhammed), who’s parents emigrated from Sandžak, a Muslim-dominated region in Serbia. Balkan is believed to be a religious authority for the Vienna-based *Kelimetul Haqq* (Word of Truth)—an organization of Bosnian and Serbian Muslims from Sandžak—and an inspirational force for several radical groups in Bosnia and Serbia. His activities are focused around the Sahaba Mosque in Vienna’s 7th District and are featured on a number of websites, of which [www.kelimetul-haqq.org](http://www.kelimetul-haqq.org) and [www.el-tewhid.com](http://www.el-tewhid.com) are the best known.<sup>25</sup> The content of both sites reveals much resentment toward the official Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, referred to in a series of video postings as the “un-Islamic Community.” These postings also reflect the group’s support of violence not only against “infidels,” but also against other Muslims who do not share its worldview. Legitimization of such violence is what has led some experts to categorize Balkan’s Salafi community as a *Takfiri* group, aligned with the *Al-Takfir w’al-Hijra* (Excommunication and Exodus) movement.<sup>26</sup>

Intelligence sources maintain that Balkan’s influence in Bosnia itself is rather limited, and they point to two very small groups of his followers in Sarajevo and Donji Vakuf (Central Bosnia), with between just ten and fifteen members in each.<sup>27</sup>

The fragmentation of the Bosnian Salafi movement also leaves room for a number of smaller, rather isolated groups that do not subscribe to any par-

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estimate that Porča has been pocketing a considerable income over the years from selling audio and video material with religious, but often disturbingly violent, content. These CDs and DVDs are being sold in BiH and abroad, and are said to generate a revenue of some 2 million KM (around 1 million euro) annually.

<sup>25</sup> The introduction to *Kelimetul Haqq*’s homepage reads: “Our goal is to invite people into a pure monotheism (Tawhid), to worship only Allah the Almighty, and nobody and nothing except Him.”

<sup>26</sup> *Al-Takfir w’al-Hijra* is the group known for perpetrating violence against those it considers *kufar* (heretics), including Arabs and Muslims whom Takfiris do not consider to be living in accordance with true Islam. For more on this, see Joshua L. Gleis, “National Security Implications of Al Takfir Wal Hijra,” *Al-Naklah: The Fletcher School Online Journal for issues related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization*, Article 3, Spring 2005.

<sup>27</sup> From an interview with a Bosnian intelligence expert who wished to remain anonymous.

ticular organizational or leadership concepts, but choose instead to maintain a specific way of living and practicing their religion.

Salafi communities in Bosnia are almost always secluded and are scattered widely throughout the country. Some analysts find it disturbing that their settlements are often in the vicinity of inter-entity borders and, in some instances, arms depots. While this could be interpreted as strategic positioning in case of another conflict, for which the Salafi communities might serve as a Bosniak vanguard against invading Serb forces, it also reflects the fact that many villages along the former frontline (now the inter-entity border) were devastated to such an extent that their original owners simply decided to sell them (for instance, in Bočinja and Gornja Maoča). The Salafis turned out to be the highest, and most probably only, bidders. Their choice of remote and isolated areas for the establishment of settlements is also stipulated by their belief that true Muslims who live in an apostate state should resort to *Hijra* – a withdrawal (or exodus) from the surrounding (infidel) world, in the example of the prophet Muhammad and his followers, who moved from Mecca to Medina in 622 to establish the first Islamic state.

Despite a number of underlying differences, all Bosnian Salafi groups share some common traits that are not exclusive to Islamic organizations. As groups, they exhibit the tendency of some traditional religious communities to isolate themselves from their fellow believers and to define the sacred community in terms of its disciplined opposition to non-believers and apathetic believers alike. This pattern is inherent to fundamentalism within practically every faith tradition and these movements share certain traits despite differences in theological doctrine, the size or social composition of the group, their scope of influence, or their propensity to violence. However, not all fundamentalist groups initiate or condone violence, whether it is turned inward (mass suicide) or outward (terrorism).<sup>28</sup>

Extremism in fundamentalist religious movements is usually linked to group-wide regression, which is exhibited by some of the following characteristics; these characteristics are not displayed by all fundamentalist religious groups and will vary according to the extent of the regression.

Regressed fundamentalist groups commonly have: a supreme leader who is also the sole interpreter of divine text; an absolute belief in their possession of the “true” divine text and/or rule; coexisting paradoxical feelings of victimization and omnipotence; psychological (and sometimes physical) barricades between the group and the rest of the world; an expectation of threat or danger from people and things outside the group’s borders; altered gender, family, child-rearing, and sexual norms, often including the degradation of women; a changed shared morality, which may eventually make allowances for the destruction of monuments, buildings, or other symbols perceived as threatening

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<sup>28</sup> Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalism Comprehended* (Chicago: UC Press, 1995).

to the group's beliefs; and they may have attempted mass suicide or mass murder in order to enhance or protect their group identity.<sup>29</sup>

There is little if anything that is unique to the organizational and behavioral development of the various Salafi groups operating in Bosnia and among the Bosnian diaspora – they are simply displaying the well-known operational patterns of many fundamentalist religious groups.

It is also worth noting that no Bosnian Salafi faction has thus far forcefully imposed its leadership on any other group. In recent months, however, there has been a concerted effort by a former religious leader of the el-Mujahid Unit, Imad el-Misri, an Egyptian cleric and convicted terrorist, to exert his influence.<sup>30</sup> His interviews, sermons, and lectures on Islam suddenly began appearing in the spring of 2011 on websites belonging to a number of different Bosnian Salafi groups, but also on YouTube. The content of el-Misri's messages is largely educational and instructive, and he stops short of advocating or inciting ideological confrontation or violence of any kind. Sources with inside knowledge claim that these messages have been skillfully crafted to avoid creating controversy while underlining el-Misri's religious authority. More importantly, his messages seem to be designed to gain popular support, hinting at leadership ambitions. Bosnian law enforcement officials interviewed for this study were unable to confirm reports that el-Misri visited Bosnia in recent months, nor could they state for the record whether there is a standing court order prohibiting him from entering the country.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For more on this, see Vamik D. Volkan, "Some Observations on Religious Fundamentalism and the Taliban," available at [www.vamikvolkan.com](http://www.vamikvolkan.com) (accessed 18 June 2011).

<sup>30</sup> During the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, Imad el-Misri, who like many foreign fighters had multiple identities (Eslam Durmo, Osama Fargallah, Al Hussein Helmi Arman Ahmed, and more), was the main ideological authority of the el-Mujahid unit. He organized a system of 19 *madrasas* for an obligatory 40-day religious course, which by rule preceded the recruitment and military training of young Bosniaks into the el-Mujahid Unit. He is the author of a booklet entitled, *The Understandings We Need To Correct*, in which he criticized local Bosnian perceptions of Islam and suggested that a number of these perceptions be changed in accordance with Salafi teachings. In 1996, following the Dayton Peace Accords—to which the mujahideen community was strongly opposed—El-Misri authored another booklet called, *Plan for the Destruction of Islam and Muslims in Recent Times*. In it, he expressed his disgust toward the treaty that ended the war: "This is not peace, this is humiliation...a conspiracy to tear down Islam and destroy Muslims ... a new occupation." His arrest on a road trip in Herzegovina on July 18, 2001, and subsequent deportation to Egypt, where he had been indicted for his alleged involvement in an earlier terrorist attack, caused a dramatic public outcry from his followers. For more on this, see Esad Hećimović, "Ljeto kad su hapsili mudžahedine," *BH Dani*, No.222 (9 September 2001).

<sup>31</sup> A high-ranking police source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that the confusion surrounding El-Misri's extradition to Egypt in 2001—caused by overlapping jurisdiction and the involvement of domestic law enforcement agencies in the case—make it impossible to verify whether he was actually banned from entering

## Mechanisms of Terrorism Prevention

Bosnia and Herzegovina has adapted its legal norms to combat terrorism in accordance with relevant international standards and recommendations. Key UN Resolutions on international terrorism have been embodied in the country's Criminal Code, which also specifically addresses a number of terrorism-related criminal offenses. In 2010, the Criminal Code was amended with new articles that criminalized support of terrorism through financing, recruiting, training, public abetting, and establishment of a terrorist group. Further, the Council of Ministers adopted a National Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, 2010-2013. Responsibility for the implementation of this strategy is divided among the police in both entities, and by umbrella organizations such as the state Ministry of Security, State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA), and the Intelligence and Security Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (OSA), as well as by the Task Force for the Fight Against Terrorism and Strengthening of Capacities for the Fight Against Terrorism, which has been operating under the leadership of the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the supervision of the Ministry of Security.<sup>32</sup>

In the wake of the Bugojno terrorist attack in June 2010, however, it became obvious that a lack of clarity as to the division of responsibilities between various law enforcement agencies has undermined terrorism prevention efforts. Most notably, during an emergency session of the Parliamentary Commission on Defense and Security in July 2010, directors of agencies central to the task of combating and preventing terrorism complained that political obstacles and inadequate legal infrastructure hamper their counterterrorism efforts. They warned that without a law on terrorism prevention, the police and prosecutor's office would be prevented from taking decisive pre-emptive measures, forced to act only *after* a terrorist act has been committed.<sup>33</sup> More than a year later not much has been done to address these concerns. On the contrary, one could argue that the capacity to effectively combat terrorism has weakened.

SIPA, the law enforcement agency with primary responsibility for counterterrorism operations, remains rather limited in its practical capacity to fill that role. The Counterterrorism Division of the Federation Police (FMUP) has been (temporarily) reduced from nine to just four officers. Also, the decision to appoint eight FMUP terrorism investigators to cantonal detachments, as terrorism-related activities fall strictly within the jurisdiction of the FMUP, is still on hold as of this writing. Severe spending restrictions are constraining even rou-

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BiH. He also said that none of these agencies could confirm reports that El-Misri was already in the country.

<sup>32</sup> Members of the Task Force interviewed for this study expressed their disappointment over the way this body operates, calling it "totally irrelevant." They also complained that members of the Task Force based outside Sarajevo are discouraged from attending meetings in the capital because they are not reimbursed for their travel expenses.

<sup>33</sup> For more on this, see the EUPM in BiH, "PPIO Daily Media Summary," 13 July 2010.

tine operations of the Counterterrorism Division, with overnight stays in more remote areas of the Federation rarely permitted and detectives expected to drive round trip to such destinations in the same day. Interviews with key law enforcement officials revealed that these financial and operational constraints are being imposed across the board.

In addition, the development of a comprehensive understanding of terrorist threats and an effective counterterrorism strategy has been obfuscated by persistent politicization of the issue of terrorism. "Terrorism" is a pejorative term, but it is also a political label, with intrinsically negative connotations that are generally applied to one's enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would prefer to marginalize.<sup>34</sup> Labeling any (identity-based) group with terrorist intentions, in essence, delegitimizes its political goals. A relentless campaign to attach just such a label to Muslims in general, and Bosniaks in particular, has been in ongoing in Bosnia for over a decade. Originating predominantly from political elites and media in Republika Srpska, and especially from the self-proclaimed "Team of Experts for Combating Terrorism and Organized Crime in Southeastern Europe," this campaign is aimed at entrenching a simple yet untenable logic: All terrorists are Wahhabis; Bosniaks are mostly Wahhabis; hence, most Bosniaks are terrorists.

For a variety of reasons, some international media and a number of academics have, over time, embraced this simplistic equation uncritically. A number of news reports and academic studies published since 2001 have portrayed Bosnia and Herzegovina as the "birthplace of Al-Qaeda," as well as its "recruitment center and logistics base," "the staging ground and springboard for operations in Europe," and the place where "white Muslims are recruited" for the waging of global jihad. The "Bosnian terrorist link" was also duly noted in a number of international incidents, from the November 2008 Mumbai attack, to the alleged 2009 assassination attempt on Bolivian President Evo Morales.<sup>35</sup>

It is quite clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina is indeed vulnerable to the threats of both internal and transnational terrorism, but such a threat is no greater than that in other European countries. Statistically, Bosnia has actually ranked for many years among those countries with the lowest recorded number of terrorism-related incidents.<sup>36</sup> Unsubstantiated allegations of an in-

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<sup>34</sup> In the words of leading terrorism expert Brian Jenkins, "what is called terrorism thus seems to depend on one's point of view. Use of the term implies a moral judgment; and if one party can successfully attach the label terrorist to its opponent, then it has indirectly persuaded others to adopt its moral viewpoint." As quoted in Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 32.

<sup>35</sup> For more on this, see Vlado Azinović, "Tackling Terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Eyes Wide Shut," *Democracy and Security in Southeastern Europe* 1:2/3 (August 2010): 53-56.

<sup>36</sup> A recently published, related study concludes that "the terrorism phenomenon in Bosnia and Herzegovina is no more developed nor is the risk of terror attacks any greater than that in many other parts of the world." For more on this, see: Juan Carlos

creased terrorism threat in Bosnia, based on preposterous claim that some 100,000 Wahhabis reside in the country, are not aimed at deterring such a threat but rather at pigeonholing Bosniaks as terrorists and delegitimizing their political aims.<sup>37</sup> The “Wahhabis are terrorists” card has been played by the media and by Bosnian Serb elite whenever critical political processes have been underway in the country (from police reform through Constitutional amendments, to general and local elections, and during consideration of a referendum on the judiciary).<sup>38</sup>

In response, the Bosniak “side,” and particularly the official Islamic Community, has descended into default denial of any security threat that may be posed by the presence of dangerous individuals and ideologies associated with Islam, calling all such references hostile and Islamophobic. The Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić has repeatedly argued that the Islamic Community should not interfere with freedom of faith of its congregation or act as some kind of religious police.

Consequently, law enforcement officials have been left to balance between two opposing, and equally flawed, perceptions – and they have adjusted their analysis and reaction to the terrorism threat to suit the outcomes desired by their respective political elite. In the words of one of the country’s leading law enforcement officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, the sole reason there have not been more terrorist attacks in Bosnia to date is due to the fact that “we’ve had more luck than brains.”

It is noteworthy that the most radical, extreme, or militant movements, regardless of underlying ideology or specific worldview, are small and unrepresentative, and do not enjoy popular support. Due to their secretive organizational character and the extent to which they harbor distaste for the wider society, such groups can be, and usually are, violent and dangerous. However, the

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Antunez, “Wahhabism in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Its Links to International Terrorism,” Islam in South East Europe Forum, 2008. Available online at <http://iseef.net>.

<sup>37</sup> For more on this, see: S. Mišljenović, “Političari ćute, a vehabije mute,” *Večernje novosti*, 29 January 2011; “Sve više islamskih frakcija u BiH, vehabije najopasnije,” *Srna*, 21 December 2010; “Po Bosni vršlja 100.000 vehabija,” *Vesti Online*, 3 April 2010. The allegation that some 100,000 Wahhabis reside in BiH is not only unsubstantiated and harmful for the image of the country, but could eventually hamper the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts, as it could drive fundamental changes to the current strategy for combating terrorism. If amended to reflect the assessment that there are tens of thousands instead of a few dozen or a few hundred possible terrorists, a new strategy could call for measures that are not on balance with the actual threat, and are as such ineffective and eventually counterproductive.

<sup>38</sup> Over the years, media in Banja Luka has played a major role in “discovering” Wahhabis, mostly in the Bosniak returnee communities in Republika Srpska. Their “investigative reports,” usually written in a manner reminiscent of the style employed by Communist State Security Services (SDB) for propagandist purposes in the former Yugoslavia, have habitually published the names of Bosniaks suspected of being Wahhabis, or of concealing weapons and stashing ammunition and explosives. Interestingly, authorities in the RS, who usually seem eager to support these allegation in their statements to the press, have never prosecuted a single terrorism-related case.

real empowerment of these groups and their opportunity to have visible impact on a society comes when political elites exploit them in pursuit of their own agendas.<sup>39</sup> Opportunities for such exploitation in Bosnia and Herzegovina are rather substantial since the same political elites, through formal and informal ties, exert control over both law enforcement agencies and some militant groups.

The country will need to do better than just “more luck than brains” to deal effectively with a variety of political and security challenges which may lead to terrorism or violence as a way to address underlying internal disputes. Ongoing leadership challenges within the SDA, forthcoming elections for the new Grand Mufti of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (scheduled for the fall of 2012)—with the Mufti of Sandzak, Muamer Zukorlić, one of the frontrunners—and persistent efforts by RS authorities to undermine the viability of state structures and the country as a whole, are just some of the most concrete challenges that could lead extreme groups or individuals to be incited, spontaneously or premeditatedly, to violence.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> It is precisely in such circumstances that various militant Islamist groups have been used as pawns in internal or international disputes when political elites or ruling establishments have not been able to afford to be seen as associated with or involved in open confrontations. The most notable cases have been in Saudi Arabia and Egypt on the domestic front, and in Pakistan, where groups such as the Taliban and Laskhar-e-Taiba have been saddled with the country’s foreign policy goals in Afghanistan and Kashmir/India.

<sup>40</sup> The mufti of Sandžak, Muamer Zukorlić, is no stranger to controversies caused by contested leadership ambitions and the use of Wahhabi/Salafi groups in conflict between the two rivaling Islamic Communities in Serbia. A senior Western diplomat interviewed for this study warned that Zukorlić’s election to Grand Mufti could cause a domino effect in which incumbent Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić could instigate a leadership challenge in the SDA to take control of the party himself. As a number of domestic and international surveys have indicated over the past decade, Mustafa Cerić has featured as the singlemost influential Bosniak political leader. Cerić has never distanced himself from such a perception, but on the contrary, has used every opportunity to reinforce it and to exert his political influence. A scenario in which Zukorlić would take the reins of the Islamic Community, and Cerić of the SDA, in exchange for mutual support, would provide Bosniak political elite with leverage in its dealings with authorities in the Republika Srpska (RS) and Serbia. Particularly with regard to possible support that the secessionist politics of RS leadership may receive from Belgrade. According to our source, the forceful introduction of Muamer Zukorlić on to the Bosnian political and religious scene is believed to send a clear message to the government in Belgrade: “Should you decide to support secession of the Republika Srpska, we are going to create a living hell for you in Sandzak.” In short, there is a calculated expectation that the Zukorlić-Cerić axis could finally end the reactive attitude of Bosniak political elite, particularly vis-à-vis Banja Luka, and transform it into a more engaged, proactive attempt at safeguarding the survival of BiH, but also of the important role that Bosniaks should play in it. Whether or not Bosniaks have the real ability to create just such havoc in Sandzak remains debatable, but the mere willingness to play the “Sandzak card,” should it become necessary, introduces new dynam-

Effective deterrents remain few, while enablers of terrorism and political violence are many. They include a weak (failing) state, an abundance of readily available arms and ammunition, widespread corruption, weak border controls, and the mobilization of uncontested ideologies.<sup>41</sup>

A continued obsession with Islamism as the single most important ideological catalyst of contemporary terrorism is as cognitively limited as it is strategically shortsighted. Such myopia diverts focus from the possibility of other dangerous security challenges. As the recent mass shooting in Norway shows, individuals capable of murdering large numbers of innocent people may very well reside in many communities. What triggers them cannot be predicted. Bosnia and Herzegovina—with its laundry list of unresolved disputes, political agendas, and security inadequacies—has a full spectrum of worrying potential triggers for violence which does not allow them to go unaddressed for very much longer.

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ics into the regional political and security context. In the case that the destabilization of Serbia really becomes an issue, there is little doubt that organized groups with strong ethnic and religious identity, such as militant Salafi cells, would be instrumental for the implementation of such a scenario. On the other hand, it is quite likely that militant Serb groups, such as the Ravna Gora Chetnik Movement would also be deployed in a proxy war.

<sup>41</sup> On the eve of the first anniversary of the Bugojno bombing, June 26, 2011, the local police force was on alert in response to reports that someone had broken into an ammunition depot in the town of Vitez in Central Bosnia and stolen unspecified quantities of explosives and detonators. In expectation of another retaliatory attack, additional police reinforcement was deployed, but in the end nothing happened. The stolen explosives have never been recovered. The arms depot in Bugojno, *Binas*, could also provide enough logistics to mount a significant terrorist attack – it houses, among other material, more than 300,000 hand-grenades. “In addition, the facility is virtually unguarded,” said an expert interviewed for this study. See also: “Iz magacina firme Vitezit ukraden eksploziv,” *Srna*, 26 June 2011.