

Radical Islam on Europe's Frontier - Bosnia & Herzegovina

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Abstract:

President Bush warned in a 2005 address to the National Endowment for Democracy that one of Islamism's goals is a trans-national Muslim theocracy, technically a Caliphate - "a radical Islamic empire that spans from Spain to Indonesia." Bosnia and Herzegovina is located at this expansive Caliphate's frontier, representing a legitimate radical Islamic threat to the region. The ethno-religious nature of the 1990s Bosnian civil war introduced materiel, moral and financial support from oil-rich Islamic Gulf states to support the beleaguered Bosnian Muslim government - with it came Saudi and Wahhabi influence. More importantly was the entrance of Islamic foreign fighters, or mujahadeen, bringing radical Islamic ideologies and, according to some sources, the Al Qaeda network into Europe itself. The growth and spread of Bosnia's radical Islam, although limited, can be seen in activities of Saudi sponsored Islamic institutions, the presence of mujahadeen, and the recent arrests of Bosnians implicated in planning and sponsoring terrorist attacks. Even though the International Community is focused on Iraq and Afghanistan as the US struggles in the Global War on Terror, the Balkans, with its historical linkage to Islam and recent radical Islamic activity merits close scrutiny. This paper investigates the distinct historical and spatial pattern(s) associated with the growth and phenomena of Bosnia's radical Islam and concludes with a discussion of the actual threat emanating from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Introduction

The historical presence of Islam in Bosnia, coupled with the influence of militant and radical Islam causes concern that Bosnia may pose a terrorist threat. The Ottoman Empire's conquest of the Balkan peoples beginning in the 14th century is still manifested today through the presence of Islamic communities and mosques across the Balkan landscape. President Bush warned in an October 2005 address that one of radical Islam's goals is a trans-national Muslim theocracy, a Caliphate - "a radical Islamic empire

that spans from Spain to Indonesia."¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina is located at the frontier between the Christian West and this Caliphate, where a legitimate extremist menace exists. Although the world's attention is focused on Afghanistan and Iraq as the US, NATO and the "Coalition of the Willing" struggle in the Global War on Terror, the Balkan's historical linkage to Islam and recent radical activity merits increased vigilance. Moreover, recent Department of State reporting highlights this concern, indicating that Bosnia is an environment which could facilitate terrorist activities.²

Bosnia is governed by a weak central government and is populated by antagonistic national groups that may be allowing Bosnia to transform into a radical Islamist sanctuary. This predicament can be linked to the 1990s civil war in which foreign fighters, or *mujahadeen* (holy warriors), from Islamic states supported the Bosnian Muslim, or Bosniak, forces. The vast majority came from the Middle East and North Africa and were provided financial and political support by wealthy Gulf states. The support gave these states an inordinate amount of influence in wartime and post-war Bosniak politics, society and in the Muslim community. Many *mujahadeen* still remain and are the source of great concern to the Bosnian government and Western security services.³ The wartime trauma of the Bosnia's Muslim community coupled with Bosnia's stagnant economy and unfulfilled post-war expectations has led to a noticeable tolerance and increase of radical Islamic practice by some Bosniaks.

Bosnia's Quandary

Bosnia's frail central government institutions render the state virtually impotent in dealing with an Islamic threat without direct international support. The inability of the state to effectively control its territory leaves a certain level of freedom for extremist elements to operate in the "ungoverned" spaces found mostly in the rugged terrain of central Bosnia. To further complicate the matter is the sub-state political division of Bosnia into two entities, one the Bosniak-Croat Federation (*Federacija*) dominated by the Bosniak community and the other *Republika Srpska* controlled by the Serbs. The *Republika Srpska*, and to a lesser extent the Croat cantons of the Federation, are anathema to any Muslim extremism.

Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, according to recent reporting, are attempting to recruit so-called "white *mujahadeen*" in Bosnia and other former Yugoslav territories.⁴ The radicalization of many of Bosnia's Muslims has led to the disaffection of those who suffered in the civil war. Although most Bosniaks favorably view the US as an ally, a weak economy and the political

organization of the country into the weak “two entity state” (figure one) has left many disenchanted with not only the US but the West in general. In addition, Bosniaks normally prize their close US relationship and for the most part reject the imported radical Islam, the influence of Islamic extremism cannot be discounted. Indeed, there have been efforts by the Bosniak dominated government to look outside the West for material and moral support to improve the economy and strengthen the central government. Alarming to the US, Bosnian officials have stepped up interaction with Iran, a known sponsor of terrorism, and other Islamic Gulf states.



Figure 1 - Map of Bosnia & Herzegovina with the Federation and Republika Srpska entities (source CIA).

There has been little rapprochement between the Bosniaks and Serbs since the civil war's end 11 years ago. Both entities are still dominated by nationalist political partisanship making substantial

political steps forward hard to achieve without active international involvement. As a weak state that lacks mechanisms to control its security and law enforcement environment effectively, a setting exists that is conducive to illegal movement of people, arms and money within Bosnia and thus Europe. Bosnia is a state in which the political discourse is dominated by ethnic hostility between the Bosniaks who seek a stronger unitary state dominated by Muslim Sarajevo and the Serbs who support the looser two entity arrangement in which many state powers are maintained. The reappearance of Haris Silajđić in Bosnian politics and his party's demands for the abolishment of the RS has re-radicalized the political environment, threatening the peace that has existed in Bosnia since the signing of the Dayton Accords. In fact Dzevad Galijasević, leader of the New Democratic Party of B-H and former mayor of Maglaj, has accused Silajđić of being a patron of terrorists and hindering Bosnia's fight against terrorism.⁵

Foreign Fighters - the *Mujahadeen*

The existence of foreign Islamic fighters in Bosnia since 1992 has been well documented (Kohlmann, 2004, Shrader, 2003). Numbers vary but estimates range from 700 in the first year of the war to over 3000 *mujahadeen* in Bosnia by late 1995.⁶ Moreover, many Islamic volunteers and humanitarian aid workers received Bosnian citizenship via the Bosnian Muslim government during and following the civil war.

These foreign fighters arrived in Bosnia from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East early in the war (figure two). By 1995 the ideological goals of the *mujahadeen* had transitioned from helping their Muslim brethren to creating a frontline against the West. Their goals were to spread *jihad* and develop an Islamist base from which to strike Europe (Kohlmann, 2004, Trifkovic, 2002). They transited primarily through Croatia which was willing to transfer men and materiel to support the Bosniaks in their common war with the Serbs.⁷ Logistical operations were coordinated through purportedly charitable nongovernmental organizations such as the "Third World Relief Agency," the "Saudi High Commission for Relief" and organizations like the Islamic Cultural Institute in Milan, Italy.

The Bosnian civil war permitted the *mujahadeen* to establish Al Qaeda's terrorist network, that had been well developed in Afghanistan, in Europe. The upswing in militant activities in Europe in the mid 1990s is seen as a result of the inroads made by radical Islam in Bosnia. The fighting and horrors being perpetrated against fellow Muslims by "Christian infidels" attracted thousands of eager *mujahadeen* volunteers from North Africa, the

Middle East, Pakistan and Europe - many still remain to this day in Europe.⁸

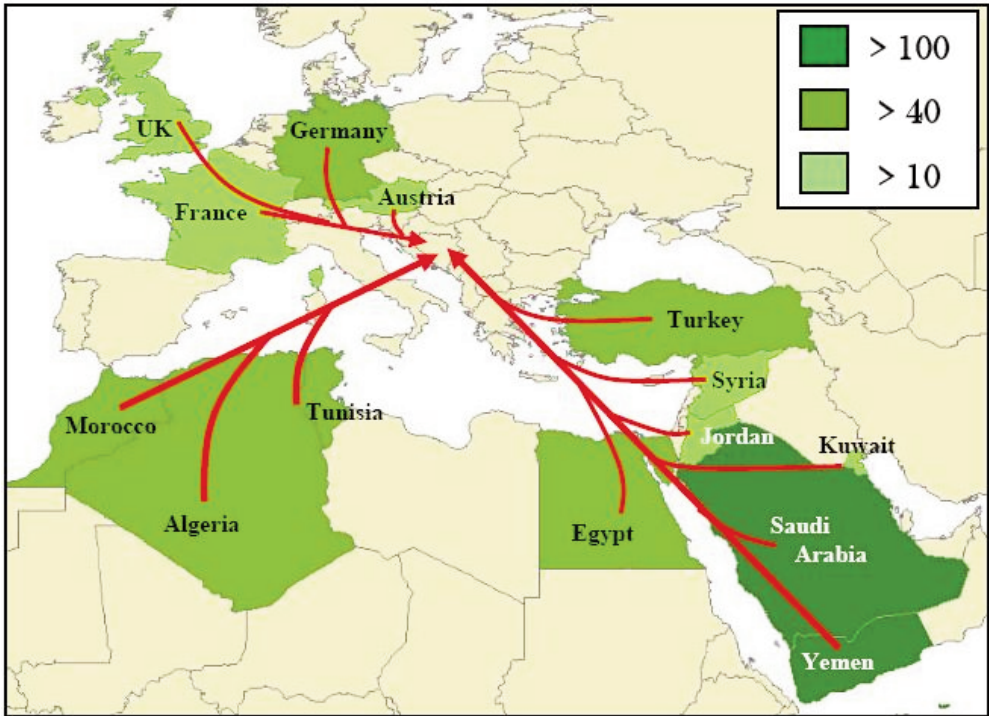


Figure 2 - Map depicting the influx and relative numbers of *Mujahadeen* into Bosnia from 1992-1995 (Oluic, 2006).

The presence of these foreign fighters caused incalculable suffering as they attempted to Islamicize native Bosniaks, wage *jihād* against the infidel (Serbs and the one time Bosniak allies the Croats) and in developing their *jihād*ist bases and network in Bosnia. Although the Washington Accords signed in February 1994 stopped the Croat and Bosniak infighting, tensions remained in central Bosnia in the Travnik and Zenica region. The *jihād*ist murders of Western aid workers and harassment of local Christians were never challenged by the Bosniak wartime President Alija Izetbegović's central government out of fear of losing the financial backing of the wealthy Middle Eastern states. Another reason is Izetbegović's own inclination to Islamicize Bosnia.⁹ The deafening silence of the Bosnian government towards the presence and activities of the foreign fighters cannot be forgotten, as many of the current Bosniak political leaders are affiliated with the wartime Bosniak nationalists and *mujahadeen*. It is through this relationship many remain in Bosnia to this day and have avoided deportation.

September 11th's Aftermath and Bosnia

Bosnia is in the process of deporting these foreign Islamic fighters. This is an unfulfilled requirement of the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords and due to Bosniak intransigence. The government amended citizenship laws in 2006 and is finalizing the residency status of these individuals. All Bosnians naturalized from April 6, 1992 to January 1, 2006 had their status and background investigated by the Commission for Review of Citizenship (CRC). This effort has met with protest by many Bosniaks who complain that the US is interfering in Bosnian sovereignty.

The 9/11 attacks on New York and the Pentagon has forced the at times equivocating Bosniak dominated government to clearly choose on which side they stood in the War on Terror. Indeed, it served as a turning point bringing the Bosnian government in line with America on the issue of international terrorism. Moreover, the identification of at least two of the hijackers as having served in Bosnian Muslim forces during the civil war led to increased and critical scrutiny of Bosnia. Izetbegović was a casualty of this change, resigning as the head of Bosnia's leading nationalist Muslim party, the *Stranka Demokratske Akcije (SDA)*, one month after the terror attacks. Izetbegović's ardent support of the mujahadeen and numerous comments denying that any Bosnian connection with Al-Qaeda or international terrorism became a political liability for the Bosniaks and fodder for aggressive Bosnian reporting uncovering his pro-mujahadeen activities. Izetbegović's departure, however, did not remove Islamists present in key positions within the SDA or Bosniak dominated government.¹⁰

Although post 9/11 Bosnia has made strides in combating the image of a state complacent to radical Islam, it has taken 11 years to address the presence of foreign fighters. Bosnia's ties with Islamic states, especially Iran and Saudi Arabia, highlight the cozy relationships that Izetbegović regime established with known sponsors of terrorism during and after the 1992-95 civil war. Although there has been extensive reporting of Iranian foreign fighters in Bosnia during the civil war, this has been proven to be false.¹¹ There is a more sinister relationship that developed between the wartime Bosnian Muslim government intelligence service and VEVAK, the Iranian Intelligence and Security Ministry. Iranian intelligence operates today more actively through its diplomatic-consular representatives, but also through cultural, scientific, educational, and humanitarian organizations which are used as a veil to cover intelligence work.¹²

Bosnia to some degree is being exploited as part of the worldwide terrorist network of Al Qaeda. Open source intelligence information provides examples of extremists using Bosnia as a transit location for Al Qaeda operatives and arms/weapons ship-

ments The October 19, 2005 Sarajevo detention of four men, one Turk, one Swede of Bosnian origin and two Bosniaks, alarmed Western governments. These individuals were planning suicide attacks on Western Embassies in Sarajevo and their arrest led to the further detention of four men in Copenhagen, Denmark planning suicide attacks elsewhere in Europe and the arrest of 17 men in Canada this past June involved in a Canadian terror plot.¹³

Since 9/11 Western intelligence services have been warning to be on guard for travelers bearing Bosnian passports as some of the most wanted terrorists acquired Bosnian citizenship during and after the civil war. Not only were *mujahadeen* provided fraudulent citizenship in Bosnia, Bosnia's embassies and consulates the world over issued passports to Islamic extremists. The discovery of Bosnian passports in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Iraq have rejuvenated international demands that Bosnian step up its efforts to combat Islamic extremism and better safeguard the issuing of passports.

The Radical Islamic Influence on Bosnia's Moderate Islam

Bosnia's Muslims are generally members of the *Hannafi* school of Sunni Islam, which is a more relaxed form of Islam that tolerates differences within the Islamic community and has the reputation of being moderate and relatively secular - hallmarks of Bosnia's Muslims (Bringa, 1995, Noel, 1994). However, the more conservative *Wahhabi* sect, a subset of *Salafism* a rigid interpretation of Islam, is also found today in Bosnia.

During Yugoslavia's Tito's era, many Bosnian Muslims received religious training as exchange students to non-aligned Muslims states such as Egypt, Iraq and Syria. Islamic influences can be readily seen in Alija Izetbegović's 1970 book "Islamic Declaration" (re-issued in 1990) in which he advocated an Islamic state in Bosnia and was critical of modern Turkey, advocating Pakistan as a model. This book led to his arrest and imprisonment by Tito. Its republishing helped fuel the nationalist intolerance developing in Bosnia, moreover it reified the narrative among Yugoslavia's Christians that the goal of the Bosniaks was to create an Islamic state.

Bosnia's Islamic Community, *Islamska Zajednica (IZ)*, is a well organized institution. It is headed by the *Rijaset* (Supreme *IZ* executive body) and led by the *Reis ul-Ulema*, Dr. Mustafa Cerić. In September 2005 Dr Cerić was elected by the *IZ's* Synodal Assembly (*Šabor islamska zajednice*) to his second seven year term. The *IZ* is believed to be the best organized and most competent European Islamic Community. In fact the *IZ* has recently expanded to include the large Bosniak community in Germany. Many International Community (IC) representatives are quick to

point out that the Bosniaks are Western oriented by a large majority and rarely practice their religion. The mannerisms, strong secularism, dress and occasional alcoholic beverage characterize Bosnia as unique in the Islamic world. This is primarily true - but chiefly in urban areas where young Bosniaks are largely well educated and politically passive. However it is disingenuous to portray all Bosniaks as moderates - it ignores that portion of the Bosniak community residing in remote rural areas and regions severely traumatized by the war.

Bosnia's Muslims receive their religious education today in the *IZ's* informal elementary religious schools (*maktabs*), Islamic high schools (*medresas*), two academies that train Islam-religion teachers, and lastly the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo.¹⁴ The high schools are located in Cažin, Mostar, Sarajevo, Travnik, Tuzla, and Visoko and; the academies are in Bihać and Zenica (see figure one). In addition to Bosnian based *medresas*, there is one each in Novi Pazar, Serbia and Zagreb, Croatia falling under Bosnian Muslim jurisdiction. This religious education organization is controlled by the *Islamska Zajednica*.

A parallel educational structure has developed outside the Bosnian *IZ's* control. Saudi funded Islamic Pedagogical Academies have also been established in Bihać and Zenica and peddle a much more conservative form of Islam to their Bosniak students. From 2003 to 2004 approximately 100 Bosnian Islamic studies students were enrolled overseas. Figure three depicts which states sponsored the students. Saudi, or *Wahabbi*, influence in Bosnia is considerable and detrimental to both Western and Bosnian interests and seen as a threat to European security. Indeed the entire Bosniak landscape is being remade with the construction of numerous "petro-dollar" ultra-modern Middle Eastern style mosques.

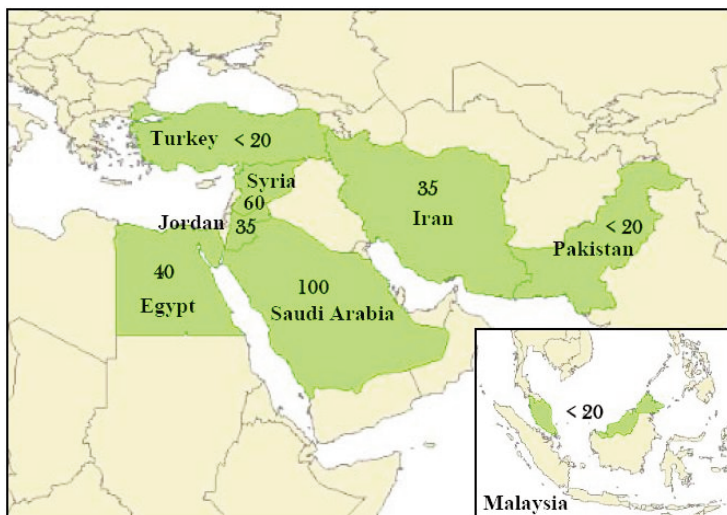


Figure 3 - Approximate numbers of Bosniak students receiving religious education in Islamic states (Oluic, 2006).

Sarajevo's King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud Mosque & Cultural Center was built in 2000 with Saudi funds and operates through Saudi financing. Located in the suburb of Ilidža, it is a major center of *Wahabbism* in Bosnia. The mosque, its *medresa* and administrative offices are under the control of the Saudis, not Reis Cerić and the IZ - it enjoys a de facto extra-territorial status. Although viewed skeptically by the IZ leadership, little can be done to obstruct its radical activities. This situation is allowed to exist by the Bosnian *Federacija* entity wherein Sarajevo lies, and Reis Cerić has condoned a permissive environment doing little to thwart the spread radical Islam.

Bosnia's Radical Groups

The Active Islamic Youth (*Aktivna Islamska omladina - AIO*) is an indigenous fundamentalist organization with the goal of promoting an Islamic state in Bosnia and is the one organization in Bosnia within the IZ that causes the most concern with ties to terrorism and fundamentalist Islam.¹⁵ Established in Zenica in 1995 and associated with the *mujahadeen* the group's main activities has been to organize protests in opposition to Bosnian state action against the foreign fighters, publishing promotional material and books showcasing AIO's religious and political extremist ideology. Its Islamic weekly magazine SAFF and organization's website, have been fonts of radical Islamic preaching, gaining notoriety for publishing interviews with terrorists who have fought against US forces in Iraq and expressing solidarity with the *jihadists* and suicide bombers in Israel.

Since 2002 the AIO has expanded to include computer and internet facilities, multi-media Islamic libraries, offices and conference rooms in centers located in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, Travnik, Mostar, Zavidovići, Gornji Vakuf, and Sanski Most - all located in the *Federacija*.¹⁶ In addition, the AIO has members throughout the Bosniak Diaspora in Europe and the US. Through outreach activities such as summer camps, internet cafes and youth centers the AIO has been effective in recruiting young, disenfranchised Bosniaks and raised suspicion in countries that host these Bosniak-AIO sponsored camps. The appearance of bearded men and women dressed in chadors in Sarajevo is noticeably increasing and of great concern to residents who adhere to the traditionally moderate form of Islam practiced in Bosnia. According to Western sources the recruiting focus of radical Islamists in Bosnia are: (1) unemployed youth, (2) orphans of the 1992-95 Bosnian civil war,

(3) rural communities in Bosnia, and (4) Bosnia's Muslim poor and disaffected. Recent surveys indicate that Bosnia's Muslim populations are concerned that the growth of radical Islam threatens Bosnia's future.¹⁷

The Muslim Brotherhood Group or *Muslimansko bratstvo*, is smaller and less well funded than the AIO. However, it represents a significant threat due to its prominence as a Bosnian Islamic portal.¹⁸ *Islam Bosna* (www.islambosna.ba), the organization's website, offers promotional material, video clips and flyers typically denouncing US or Israeli aggression against the Muslim world. Its advocating to establish an Islamic state in Bosnia, sympathy with *Hamas* and destruction of Israel highlight concerns about this website. *Islam Bosna* has supposedly distributed at least 80,000 copies of some of its posters and operates a well maintained and largely unregulated message boards and information postings. This poses an exceptional threat given the grave concerns recently of terrorist organizations utilizing radical Islamic websites to pass information and conduct terrorist attacks. Another concern is the Muslim Brotherhood Group's success in attracting Bosniak youth membership through its website. According to the *Nezavisne Novine* daily in 2002 the oldest members were just 25 years old.¹⁹ The use of the internet in recruiting *jihadists* and spreading radical ideologies has increasingly become a focus of concern for Western intelligence agencies.

Islamic Banking, Zakat, & Shariah

Islamic banking is one of the fastest growing sectors of the European banking industry and not surprisingly, where 40% of the population is Muslim, Bosnia has become a new hub in this financial network.²⁰ Islamic banking simply complies with provisions of *Shariah* law, dictating that Muslims cannot earn interest and thus making specialist banking services necessary. Sarajevo-based Bosna Bank International (BBI) was established on March 13, 2002 by some of the most powerful financial institutes in the Gulf, including Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank and the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah. It is the only provider of Islamic banking services in Bosnia. By 2007 BBI plans to have doubled the number of branches in Bosnia and expand its internet and telephone banking services and call service center capabilities. Security services in Italy have noted that traditional Islamic mustering points include call centers, internet points, and money transfer offices - all closely associated with modern banking facilities.²¹

Micro-banking or micro-financial activities are also a new phenomenon that is altering the face of terrorist financing. Europol reporting indicates that as large Islamic charities and NGOs are

being closed down for their ties to radical Islam and terror, new mechanisms are arising that continue to finance terror.²² Recent scholarship has highlighted the ability of Al Qaeda's adaptive financing infrastructure to counter Western financial policy and oversight efforts.²³ Funding radical Islam and terrorism is becoming increasingly local and substantial funds are still being raised across the Islamic world without the ability of intelligence agencies to monitor them.²⁴

Zakat, an alms tax or tithe, is increasingly becoming a significant source of terrorist funding. Difficult to track, these donations at the local level are gaining importance. This suggests that due to the effects of crackdown on large donors, charitable organizations, and banks, terrorists are increasingly turning to micro-scale financial activities and collecting more donations from small donors. The *zakat* as well as larger donations by wealthy Muslims called the *sadaqa* are used to support the purposes of Islam without accountability.²⁵ In all likelihood this explains why counter finance activities have done little to thwart terrorist operations and even lethality since 9/11.²⁶ The Islamic world's outrage over the GWOT and recent Israeli incursion into Lebanon has energized this donor base into providing terrorism financial and moral support.

The lack of transparency in Islamic banking and charitable giving, provides an ideal infrastructure for radical Islamists and terrorists to transfer money and makes it extremely difficult for counter terror organizations and financial regulators to collect intelligence and map out their activities. The chronically short staffed and under funded SIPA is hard pressed to overcome the cloak concealing the potential or actual funding of radical Islam and terror organizations in Bosnia today. This financial wealth gives radical Islam power within the region and easy access to weapons, explosives and even advanced technology. The efforts to counter terrorist financing in Bosnia is an immature and developing front.

Bosnia's Response to Radical Islam

Under great US pressure to deal with the allegations and realities of foreign radical Islamist presence on Bosnian soil, the government has empowered the State Information and Protection Agency (SIPA) to grapple with issues of terrorism and has instituted the Citizen Review Commission (CRC). On December 1, 2005, the Bosnian Council of Ministers adopted draft amendments to state laws giving the SIPA extensive power to combat terrorism. Moreover, SIPA now possesses the authority to conduct security and background checks of individuals with access to confidential

information. SIPA's mission and structure closely resembles the US Federal Bureau of Investigation; it is an institution of the Bosnian state, not accountable to the entities, however it is chronically understaffed and has been accused of being influenced by Bosniak officials tolerant of extremist activity. Nonetheless, SIPA has been very active since December in apprehending suspicious individuals of North African and Middle Eastern descent found in central Bosnia.²⁷

The Citizen Review Commission estimated that approximately 15,000 citizenship certificates were issued and of that number, 1,500 naturalized Bosnians originate from countries outside the former Yugoslavia.²⁸ The CRC's first quarterly report indicates that a very serious problem existed in the issuing of Bosnian citizenship to foreigners. During the war and after one could purchase the required paperwork and many mujahadeen were granted citizenship fraudulently by the Izetbegović regime. A review of the first batch of 50 citizenship certificates issued revealed that 38 of them were issued illegally.²⁹

There have even been some grassroots efforts to draw attention to the radical Islamic threat. Two former Bosniak members of the radical Islamic movement and *Wahhabi* sect in Bosnia, Jasmin Merdan and Adnan Mesanović recently published a book titled "*Wahhabism - Salafism*" explaining in detail the differences between the traditional and radical interpretations of Islam. While well received in traditional Islamic circles, the book has been vehemently criticized by the Bosniak adherents of radical Islam.³⁰ Both authors claim that the presence of radical Islam is far greater than realized. The recent stand by the Tuzla Cantonal government to ban the activities of a "self-styled primary school" in Gornja Maoca where teaching is in Arabic and adheres to *Wahhabi* ideology indicates the increased willingness of Bosniak authorities to confront radical Islam.

Political Ghosts from the Past

The political reappearance and election win of Haris Silajdžić (the wartime Bosnian Muslim government foreign minister and politician) has added a new element to the political machinations in and stability of Bosnia. A leading member of Izetbegović's cabinet, he directly oversaw the importing of *mujahadeen* into Bosnia; he brings this background to his new position as the Bosniak member of the Bosnian Presidency and is viewed as hostile to Serb, even Croat, interests. Silajdžić's 2006 election platform's main message is to abolish the entities of *Republika Srpska* and *Federacija*, something that the Serbs will never accept, and strengthen the state. The post-war stability of Bosnia was acquired

by the establishment of the Dayton Peace Accords entity arrangement, guaranteed by NATO, now EU troops and the West's political and financial support.

Silajdzic's campaign rhetoric has radicalized all elements of Bosnian society and according to some, taken Bosnia back to 1995. The Serb leadership, under Prime Minister Milorad Dodik who was also reelected in October, has maintained that if Silajdzic and his Party for Bosnia (SBiH), continue to push for dissolution of the entities then *Republika Srpska* will advocate secession.³¹ The Croats have also led renewed calls for a third entity to represent their interests and move out of their Bosniak partner's shadow.³² The politics of Bosnia will be tense in the upcoming months.

The abolition of the entities would place Bosnia under the control of its Bosniak majority as they represent 40 to 45% of Bosnians. Herein lies the problem, by a simple majority and via the democratic process the Bosniaks would control the state. All three national groups have shown over the last 15 years that they vote along national lines. Silajdzic has been able to mobilize the Bosniak voters to support his quest to dissolve the entities and place the state under Bosniak control, centered in Muslim dominated Sarajevo. The Iranian government's pleasure at the election results of Silajdzic victory and pledge of continued support in a time which Iran is increasingly under Western pressure for its nuclear program and known state sponsored terrorism leaves many Western diplomats in a state of consternation.³³ It may indicate a strengthening of ties between Iran and Silajdzic's Bosniak interests.

Given the influence of Islamic states in Bosnia's Islamic Community, continued relations with conservative Muslim politicians and Silajdzic's role as wartime foreign minister, a concern becomes readily apparent that radical Islamic influence may grow and thrive under the new Bosniak political leadership and new direction. Establishment of Bosniak hegemony within the boundaries of Bosnia has become the major political objective with the election of Silajdzic. The recent drive to give Srebrenica an autonomous status, falling under the political jurisdiction of the *Federacija*, has further enflamed nationalist aspirations.³⁴ Of some concern, should the *Republika Srpska* buffer challenging radical Islam's expansion in Bosnia disappear, Islam's territorial footprint in Bosnia would double. It is even imaginable the emigration of Serbs out of Bosnia or even renewed war if secession is unattainable - an environment especially conducive to radical Islam's expansion.

Observations and Concluding Thoughts

Radical Islam and Al-Qaeda's influence on Bosnia has met with limited success as the goal of an Islamic Balkan state has not been

realized. Radical Islam is not popularly supported, nonetheless vestiges of a transnational terrorist underground and radical Islamic network was created in the heart of Europe. The London and Madrid terrorist bombings have been tenuously linked to Bosnia.³⁵ Coupled with the recent arrests of suspected terrorists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bangladesh, Britain, Canada, Denmark, the US and over the past year indicates that the region is clearly part of the global War on Terror.³⁶ The Department of State's recent *Country Reports on Terrorism* explicitly stated that Bosnia is "vulnerable to exploitation as a terrorist safe haven or as a potential staging ground for terrorist operations in Europe".³⁷

The *Islamska Zajednica* should not be considered an immediate radical Islamic threat. Its superb organization and territorial footprint is an excellent institution from which to enhance and maintain moderate Islam in the Balkans, or if left unchecked, a proponent of radicalism. The adherents of radical Islam within the IZ, such as members of the AIO, Muslim Brotherhood and holdover wartime Bosniak political leaders are inculcated with a conservative Islam they believe is coupled to a successful centralized Islamic Bosnian state. The recent funeral of Jusuf Barčić, a Medina educated radical Islamic cleric, was attended by over 3,000 mourners from Bosnia and elsewhere in Europe indicates that the presence and spread of radical *Wahhabist* ideologies is making headway in the region.³⁸

A generation of foreign militant Islamists have been given "safe haven, training, financing, and ideological inspiration" within Bosnia since the signing of the DPA and only recently under the shadow of 9/11 has the Bosniak and Bosnian leadership approached this threat.³⁹ The support of foreign sponsors, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, and charitable and financial organizations that clearly advocate radical Islamic ideologies and terrorism are firmly planted in the Bosniak regions.⁴⁰ Bosnia's ability to resist extremism and radical Islam depends on continued Western engagement in the region and the recent phenomena of moderate Bosniaks challenging the radical Islamists and their ideologies. The election of Haris Silajdzic indicates that nationalist political brinkmanship is back on the table, continuing to foster an environment of national non-rapprochement. Moves by the Bosniak leadership to create a stronger, unitary state centered in Sarajevo should be carefully deliberated. Subsuming the Croats and Serbs within a state absent entities assures Bosniak hegemony. However, care must also be given to temper Bosniak demands without having them resort to more drastic measures pursuing greater support from radical Islamic states. In twelve years since the end of the Bosnian civil war and signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, this region finds itself once again on the global stage as it wrestles with the issues of militant and radical Islam and a renewed call for

the abolition of the entities - a recipe for renewed crisis in the Balkans.

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