GREASE
Religion, Diversity and Radicalisation

Radicalisation and Resilience Case Study

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Center for the Study of Democracy

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This case study is part of a series of in-depth reports on religiously motivated violent radicalisation - and resilience to it - in 12 countries. The series examines periods in which religious radicalisation and violence has escalated and analyses relevant policy and political discourses surrounding them. While seeking to identify factors that drove radicalisation and violence in each country, the case studies also critically assess programmes of prevention and resilience-building, identifying good practices.
This series was produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, secularism and religiously inspired radicalisation.

Countries covered in this series:
Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Tunisia and the United Kingdom.

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The EU-Funded GREASE project looks to Asia for insights on governing religious diversity and preventing radicalisation.

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

While exploring religious governance models in other parts of the world, GREASE also attempts to unravel the European paradox of religious radicalisation despite growing secularisation. We consider the claim that migrant integration in Europe has failed because second generation youth have become marginalised and radicalised, with some turning to jihadist terrorism networks. The researchers aim to deliver innovative academic thinking on secularisation and radicalisation while offering insights for governance of religious diversity.

The project is being coordinated by Professor Anna Triandafyllidou from The European University Institute (EUI) in Italy. Other consortium members include Professor Tariq Modood from The University of Bristol (UK); Dr. H. A. Hellyer from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) (UK); Dr. Mila Mancheva from The Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Dr. Egdunas Racius from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania); Mr. Terry Martin from the research communications agency SPIA (Germany); Professor Mehdi Lahlou from Mohammed V University of Rabat (Morocco); Professor Haldun Gulalp of The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Turkey); Professor Pradana Boy of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia); Professor Zawawi Ibrahim of The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (Malaysia); Professor Gurpreet Mahajan of Jawaharlal Nehru University (India); and Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). GREASE is scheduled for completion in 2022.

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GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

Contents

Introduction

The goal of this case study is to explore religiously-attributed radicalisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). To do so we focus on one timeframe within the recent history of BiH when religiously-inspired radicalisation escalated and specifically look at two incidents of radicalisation which ended up in violence. In general terms, by religiously-inspired violent radicalisation we understand radicalisation in which the targets of violence are chosen because of their religion or/and in which the perpetrator of violence has been motivated by their religion.

BiH presents a valuable case for the study of religiously-attributed radicalisation and violent extremism for a number of reasons. The country is an important case in Europe where the legacies of a relatively recent war which was fought over ethno-religious lines have shaped the relationship between the various religions and ethnic communities. Even though military actions have ended, true reconciliation between the different sides of the war is still lacking, feeding a volatile ethno-religious environment. The unresolved aspects of the Bosnian war have been a major contributor of vulnerability to religiously-inspired radicalisation. It was the Bosnian war which planted the seeds of religiously-inspired radicalisation on country soil and allowed for the introduction of non-traditional interpretations of religion. Since then (religiously-attributed) radicalisation and violent extremism have occurred, whether on BiH territory or abroad on behalf of BiH citizens who radicalised and left the country to Syria, Iraq and Ukraine, as foreign fighters. Such dynamics, in combination, with the variety of responses to radicalisation and violent extremism by state and non-state actors provide ground for an instructive case analysis.

Methodology

Data for this report come from interviews with relevant stakeholders in BiH and desk research. We conducted interviews with members from the following stakeholder groups in BiH: policymakers, counter-radicalisation frontline practitioners, members of CSOs, members of BiH law enforcement agencies, researchers, and media representatives. For the purposes of confidentiality, our analysis does not refer to the names and positions of the respondents. The methodology of data collection was designed to achieve three objectives: (1) to critically analyse the approach used by BiH to counter religiously-inspired/attributed radicalisation and violence; (2) to identify factors which drove religiously-inspired/attributed radicalisation; (3) to critically assess prevention and resilience-building programs and identify good practices. The contents of this report are divided into six sections corresponding to these objectives.

Conceptualisations of radicalisation

Our approach to collecting expert data on religiously-inspired radicalisation in BiH was guided by the conceptual framework developed by the GREASE project. Mainly, religiously-inspired radicalisation can be understood in terms of the relationship between religion, radicalisation and violence resting on the importance of contextual factors, the role of ideas and ideologies pertaining to religion in a certain context. When taken in the context of the BiH case we observed that some interviewees did not feel

comfortable with terms such as "religiously-inspired" or "religiously-attributed" radicalisation. Indeed, in multiple interviews upon being asked how they understand religiously-inspired and religiously-attributed radicalisation, participants spoke about radicalisation or radicalism and violent extremism in general terms. There is a tendency for participants to avoid the religious aspect in the definition. In the cases in which they discussed the religious piece, participants attributed radicalisation to other dynamics and not necessarily strictly to religion. Following is an overview of the ways in which certain participants conceptualise radicalisation more generally, with references to the religious component in some instances.

Policymakers

On the side of policymakers radicalisation is rarely framed in the context of religion. For instance, one policymaker argued that the existing BiH legislation at the state level does not contain the term "religious radicalisation" or even "religious extremism" at all. Rather, the legislation engages in the notion of extremism in more general terms, as "a series of crimes ranging from hate speech through hate crime to acts of terrorism." This policymaker views radicalism (not radicalisation) as a process "through which individuals adopt certain radical attitudes and they not necessarily transform those radical attitudes into violent actions."

Other policymakers are not so concerned about conceptualising the phenomenon, but are rather focused on the practicalities related to religiously-attributed radicalisation vis-à-vis the challenges which it poses and how the policymaking community can tackle such challenges. For these policymakers religiously-inspired radicalisation and religious extremism are security threats which need to be addressed. It is the task of security sector agencies to deal with the threat through multi-stakeholder approaches at the local and regional levels. One particular policymaker, for example, viewed the necessity to involve different stakeholders in addressing religiously-inspired radicalisation in the country, including the police, NGOs, local government structures, civil society members, and religious communities. Thus, religiously-attributed radicalisation as a term is conceptualised more through the prism of practical solutions rather than the prism of definition.

Counter-Radicalisation Practitioners

Similarly to policymakers, counter-radicalisation practitioners avoided conceptualising radicalisation through the lens of religion. One practitioner did not elaborate on the notion of religiously-inspired radicalisation at all, but instead spoke of the overall process of radicalisation as preceding violent extremism and terrorism, and manifesting in violent and non-violent ways. Another practitioner described "religiously-inspired radicalism" as "just one straw that highly traumatised people cling to in seeking meaning in their lives." For this practitioner religiously-inspired radicalisation is a phenomenon that has more psychological and personal dimensions than religious ones. Along these lines, some practitioners preferred to avoid the notion of religion and conceptualised radicalisation in terms of ideological extremism which utilises religion for specific goals. Practitioners who expressed this perspective argued that religious radicalisation presents a "distorted interpretation of religion" bordering with "abuse of religion."

Research Community

Among representatives of the BiH research community religion was again either not considered in the conceptualisation of radicalisation or was seen as problematic, particularly when used in phrasing such as "religiously-inspired" or "religiously-attributed" radicalisation. Some experts on radicalisation consider that conceptualising radicalisation should inevitably be seen in the context of extremist violence. According to such scholars "radicalisation could be defined as a deviation from the mainstream norms and values, and advocacy and pursuit of norms that often collide with common understanding of acceptable behaviour, or even are directed against human rights and freedoms, and it does not necessarily involve violent behaviour." In this sense, radicalisation is a "cognitive expression" of norms and values which diverge from those prevailing in society. If matters come down to violent extremism inspired by religion, radicals pursue certain interpretations of religion as the only right way. Relatedly, some scholars view the notion or "religiously- inspired" radicalisation as problematic since they view radicalisation processes as ideological processes based on certain interpretations of religion instead of based on religion as the generator driving radicalisation. More specifically, one scholar argued that religious radicalisation is about ideologies based on some interpretations of religion, whether misused or not. According to this scholar, political extremism and terrorism always have political and ideological motivations.

Country background

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a complex political structure, as well as a long history of overcoming cultural and national differences (Hayden, 1995). These principles were enshrined in the Constitution — the basis for the creation and organisation of the Federation of BiH, in which all religious communities are separated from the state, and the four main traditional religious communities – the Islamic Community, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the Jewish Community -- are guaranteed equal rights and protection. The BiH Constitution does not directly refer to religious representation in parliamentary and government structures, but refers to ethnic diversity in such positions among the three major ethnicities – Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, each of which is affiliated with a particular religion (Serbs – Orthodox Christianity, Croats – Roman Catholicism, Bosniaks – Islam).

Data from 2016 report the following percentages regarding major religious affiliations: Muslim – 50.7%, Catholic – 15.1%, Orthodox – 30.75% (Agency for Statistics of BiH, 2016). Religious communities subscribing to other faiths comprise around 1.5%. Less than 0.5% of the population of the country declare themselves as agnostic and nearly 1% percent declare themselves as atheists. The 2004 Law on Freedom of Religion and the Legal Status of Religious Communities and Churches granted religious communities autonomy, self-government and the right to charitable joint activities with the state, while limiting the community's right to be officially registered if it opposes freedom and human rights. The four traditional religious communities of the country act as partners of the state in developing religious educational programs, and are also members of the Inter-Religious Council, an institution providing believers of different faiths with inter-religious experience and cooperation. Despite the presence of the 2004

Law and the Inter-Religious Council, there have been some doubts about the effectiveness of these platforms – the law has allegedly privileged only certain religious communities and the Council has been seen as inefficient in genuinely promoting interreligious dialogue (Tzvetkova and Mancheva, 2019).

Contextually relevant to this report is the Bosnian War (1992-1995) and the unresolved ethno-religious challenges which it left behind. Resulting in from the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the war became associated with grave acts of violence (such as the Srebrenica massacre of 1995) which further deepened ethno-religious divisions within Bosnian society and challenged the accommodation of religious freedoms and inter-religious harmony. Among the main belligerents of the war were foreign fighters – the so-called Croatian Defence Council supported by Croatia, mercenaries and volunteers from Orthodox countries (Serbia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece) fighting on the side of the Bosnian Serb army, and Afghan and Arab *mujahideen* who fought on the side of the Bosnians Muslims. Since the war was fought along ethno-religious lines and symbols, the post-war reconstruction of BiH had to engage a reconceptualisation of the relationship between the state and religious communities – a process made difficult by ongoing institutional gridlock and unresolved ethno-religious tensions.

Crisis case studies

Although in this report we analyse religiously-inspired radicalisation and counter-radicalisation approaches in BiH more generally, we are grounding our analysis on the period around 2015. The argumentation behind selecting the period around 2015 as a study period is based upon the intensification of events in four spheres which, we believe, are interconnected in shaping the specific nature of religiously-inspired radicalisation in BiH. First, during this period the state established its legislative and regulatory domination over rightful practices over religion (e.g., through the Strategy against Terrorism, the Ban on Religious Symbols). Second, the period was marked by contestation related to unresolved issues back from the war in the 1990s (e.g., the ongoing trials against war criminals as well as issues related to the discriminatory change of the name of the Bosnian language in Republika Srpska). Third, economic issues such as poverty, unemployment, low access to public services have continued to plague the population of BiH during this period. Finally, this period is important due to the mobilisation[1] of radicalisation internationally expressed through strong connectivity between local organisation and international networks of violent religious movements (this was the peak period in the migration of foreign fighters from BiH to Syria and Iraq).

Within the period around 2015 we are analysing two specific incidents of violent extremism in BiH which are allegedly rooted in religiously-attributed radicalisation and the specific context surrounding them. The two incidents are the attacks in (1) the town of Zvornik (Republika Srpska) and (2) the neighbourhood of Rajlovac in Sarajevo.

Crisis Events

This report focuses on events in the town of Zvornik and the neighbourhood of Rajlovac (Sarajevo) due to violent nature of the two occurrences. Some sources suggest

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[1] Intense migration to and from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq contribute to an easier flow of radical ideologies, as well as the trafficking of people, weapons and other goods.

that both crisis events have been perpetrated by Muslim extremists (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2019). The attack in Zvornik, Republika Srpska, occurred on April 27, 2015. A young man opened fire at a police station in the town of Zvornik injuring two people and killing a police officer. The perpetrator was also shot dead by the police. The attack was well-contemplated as it was conducted when police patrols were switching so they were the most available "targets". The young perpetrator is told to have yelled "Allahu Akbar" before committing the act. The perpetrator himself seems to have been influenced by ethno-national historical perceptions which were possibly enhanced by his father's death as a victim of the Zvornik massacre in 1992.

The violent act in the Sarajevo suburb of Rajlovac occurred on November 18, 2015. The perpetrator shot at three militants in a betting shop, as a result killing two of them, injuring another one of them, as well as the employee in the shop. Upon exiting the shop, he shot at a bypassing bus, injuring the driver and two passengers with the shattered glass. The attacker is reported to have worn a headband with excerpts from Arabic scriptures and to have shouted "Allahu Akbar". The perpetrator was later surrounded by police in his home where he committed suicide in an attempt to execute another terrorist act by detonating two explosive devices.

Although certain details in the two incidents suggest that the two attacks were based on religiously-inspired radicalisation (some sources explicitly call the attackers "Muslim extremists"), the interviewees revealed there is no solid evidence that these were indeed religiously-inspired radicalisation acts. Therefore, it is important to analyse the two cases through a contextual lens by considering their interdependence with the social, ideological, cultural, economic and political processes occurring in BiH at the time.

Contextual Factors

A number of specific occurrences in the immediate time before and after the two attacks provide relevant context to the attacks, including the trial against Husein Bosnic, the attempted change of the official name of the Bosnian language in Republika Srpska (RS) and the ban on religious symbols in public institutions:

1.   **The trial against Husein (Bilal) Bosnic** is one of the pivotal points of the development of underground Salafist organisations in BiH. Perceived as one of the founders of the Salafist movement in BiH, Husein Bosnic is directly responsible for the enlargement of radical Islamist organisations and their spread to newer territories. His trial began in February 2015 and ended in November 2015 with a sentence of 7 years of imprisonment. The arrest and subsequent trial of Bosnic led to a crucial change in the dynamic between suspected religious extremist "elements" with a law enforcement officer stating: "We monitored them, followed them, invited them in for questioning. They were not immune to our intimidation techniques and stopped feeling safe, especially after the arrest of Bosnić" (Bećirević, 2018, p.34). The trial, the sentence and the demobilisation of Husein Bosnic highlight two vital contextual specificities of radicalisation tendencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is notable that the two violent incidents occurred in close temporal proximity to the beginning and end of Bosnic's trial (the Zvornik attack was 2 months after the start of the trial against Bosnic and the Rajlovac shooting was conducted 13 days after the sentencing of Bosnic). Inter-religious clashes in BiH have lately (after the war in former Yugoslavia) been realized in the

domain of the battle for domination over 'historic truths'[2] and, therefore, the symbolism of these demonstrations should not be neglected. The employed symbols point to relevant aspects of ideological mechanisms and tools for radicalisation.

2.   **The reported attempt to legally change the official name of the Bosnian language** (spoken predominantly by the Bosnian Muslims and officially recognised as one of the official state languages, along with Serbian and Croatian) in Republika Srpska is an illustration of discriminative entity-level governmental decisions. Reportedly, the Republika Srpska Ministry of Education instructed schools to officially document the language of Bosniak students as Bosniak, rather than its officially accepted name of Bosnian (Panic, 2015). Such power distribution political moves are considered natural in times of attention toward religiously-motivated historical violence in the past (the upcoming 20th Anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, which would occur two months after the attempted language name change) (Panic, 2015).

3.   **The Ban on Religious Symbols in Public Institutions, adopted in October 2015**. Although technically referring to all types of religious memorabilia and symbolism, the Ban tended to disproportionately affect Muslim women and their headscarves. There is no direct correlation between the two attacks and the ban. However, the ban is one of the events shaping the social and ethno-religious climate in BiH in 2015.

Drivers of religiously-inspired radicalisation and assessment

The manifestations of religiously-inspired extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina seem to be the intricate product of predominantly local factors interacting against the backdrop of the country's war legacy and the uncompleted post-war transition period. While none of the individual, communal and systemic deficiencies constitutes a causal driver alone, a combination of personal vulnerabilities, ethno-religious rifts, socio-economic marginalisation, and the state's shortcomings provides a fertile ground for (religiously-inspired) radicalisation and violent extremism.

Such factors did have impact on the lives and ultimate fate of the two perpetrators of the Zvornik and the Rajlovac incidents. However, contrary to our initial expectations when we selected the two incidents for case analysis, interview data revealed that there is little ground to prove that the two incidents were primarily driven by religious motives if at all. Indeed, interview data suggest that the primary drive of the attacks could be personal in nature, while contextualised by additional drivers (such as socio-economic factors) which will be discussed below in the report. Associating the two cases and the overall religious radicalisation trends in BiH in the period around 2015 only with religion, thus, would limit our analysis. Taking a broader picture of the drivers allows us to understand what stands behind the two incidents and what possibly stands behind other manifestations of violent extremism and radicalisation in BiH. In this regard some interviewees claim that "there is no unique profile of a radicalised person ready to commit a violent act".

Ethno-Religious Historical Complexities
In the context of the two incidents and the period around 2015, religion has been connected to extremism as it is closely intertwined with the notion of ethnicity and

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[2] For the tradition of employing symbols and memory in the process of negotiating the face of transitional justice in BiH (with regard to the Bosnian war) see Karabegović (2019).

ethnic tensions prone to foster radicalisation. One interviewee observed that BiH is marked by "an ethno-religious form of radicalism and extremism". The post-war context in BiH has been characterised by deeply entrenched ethno-religious rifts which remained unresolved after the Bosnian war. After the war, religion emerged in entanglement with ethnicity as a complex overarching marker of identity and belonging. Ethno-religious lines became hard boundaries, culminating in the Bosnian war and finally materialising into a segregated political and governmental structure. This entanglement of religion and ethnicity has originated long before our period of interest, but still stood out in 2015. The US Department of State reported that "politics, ethnic identity, and religion were often blurred. Political parties dominated by a single ethnic group continued to identify closely with the religion associated with that ethnic group. Because religion and ethnicity are often closely linked, it is difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religious identity. The country remained largely divided along ethnic and religious lines" (US Department of State, 2016, p.5). Furthermore, the absence of a holistic truth and reconciliation concept addressing the grievances of the war-torn and divided society resulted in deeply ingrained frustrations and a widespread feeling of injustice shared by all ethnic groups.

It is thus not surprising that memory politics and everyday oppression due to unresolved ethno-religious histories have had a strong influence on the 2015 context. Daily acts of hatred against Bosnian Muslims[3], especially in Republika Srpska (violent or threatening graffiti, verbal aggression, hooliganism acts of occasional hate crimes, organised marches with violent chants and slogans, etc.) set the scene for intolerance and easily inflammable inter-religious sparks. The ideologised distinctions between ethnic groups are sustained and further fuelled by partisan media's "insufficiently balanced and sensationalist approach, unprofessional attitude and inconsiderate and inflammatory rhetoric" (Bayrakli and Hafez, 2016, p. 86). Both religiously ethnicised[4] groups (Bosniak Muslims and Orthodox Serbs) are involved in the process of radicalisation as they are active participants in the everyday ideological reality as inter-group distinctions are developed and realized in interaction and opposition. These tensions are further deepened by BiH's inability to determine a "historical truth" or an official version of rights and wrongs done throughout time (Karabegović, 2019, p.1912). BiH has failed to address the clashing interpretations of history in its different entities (Karabegović, 2019, p.1912). For instance, the segregated educational system contributes to disparate interpretations of historic realities and definitions of national belonging (Byrakli and Hefez, 2016, p.84-85). The distinctions among ethno-religious groups are brought forth on a daily basis by representatives and media outlets of either side. Renegotiations of memory politics during the period of "transitional justice"[5] (Karabegović, 2019, p.1912) attempting to establish which group should have historical moral high ground are brought forth regularly by media outlets. These public debates over establishing the transitional justice after the Bosnian war (Karabegović, 2019, p.1912) are further deepened by the still ongoing procedures of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The overall perception among people in the

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[3] For a complete list of 11 daily occurrences of hate crimes and verbal and non-verbal aggression against Muslim in Republika Srpska see Byrakli and Hefez (2016).

[4] By "religiously ethnicised" we refer to the specifically constructed identity of Bosnians, where religion cannot be discerned from ethnicity. Because the two are so interconnected, neither can be analysed or even approached without a recognition of the importance of the other.

[5] "Transitional justice" refers to judicial mechanisms (such as tribunals) as well as bottom-up approaches of holding accountability for human rights abuses. Examples of bottom-up approaches to transitional justice in BiH include memorialisation activities organised and implemented by diaspora communities, including war and genocide commemoration activities, peace marches, symbolic annual collective burial ceremonies (Karabegović, 2019).

country that justice was never restored officially framed the context in which the two cases occurred, especially in the case of the Zvornik perpetrator who attacked an alleged assassin of his father.

Challenges of State Institutions

The overall compromised performance of the BiH state institutions has also created grounds for radicalisation and violent extremism. On the one hand, national institutions have had limited resources and channels to influence and regulate segregated areas. Emerging as an attempt to retain the fragile ethno-religious peace in the 1990s, the segregated political and governmental system practically established two countries within the borders of one state. The legislation on entity level (Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) is the government measure which practically affects the reality of its constituents. This has proven inefficient in synchronising and regulating the legal systems of the entire state. Although freedom of religion is established in the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (US Department of State, 2016, p. 1), the state level legislation is not responsible for securing all acts and regulations, ensuring the legal opportunity of all religious groups to practice their religion. This responsibility falls on the entity level governments (the Cantons of FBiH and RS). An example of the state's failure to address religious tensions in 2015 is represented by the entity level authority's inaction after numerous officially filed complaints of harassment and religious hatred in Republika Srpska against peaceful Muslims (Bayrakli and Hefez, 2016, p. 80-81).

National institutions have also had limited resources and channels to regulate the religious sphere within a centralised domain. The state's inefficiency in regulating its population from a central standpoint transpires in its inability to produce a structure capable of addressing all manifestations of religious belonging and spiritual practices. The Islamic Community is a regulating entity acting on a national level in BiH. However, its centralised nature has prevented it from addressing the grievances, needs and everyday realities of some of its adherents[6]. Especially neglected in BiH have been the economically marginalised and excluded citizens in rural areas, living in poverty and in some cases in isolation from the developments of the urbanised bigger cities. The lack of recognition on the side of the state that a religious group is not a monolith and cannot be governed from afar (especially in a context of religious tension, easily ignited by nationalism) has led to a detachment of some rural Muslim populations from the officially accepted regulator of the Muslim faith. Such dynamics have set the stage for the emergence of parallel communities with their own clergy, religious institutions and communication infrastructures (known in BiH as para-jamaats) which have become nests for religiously-inspired radicalisation (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p.130).

Economic Drivers

Poverty, economic vulnerability and spatial exclusion also appear as salient issues contributing to radicalisation and violent extremism. Poverty which is often linked to uncompensated material and personal losses of the Bosnian war has marginalised

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[6] The state's main regulatory body for all religious groups and organisations, self-identifying as Muslim, is the Islamic Community (IC) (US Department of State, 2016, p.3). Its main responsibilities include the oversight of religious practice and representation of the Muslim population in BiH. It also holds a preventative function, as it legitimises or condemns certain organisations, affiliating themselves with mainstream Islam, but demonstrating incoherence with the official beliefs. In 2016 the IC's calls for state intervention in halting the operations of unregistered, therefore illegal, "mosque run by a Salafist group" (US Department of State, 2016, p. 6).

segments of society. As an interviewee stated, "we live in a country…where there is no access to anything when needed. This is a dysfunctional state." Economic dysfunctionality has affected those who are the most vulnerable to radicalisation: those who are "in some way harmed, neglected, marginalised and put aside at the fringes of society…by a local community or by the state" (interview data). Low level of education, unemployment, economic and social injustice characterise their reality. The resulting social discontent and alienation pushed some to seek meaning and a sense of purpose elsewhere, for example in Syria and Iraq, or to adhere to a radical ideology promising to remodel the socio-political system. As one interviewee stated, for young people radicalisation becomes the only way out of community rejection and a reality of drug addiction and criminality. The state's inability to create opportunities, especially for the young has contributed to many of them falling into lethargy and social apathy, yearning for a cause offering meaning.

The challenges of poverty and social exclusion have been combined with the inability of the state to provide basic services fostering resilience to radicalisation. According to some interviewees, the school system has not sufficiently supported critical thinking and open-mindedness, while existing religious education has failed to impart a sound theological understanding resilient to the influence of distorted interpretations of religion. This situation has created conditions for vulnerable individuals to resort to the offerings of structures which are more easily adjustable to the grievances and specific troubles of excluded and secluded communities (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p.69). In this sense, para-jamaats (para-structures), or closed Muslim communities which turned into hotbeds of religiously-inspired radicalisation, have become more capable of addressing the needs of Muslims living in poverty and exclusion. Sometimes para-jamaats have been able to provide Muslims with services, which the state has failed to secure (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p.13). The para-jamaats, therefore, are more influential as they have practically been the only representatives of a particular (but still very real) perspective on the life of poor Muslims in BiH. This has allowed them to become successfully organised transmitters of non-traditional interpretations of Islam. The inability of the state to provide socio-economic security to some of its most vulnerable people has provided radical extremist propagators with the subcultural practical insight into the lives and realities of these people (Azinović and Jusić, 2016, p.69).

Personal Drivers
Personal factors, such as psychological and social instability, also increase vulnerability to radicalisation. Growing up as orphans or displaced persons, many young Bosnians have suffered war-related transgenerational traumas. One interviewee shared that female foreign fighter returnees, for example, have typically gone through several traumas – been born in refugee camps, experienced trauma during the Bosnia war and in Syria as foreign fighters, and undergone further trauma after their return to BiH. Interviewees observe that violent behaviour becomes an outward manifestation of inner unresolved suffering. The perpetrators from Zvornik and Rajlovac are exemplary cases for the significance of psychological problems in acts of violence as both allegedly suffered from a childhood trauma due to unstable family background, which was not addressed adequately and which ended up in deep mental issues and drug addiction in one of the cases (Rajlovac). Psychologically traumatised and unstable individuals might also be easily triggered by news coverage of terrorism, as was the case with the shooting in Rajlovac (half an hour before the shooting, the Rajlovac shooter watched footage of the Paris attacks of 2015 on TV) and also incidents in Konjic (where a heroin addict fired

into the air shouting "Allahu Akbar") and Zenica (where a disturbed young man drove a car with the ISIL flag around the building of the state Presidency).

Global Dynamics as Drivers

Although the two case incidents in Rajlovac and Zvornik occurred in a context of increased terrorist activity internationally, most interviewees find it difficult to relate the attacks of Zvornik and Rajlovac to global dynamics. Yet, their timing in a period when Europe was hit by ISIL-related terror attacks led to their overinterpretation as acts of Islamic extremism which could possibly explain why our initial desk research led us to consider the two acts as instances of religiously-attributed violent radicalisation. However, radicalisation narratives contextualising the time around 2015 had a global dimension which could have impacted individuals vulnerable to radicalisation in BiH. The combination of the above-mentioned local deficiencies rendered parts of the Bosnian community vulnerable to manipulative ideologies. Radicalising elements – be it highly organised global groups such as the ISIL, Salafi elements within Bosnia, or political stakeholders benefitting from the instability caused by extremism – specifically targeted vulnerable individuals. The ideologies of these radicalising elements filled the vacuum left by the personal or systemic absence of opportunities and purpose and promised betterment. Particularly, the ISIL narrative emphasising the perceived suffering and oppression of the Ummah resonated with many Bosnians' own victimhood. Thus, the urge to help their fellow coreligionists in Syria and Iraq might have led some on the radical path, especially those in the communities where para-jamaats were active and where manipulative narratives were accessible.

Approaches to Countering Radicalisation

This section of the report reviews main approaches to countering radicalisation (and religiously-attributed radicalisation) in BiH particularly after the two case studies and after 2015 more generally. The review is organised according to main types of actors/stakeholders who have been involved in countering radicalisation including: the Bosnian state, the Interreligious Council and the Islamic Community, civil society organisations (CSOs) and similar international actors, the Bosnian media.

State Approaches

a. **Legislative approaches**. In the context of a set of factors (including the rise of ISIL, the departure of radicalised Bosnian foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq, the 2015 Paris attacks, international pressure coupled with financial assistance, and the two incidents in Zvornik and Rajlovac), the Strategy for Preventing and Combating Terrorism (2015-2020) in 2015 was adopted. The first document of its kind in the region, the Strategy is based on four pillars – prevention, protection, investigation, response to acts of terrorism. According to one interviewee the Strategy is problematic as it equates radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism and for this reason gives the state the right to use pre-emptive measures against people whose views may not necessarily be threatening, but which deviate from the mainstream. Furthermore, the very process of drafting the strategy has been characterised as flawed. According to one interviewee, important stakeholders such as CSO representatives were not sufficiently involved in the process likely because security institutions considered the topic to be too sensitive. Furthermore, it is possible that security institutions failed to see the

potentially strong role of CSOs, particularly when it came to their capacity to contribute to reintegration programs in the field.

Another interviewee further mentioned that the process of Strategy implementation has been marked by challenges due to the lack of funding and capacity to implement the Strategy at the local level. Such inefficiencies have contributed to fragmented results and a lack of comprehensive implementation of the measures outlined in the document and envisioned in the accompanying action plan. The current version of the Strategy is to expire at the end of 2020. The BiH government is preparing a public report with assessment of the implementation so far and propositions for revisions.

In addition to adopting the Strategy, the state made amendments to the criminal code of BiH. Individual acts of terrorism have been criminalised through articles 201 and 202[7] since 2003. However, 2014 and 2015 marked expansions of the Criminal Code (of BiH and of each of its comprising entities), aimed at approaching the organisation and support of terrorism, in addition to its mere practical execution. With these changes, the Criminal Code criminalised the departure of citizens to perform terrorist activity in foreign lands not only Syria and Iraq, but also in Ukraine. According to one interviewee such changes to the Criminal Code have led to the sentencing of half of the foreign fighter cases in BiH and a subsequent deterrence of further foreign fighter activity. Changes to the Code have also widened the scope of the criminalisation mechanisms against the financing of terrorism. For instance, BiH adopted legislation against money laundering and funding aiming to support terrorist activity.

b. **Institutional Approaches**. To counter radicalisation the Bosnian state also adopted a number of institutional approaches, including the creation of supervisory mechanisms to track down the implementation of the Strategy and specific preventive actions by security forces.

After the adoption of the Strategy for Preventing and Combating Terrorism the Council of Ministers created a special body, the Supervisory/Monitoring Body, which acts under the auspices of the Ministry of Security. The Supervisory/Monitoring Body is comprised mainly of representatives of security agencies, but includes members of ministries such as the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Established in late 2016 the overall goal of the Body has involved strategy development and coordination to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism, as well as monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Strategy. In 2018 and 2019 the Supervisory/Monitoring Body initiated a number of counter-terrorism programs locally, including in Zvornik and Rajlovac, to foster capacity-building of local communities. For instance, in the context of such programming, the City of Zvornik set up a special team which has been active in producing positive results in capacity-building. An extension of the Supervisory/Monitoring Body has also been established in the Brčko District, known as the Coordination Body.

Apart from the activities of the Supervisory/Monitoring Body, institutional approaches have been exhibited in the operational domain of security and intelligence agencies. One of these approaches has been the so-called Operation Ruben. Operation Ruben was implemented by the Republika Srpska law-enforcement agencies. It was a targeted arrest of 32 Bosnian Muslims in Republika Srpska. The arrests were publicly

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[7] Article 201 criminalises the acts of terrorism and article 202 deals with organisation and financing of terrorist acts, defines their legal meaning and establishes the forms of punishment (Criminal Code of B&H "Official Gazette of B&H" number 3/03, 37/03, 54/04, 61/04, 30/05, 53/06, 55/06, 32/07, 08/10.).

conducted and based upon suspicions of involvement with terrorist organisations. All arrested people in Operation Ruben were later released without any indictments. There are two possible explanations to this development: 1) the arrestees were connected to terrorist organisations abroad but the investigative and judicial systems of BiH have not been equipped to handle and resolve such cases, or 2) the arrestees were innocent and solely targeted due to their religious affiliation and local proximity to the attacker in the Zvornik incident.

Operation Ruben was followed by a similar operation in the end of 2015. On December 22, 2015, another specialised action targeted suspects for connections to terrorism and terrorist groups. Thirteen locations in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina were raided. One of them was the Rajlovac suburb. Law enforcement officers raided several private homes and two places of worship, or "places of religious gatherings of radical persons" (Džidić, 2015). Police had targeted 15 persons of interest, suspected of having links to ISIL. Resulting from the raid "something concrete" that would have taken place by the end of the year (more specifically during the New Year's Eve celebrations) is believed to have been prevented (Džidić, 2015). More prosecutors were involved in the case by January 2016, but all arrestees were released by the end of January 2016 with no indictments and no recovered explosives or other evidence that an attack would have been executed (Jahic, 2016). Such examples of indiscriminate detention of terrorism suspects as an approach to fighting radicalisation and violent extremism has been considered by some respondents as too oppressive and subjective since it "arbitrarily" labeled individuals and communities as extremist.

Such hardline measures have been a manifestation of the measures taken by law-enforcement agencies towards capacity-building within the BiH security structures. For instance, the issues the security forces were concerned with started shifting in the years leading up to 2015. Since 2013 and 2014 the terrorist trends already observable in Europe stimulated security agencies to prioritize these developments and orient themselves towards tackling terrorism. The incidents in Rajlovac and Zvornik further consolidated much of the attention of the security apparatus towards this matter. One policymaker pointed out that to achieve success in this regard the security agencies needed to overcome issues with the existing fragmentation of the BiH security system and reactivate the latent Task Force for Combatting Terrorism which increased its cooperation with the Ministry of Security, entity-level police agencies and other relevant bodies. Such cooperation suggests that intra-institutional data sharing and operational cooperation between such agencies would be intensified. However, a police officer commented that inter-agency coordination has indeed been poor. Local approaches have been lower in intensity. Threats coming from higher levels than the local are not communicated to local authorities due to poor coordination of police agencies across the Federation. This is problematic, according to some interviewees, since local police forces have no insight into radical organizations which may be at the top of the radicalisation pyramid. It is typically security agencies at the local level which act as direct executives of anti-radicalisation measures, but they do not receive sufficient and timely information on possible local threats.

Such challenges, though, have not impeded the overall enthusiasm and initiative of security institutions in tackling radicalisation and terrorism. According to one interviewee, the 2014-2016 period marked a time of crucial capacity-building of police and intelligence agencies done in collaboration with other similar institutions in the region. The professionalism of the police and intelligence agencies in BiH has been

shown in the methods they would choose to assess radicalisation risks, including applying lists of indicators adopted by the EU and the USA to identify social and psychological dynamics influencing the development of radicalisation characteristics in risk groups. The police has also become engaged in prevention and resilience-building programs at the local level in successful collaboration with members of religious communities. The state has also taken measures to repatriate women and children from Syria, but these efforts have been slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, at the backdrop of such positive evaluations of the contribution of security structures, some interviewees bring attention to the mistakes of the state's initially oppressive approach after the incidents in Zvornik and Rajlovac. To such stakeholders responding to violence with oppression further perpetuates violence. Furthermore, some interviewees argued that the approach of the state towards radicalisation has been one-sided and politicised targeting only religious radicalisation "while leaving aside other organizations such as right-wing and neo-Nazi movements," ignoring the interplay between different types of extremism existing in BiH.

Interreligious Council & Islamic Community

Before the occurrences in Zvornik and Rajlovac, the Interreligious Council (IRC) was not highly involved in countering religiously-attributed radicalisation trends. However, in the context the two incidents and the general radicalisation dynamics in BiH, the IRC and certain religious communities realized that they, too, needed to have a role in counter-radicalisation and become active participants in this effort. According to one counter-radicalisation practitioner, after the two events, the IRC and individual religious communities became organised in local counter-radicalisation projects. For instance, one policymaker pointed out that after that the attack in Zvornik, the IRC made efforts to calm down the situation and prevent reprisals against BiH foreign fighters who would return from abroad, specifically through actions to encourage dialogue and tolerance when it came to these matters.

Different religious communities have also been active in counter-radicalisation efforts. In the aftermath of the two events, in December 2015, religious representatives (along with a number of political representatives) released a common statement condemning terrorist acts and calling on all institutions and society to act accordingly. As a sign of this stand religious actors such as imams and Orthodox priests took part of local prevention projects. Since the Islamic Community was the community most saliently impacted by religiously-inspired radicalisation trends, it showed the highest degree of counter-radicalisation activity. In this regard, as interview data suggest the Islamic Community's greatest contribution was the incorporation of the para-jamaats (para-structures) - the closed Muslim communities which turned into hotspots for religiously-inspired radicalisatoin and recruitment of foreign fighters from BiH. As part of this initiative a great number of previously disowned para-jamaats became integrated into the Islamic Community in a peaceful and human way (Lilyanova, 2017; Preljević, 2017). Other para-jamaats, such as those in Maoča and Ošve, became permanently closed. As a result of this, radical Salafi preachers were "pushed to the margins" and substituted by "softer" Salafi preachers. Additionally, to further impede the spread of radical Islamist ideas, the Islamic Community trained its imams to detect cases of radicalisation.

Non-Governmental Approaches

A number of non-governmental initiatives, typically funded and executed by international organisations, have been implemented to counter violent radicalisation in

the context of the two incidents. Some of the relevant programs identified include: The UNODC's Container Control Programme, The Resonant Voices initiative, the "Institutional Strengthening: Establishing a Formal Referral Mechanism for Preventing Violent Extremism" project, and some initiatives of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the OSCE. Following is a brief review of each of the selected programmes' potential.

a.   The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Container Control Programme targets the illicit border activities and traffic in BiH. The programme was established in 2015 after the two violent acts and in the context of an uncovered network of connections to international terrorist organisations.

b.   The Resonant Voices Initiative aims at challenging extremist narratives in the public discourse, with a particular focus on online disseminated speech. It is run in BiH, Albania and Macedonia by CIJA US, BIRN and the Propulsion Fund. In 2018 the programme piloted 10 distinct projects in the three Western Balkan countries. Their general objective was "to equip critical voices in the target countries with the skills, know-how and resources to counter radicalisation, the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters and violent extremists, and other dangerous trends. It aimed to empower a diverse group of civil society actors – activists, journalists, bloggers, educators and other online (and offline) influencers – to become resonant voices, able to counter violent extremism, to push back against extremist propaganda and to increase and amplify alternative, positive messages" (BIRN, 2018). There were three developed projects as part of this initiative in BiH:

> **b.1. The Faketective online game,** fostering young people's resilience and defence mechanisms against untrue propaganda messages online. This project attempted to cultivate a younger generation which can easily recognise and challenge problematic online content through their digital media literacy skills.

> **b.2. The Bosnian Post-Conflict Research Centre's Ordinary Heroes video project** shifted the lens of war-time narratives, representing armed conflict as not just historic clashes of ideologically opposing sides, but also as an aggregation of human stories and tragedies. The project "utilise[d] the video content of oral histories of wartime inter-ethnic rescues to create short videos that look at the present day inter-ethnic tensions through the prism of these positive stories from the past, tackling the prevailing divisive narrative based on glorification or vilification of war-time political and military leaders" (BIRN, 2018). It targeted at risk of radicalisation youths, exposed to nationalistic propaganda – football fans and specific groups on social networks.

> **b.3. Humans of the Balkans** was a "platform for photos and stories of ordinary people from all over the region, to celebrate its diversity, beauty and potential" (BIRN, 2018). It is continuing the trend of representing personal stories of diverse people in an attempt to humanise and de-mythologise otherness.

> **b.4. Portal Kultura's** project attempted to facilitate the networking and bonding processes of young people, involved in arts, through the organisation of events and workshops, including a Festival in Banja Luka.

The Resonant Voices Initiative has strategically aimed at influencing public dialogue and discourses as those are usually the main media representing and normalising extreme narratives. Influencing the public dialogue contributes to the production of an overall

culture of tolerance, acceptance and regular practices of challenging and questioning hate speech and other early radicalisation tools. Targeting at risk youths is a strategy hinting at long-term goals as it is characteristic of lasting generational change. As ideological and cultural factors tend to be the main mechanisms for legitimising and propagating radical ideas, the focus of the Resonant Voices Initiative seems to be addressing fundamental issues of radicalisation. Fostering the networking and continuous communication among like-minded youths is a contributing factor to ensuring the cultural longevity of the initiated linkages.

However innovative and promising they may seem, such non-governmental initiatives seem to have lower popularity and potential for including wider communities and larger target groups (Turcalo and Veljan, 2018, p.20). Some of them do not seem to have reached the attention of the communities within which they have been implemented (Turcalo and Veljan, 2018, p.20)

c. **The "Institutional Strengthening: Establishing a Formal Referral Mechanism for Preventing Violent Extremism" initiative** is a US government-funded project, initiated by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in October 2017. Its aim was to promote the engagement and to build resilience among youth in BiH.

d. **The IOM also carried out a project for assessing the drivers and the prevalence of radicalisation in 15 Bosnian communities.**

e. **The Organisation for security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has established Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism programmes in BiH**. The mechanism's main mission is to assist and enable the state authorities in their fight against terrorism and radicalisation in a legislative manner "through a full spectrum of initiatives to encourage dialogue on violent extremism, empower youth, and offer training to educators and policy makers" (Turcalo and Veljan, 2018, p.20). The initiatives have been aimed at involving state and administrative bodies in the practical infrastructure of countering radicalisation on local and state levels. The OSCE supported the Islamic Community's trainings for more than 1000 imams and in the development of an informative online module on hate crimes and discrimination. The initiative was then picked up and with the support of the EU Delegation to BiH extended to provide trainings for parents and adolescents from 23 communities (Turcalo and Veljan, 2018, p.21)

f. **Project by Centre for Security Studies and "Ja bih u EU".** The Centre for Security Studies and an organization named "Ja bih u EU", two Bosnian-based CSOs, were supported by Hedayah Centre, Abu Dhabi, to implement a prevention and recovery project which focuses on the social aspects of radicalisation, the role of media and educators in the manifestation of radicalisation. The project was implemented in the four cantons with the highest number of foreign fighter departures from BiH: Zenica-Doboj, Una-Sana, Tuzla and Sarajevo.

g. **CSO Research**. To contribute to non-governmental prevention efforts some CSOs have put their focus on researching radicalisation. For instance, the Atlantic Initiative, a Sarajevo-based non-governmental research organisation, published two reports looking at "trends and patterns of radicalisation and recruitment in BiH" (Regional Cooperation Council, 2016, p.5), as well as a project which ended up with the publication of a report analysing the differences between traditional Bosnian Islam and Salafist interpretations of Islam. The topic has been particularly relevant and needed to be brought to the forefront among the

research community and the general public after the two terrorist acts in Zvornik and Rajlovac. The Atlantic Initiative also implemented a project targeting youth in BiH the goal of which was to prevent radicalisation through raising awareness about the issue.

Initiatives like the ones described in this section have been identified by some interviewees as "soft" approaches to countering religious radicalisation contrasting the initial reaction of the state security and intelligence structures to the Zvornik and Rajlovac cases characterised by some interviewees as "oppressive"(e.g., Operation Ruben). However, even with the presence of such "soft" approaches some interviewees argue that there is an actual lack of appropriate targeted prevention programmes and long-term resilience (even at the CSO level) which address the core of the matter in a systemic and peaceful way. One interviewee expressed this concern in the following way:

> We [the actors in BiH responsible for prevention] no longer addressed this problem [Zvornik and Rajlovac in particular, and radicalisation and extremism in general] in terms of prevention. We are working on prevention, but in this work we do not have target groups. They [people prone to radicalisation] are people who come, who may have some issues how to deal with life. I think, the challenges are that this program of prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism must focus on the areas from which both of these cases originated. Did anyone deal with the family of the guy from Zvornik, did anyone deal with his mother or the rest of his family? Did we deal with their wider and closer family, the community in which they live, etc.? We did not deal with that. And until we deal with it in a systematic way, in the sense of not changing them, but supporting them, so that things would not get worse in some ten years, we didn't deal with them. These are some mistakes in our system that we don't deal with. Somehow, we always deal with the things in the end. And even when they happen, we act oppressively. When it comes to radicalisation, unfortunately, this approach cannot be an appropriate answer.

Similar views have been shared by interviewees close to media – they too suggest that the efforts of such non-governmental approaches are overshadowed by the oppressive measures taken by the BiH state, as well as the lack of addressing core matters contextualising radicalisation in BiH at the level of society and the state, such as the lack of a true post-war reconciliation process, an ongoing denial of war crimes, lack of access to reparations, etc. Interviewees have shared that CSOs should do more projects that directly affect the individuals in relevant communities. This, however, has been described as challenging by some interviewees due to the funding dynamics that BiH CSOs have been facing. Due to dependence on foreign money to run projects, some CSOs could not begin project work in communities until 2018 and 2019. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the non-governmental initiatives following up 2015 have been implemented by international organisations. In this regard, some interviewees reiterated that a challenge to the effective prevention and resilience-building work of CSOs has been their dependence on foreign donors and the reality that funding calls may not always correspond to the pressing needs of local communities.

Multi-Stakeholder Approaches

Multiple interviewees emphasised the importance of collaboration between different stakeholders in countering violent religiously-attributed radicalisation. One interviewee stated that when it comes to such a "multidimensional topic" as radicalisation the issue can be addressed effectively only when a coalition approach is

taken, not only by the police agencies, but also include non-state actors, such as religious communities, the media, educational institutions, health care institutions, etc. The reasoning behind such arguments is that religious radicalisation is not simply a security matter, but an issue having "its medical side and its religious and upbringing aspects." For this purpose one of the interviewees has personally set up a centre which aims to bring together educated people to organise public debates and discussion forums at the local level to meet these challenges. In this regard, multiple interviewees express the need for further local community engagement as much as possible.

Considering the federal character of the state of BiH, counter-radicalisation efforts certainly need coordinated effort. While the 2015 has been marked by challenges in such coordination, from 2017 onwards intra-actor coordination and collaboration between security agencies, policymaking institutions, counter-radicalisation practitioners, academics and NGOs have improved. Partnerships have been launched between the state, international organisations (such as the IOM, the OSCE) and religious communities resulting in prevention programmes. Some of these programmes have focused on developing resilience and others have focused more on addressing drivers of radicalisation.

A crucial role in setting the stage for multi-stakeholder approaches to countering radicalisation has been played by the International Republican Institute (IRI) (https://www.iri.org/country/bosnia-herzegovina).

Role of Media

Media in BiH did not take special actions to counter radicalisation and violent extremism around 2015. As one interviewee stated, there have not been "substantial attempts by the state to involve media in counter-radicalisation." However, it is important to mention media in this section as their activity served to both support and impede productive responses to the two violent incidents and radicalisation in BiH generally.

Interview data reveal that when it came to reactions to the two events, media in BiH did not act as a cohesive group. On the one hand, according to one interviewee, a great number of traditional media, such as BIRN, N1 and Al-Jazeera Balkans, played a positive role. For instance, some media disseminated counter-narratives, information on the phenomenon of violent extremism and the two incidents in Zvornik and Rajlovac, and helped prevent further violence after the incidents by disseminating messages of peace. In particular, after the incident in Zvornik, a local radio station aired the Zvornik mayor who communicated peaceful messages to calm down the community and avoid repercussions on the process of peaceful return of Bosniak foreign fighters from abroad. According to some respondents, the media created a positive atmosphere by "contributing to the spread of the views of the Islamic community at the time of the crisis and when the Islamic Community tried to resolve its outcast members."

On the other hand, some media took a politicised and sensationalist approach by reporting on the events through "one-sided, subjective, biased, and simplified reporting." The nature of such reporting reminds of the ongoing underlying current of ethno-religious divisions unresolved since the war in the 1990s. The way in which some media outlets reported about the two events followed the trend of media reporting on violent extremism in the country – that is, the ethnic group belonging of some journalists determined how they would report on such phenomena. For instance, Bosniak media would report more on Christian and right-wing Serbian or Croatian extremism while Serbian media (in Republika Srpska) would highlight the wrongdoings of Islamic extremist ideology (such as in the case of Zvornik). The ownership of the majority of BiH

media by politicians has also further added ideological and political tinges in media reporting about radicalisation and violent extremism in the country.

Best practices

Below we review the best practices when it comes to countering religiously-based radicalisation in BiH. Importantly, while the data show that each of sub-category of good practices is successful, it is important to take these good practices as most effective when they work simultaneously and bring together a multitude of actors in achieving the common goal of countering radicalisation and violent extremism. Importantly, many interviewees suggest that hard approaches, such as the indiscriminate use of violence and oppression in response to violent religiously-attributed acts is not effective. Rather, stakeholders highlight that initiatives/activities incorporating any of the following elements could contribute to effective prevention and resilience-building: (1) engagement of a multitude of stakeholders in prevention and resilience efforts, (2) development of programs at local and regional level with people from those communities, and (3) involvement of religious leaders in relaying the counter-radicalisation message.

Initiatives by Religious Institutions and Communities

In the BiH case representatives of major religious institutions and religious communities have implemented a number of good practices as soft approaches to countering religiously-attributed violent radicalisation. On the one hand, having a body which brings together all major religious communities has opened possibilities for collaboration on issues of religion between these communities. In the BiH case, this role is played by the Interreligious Council (IRC) which unites religious communities in common anti-radicalisation efforts by encouraging dialogue and tolerance and also connecting religious communities to the state (the IRC itself aims to cooperate with the state). In that sense, a good practice identified by some interviewees have been the projects implemented by the IRC in the City of Doboj, Republika Srpska. The goal of these projects has been to bring together imams and Orthodox priests to collaborate on how to deal with religiously-inspired radicalisation. Another good practice of the IRC has been its focus on monitoring attacks on religious sites and officials – a practice which has provided counter-radicalisation practitioners with a good overview of where they need to intervene and focus their resources for prevention.

Symbolic acts of unity by religious communities have been another good practice. More specifically, under the auspices of the IRC, the leadership of major religious communities created and signed a common statement against terrorism and violent extremism. Encouraging such a practice is highly important and relevant, particularly in a country still marked by unresolved history along ethno-national (and religious) matters.

In the aftermath of the two cases, the Islamic Community has played an essential role and several of its actions can be identified as good practices. For instance, multiple interviewees identify the integration of the para-jamaats into the Islamic Community as one of the most effective courses of action towards decreasing religiously-attributed radicalisation trends in BiH after 2015. According to some interviewees the integration has helped prevent religiously-inspired extremism by maintaining traditional Islam in BiH and restricting the activity of imams preaching versions of Islam which promote radicalisation.

Initiatives by Non-Governmental Actors
Initiatives designed and implemented by non-governmental actors also provide examples of good practices despite the challenges which the non-governmental sector in BiH has been facing. From a general perspective, projects which have involved youth empowerment, youth education and the involvement of local communities affected by religiously-attributed radicalisation have turned into good practice examples. Generally, interviewees insist that good practices entail cooperation with local communities and their input in the conceptualisation of prevention programs.

   a. **IOM project work on youth empowerment**. Prevention projects targeting the empowerment of young people in BiH have been identified as successful practices, more specifically the project by the IOM titled *Institutional Strengthening: Establishing a Formal Referral Mechanism for Preventing Violent Extremism.* In the framework of this project counter-radicalisation practitioners have aimed at building resilience of radicalisation responses as a path to the prevention of violent extremism. There are a number of good practices in this project work. One good practice is the focus of development of critical thinking of young people. Another good practice is that while the initiative's main target group are young people, parents and adult family members are also engaged as part of the project work as they shape the environment within which youth develop.

   b. **Atlantic Initiative (AI) work on youth education.** The Atlantic Initiative implemented a project titled *Prevention of Radicalisation among Youth in BiH* to raise awareness about violent radicalisation. The project is an example of a good practice for several reasons. First, the project gathered young people from around BiH at workshops to discuss radicalisation and violent extremism and brought awareness to this target group about such processes. Second, the project aimed at identifying long-term preventive tools which young people could carry and transmit to other youth at risk. Third, these workshops were attended by already radicalised youth. Fourth, the project included participation by a former member of an extremist group in the UK who is currently de-radicalized – sharing his perspectives and explaining his personal process of becoming radicalised and de-radicalised has been described as a good practice of this project.

   c. **DeThreat.** Interviewees have pointed out that the CSO initiative DeThreat is another good practice example (collected data did not make it fully clear what organization ran the project – possibly the Centre for Security Studies). The aim of the project was to define factors that drive the process of radicalisation and violent extremism. The reason interviewees gave DeThreat as a good practice example is because from the very beginning the program focused on the local community. The project also allowed for the collection of primary data from particular communities (some interviewees claimed that collecting primary data would be something very rare for CSOs and they would usually be dependent on government data). In addition, the work in this project was done in collaboration with local police officers, local authorities and with people who are in charge of monitoring radicalisation trends. DeThreat was also rated as a good practice by local political institutions.

Legislative Actions
Although a number of interviewees critiqued the oppressive approach of the BiH law enforcement agencies after the two attacks, a few interviewees claimed that the overall legislative actions taken by the BiH government are an example of a good practice because they helped the country stop the outflow of foreign fighters. Legislative actions

such as the adoption of the *Strategy for Preventing and Combating Terrorism and the* amendments to the *Criminal Code of BiH* also proved that BiH, indeed, adhered to its obligations as a partner in the global coalition against terrorism. Particularly salient is also the *Standard Operating Procedure in the Case of Terrorist Attack in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (SOP) which prescribes what exactly each relevant state institution and agency (such as the military, the fire department, the police, etc.) would do if a terrorist attack occurs.

The International Republican Institute (IRI)
The presence of an organisation like the International Republican Institute has had positive impacts on countering radicalisation in BiH. One good practice associated with the IRI has been the provision of expert and professional analysis of the overall radicalisation and extremism situation in BiH. Through tools such as public opinion polls, expert research, the analysis of concrete proposals to security and parliamentary bodies, the IRI has provided valuable knowledge to relevant actors so that proper counter-radicalisation actions can be taken. Another good practice by the IRI was the initiation of the Western Balkans Task Force (created in 2015) which brought together policymakers from BiH and the rest of the Western Balkans in building an informal counter-radicalisation network. The Task Force has engaged local, national, and regional stakeholders (such as regional ministers of the interior, national CVE coordinators, local government officials, CSO representatives, academics, local practitioners, researchers and journalists) in forums discussing returnees and their families, as well as building resilience to violent extremism.

Table 1: Good practices in countering religiously-inspired radicalisation and violent extremism in BiH

Good Practice	Implementing Actor
Projects in City of Doboj bringing together imams and Orthodox priests to collaborate on dealing with religiously-inspired radicalisaion	IRC
Common statement against terrorism and violent extremism	Religious communities (under auspices of IRC)
Monitoring attacks on religious sites and officials	IRC
Integration of para-jamaats into the Islamic Community	Islamic Community
Restriction of activity of imams preaching non-traditional versions of Islam	Islamic Community
Youth empowerment and resilience building	IOM
Awareness-raising about radicalisation and violent extremism	Atlantic Initiative
DeThreat (factors driving radicalisation and violent extremism)	Centre for Security Studies[8]

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[8] The interview data did not make it fully clear whether this initiative has been implemented by the Centre for Security Studies, but interviewees spoke about the initiative while discussing project work by this organisation.

Strategy for Preventing and Combatting Terrorism, BiH (2015-2020)	Government
Amendments to BiH Criminal Code, 2015 and beyond	Government
Standard Operating Procedure in the Case of Terrorist Attack in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Government
Western Balkans Task Force	International Republican Institute
Multi-Stakeholder Fora	International Republican Institute

Conclusion

The period around 2015 has proven important for radicalisation trends in BiH as it set the stage for major counter-radicalisation efforts in BiH. Since this time, due to various tactics on the side of the state and non-state actors, the flow of foreign fighters from BiH has ceased. To achieve this the state used both soft and hard measures. The latter have been particularly criticised by different stakeholders in BiH who argue that oppressive practices and indiscriminate force by security and intelligence agencies may spur further violence. The state, however, also made legislative efforts which some interviewees have considered as good practices, including the adoption of the implementation of the Strategy for Preventing and Combatting Terrorism, BiH (2015-2020), amendments to the BiH Criminal Code, the implementation of the SOP in case of terrorist attacks, all of which organized the state prevention and response mechanisms in countering radicalisation. Security structures went through capacity building, but despite these efforts challenges have remained in the local-national coordination, especially in the area of intelligence.

Approaches on the side of non-state actors have varied, ranging from contributions by religious communities, the Interreligious Council, CSO organisations in BiH, international non-governmental organisations, and initiatives such as the International Republican Institute. One of the most salient contributions to tackling religiously-inspired radicalisation comes from the Islamic Community which actively worked with its imams and representatives across BiH to close or reintegrate the breeding grounds of religiously-attributed radicalisation. Although interviewees argue that there could be more equal contribution on the side of other religious communities, examples exist of Orthodox priests who were also involved in project work and trained to detect radicalisation. Non-governmental initiatives among youth and local communities have shown to be effective and needed.

Apparently there has been will for addressing the challenge of radicalisation on both state and non-state levels. However, data reveal that challenges persist. Some of the main drivers of religiously-attributed radicalisation persist, such as the unresolved histories surrounding the Bosnian war, the ongoing ethno-religious tensions which are affirmed in hateful rhetoric by some politicians, news reports on radicalisation driven by ethno-religious biases, as well as the compromised economic situation of BiH. Despite the presence of counter-radicalisation initiatives, people who are in the most vulnerable environments across BiH have been identified to have insufficient knowledge on recognising radicalisation or on methods of working with people at risk of violent extremism. Thus, educating communities and at-risk groups remains a task for counter-radicalisation practitioners. A further task in counter-radicalisation efforts is the

inclusion of women. While some of the main prevention practitioners (such as social workers, psychologists, educators and researchers) have been female, women from the general population who are radicalised or are relatives to radicalised men have not been included sufficiently in such efforts.

Finally, one of the key findings of our research showed that what seemed to be two cases of religiously-attributed radicalisation turn out to be a manifestation of a complex set of factors engaging historical intricacies and contexts, present-day socio-economic challenges, state institutional inefficiencies, psychological trauma. To be effective in the long term counter-radicalisation efforts would need to address the multi-dimensionality of such drivers.

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