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Bosnia's Dangerous Tango: Islam and Nationalism

I. Overview

The Bosniak community is deeply frustrated with the dysfunctional government, flawed constitution and economic stagnation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), as well as renewed Croat and Serb challenges to the state's territorial integrity. The Islamic community has taken a leading role in channelling popular anger, filling a vacuum left by Bosniak political parties, whose leadership seems adrift. Political Islam is a novelty in Bosnia, and its rise is seen as threatening to secular parties and non-Muslims. On the margins of society, a plethora of non-traditional Salafi and other Islamist groups have appeared, raising fears of terrorism. They are small, divided and largely non-violent, however, and the state and the Islamic community should work to integrate them further into society. Real instability and violence are more likely to come from clashing nationalisms. The Islamic community's best contribution would be to help craft a vision for Bosnia that Croats and Serbs can share.

The Islamic community (Islamska zajednica, IZ) in BiH has is a religious organisation as well as an important political actor that has shaped Bosniaks' national identity, though it has recently become more divided and disorganised. Its still influential and charismatic former leader, Mustafa ef. Cerić, ensured that Islam became a strong element in the post-war Bosniak nationalism of which he was a main author and promoter. He likewise linked the Bosniak cause to BiH, which, though also multiethnic, he argued, should be a nation-state for the Bosniaks, since Croats and Serbs already had countries of their own.

The threat of fundamentalist Islam has been evoked repeatedly in Bosnia since several thousand mujahidin arrived in the early 1990s, though it is foreign to the great majority of the Muslim population. Especially after 11 September 2001, when it embarked on its global war on terrorism, the U.S. in particular has pressed Bosnian authorities to arrest or deport individuals with possible links to al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Most recently, in December 2012, a self-declared Islamic insurgent was sentenced to eighteen years imprisonment for shooting at the U.S. embassy in Sarajevo the previous year. A month earlier, a Bosnian-born naturalised U.S. citizen was sentenced to life in prison for planning attacks in New York in 2009.

These cases nurture the perception that radical Islamic groups form a serious and unified threat to stability. In fact the few existing groups are small and divided. Some are integrated in the IZ; others reject its authority and withdraw to secluded

communities. Virtually no home-grown radicals have been involved in violence; the vast majority of attacks have been the work of émigrés or persons with documented criminal or psychological records. There is a risk of similar, small-scale attacks in the future, but no sign of an organisation capable of or interested in mass violence or terror. To guard against future incidents, however:

- the Islamic community and Bosnian state officials should cooperate to engage non-violent Salafis, especially those returning from the diaspora, in dialogue so as to encourage integration.

It is the IZ's use of Bosniak nationalism, partly in response to provocations by Croat and Serb nationalists, that is more likely to exacerbate tensions. This is the case today in Mostar, where the IZ advocates a hard line, seeking to unify Bosniaks in their political struggle with the main Croat parties on how to elect local authorities and form the municipality. Though its city administration's mandate and budget have expired, Mostar failed to hold elections in 2012; with no lawfully constituted city authority, services risk being suspended in the coming months. Without a difficult compromise, all residents will suffer. To overcome this crisis:

- Mostar religious leaders should be attentive to their constituency, which favours negotiation, and drop their hardline approach, support a compromise position acceptable to all three communities, refrain from divisive rhetoric and call upon the city's political leaders to reach agreement without delay.

The election of a new grand mufti, Husein Kavazović, at the end of 2012, offers an opportunity to restructure and depoliticise the IZ and focus it on institutional reform. But the political Islam that Cerić promoted, based on the affirmation of a strong Bosniak identity, will be hard to let go as long as many Bosniaks feel that their state's integrity is being challenged. Cerić remains active; he launched a World Bosniak Congress on 29 December 2012 that includes a strong presence from the Sandžak, a mixed, Muslim-majority region on the Serbia-Montenegro frontier. More than any of the small Salafi groups operating in Bosnia, further politicisation of the Bosniak cause may contribute to instability if it develops in opposition to the country's other communities. To avoid dangerous escalation in nationalist conflict, the IZ and Bosnia's other religious communities should:

- withdraw from the partisan political arena by refraining from endorsement of parties or candidates; and
- commit to interfaith dialogue to seek common ground and shape a vision of the Bosnian state as the shared property of all three major communities.

II. The Islamic Community in Bosnian Politics

The Bosnian Islamic community (IZ) broke away from Belgrade around the same time Bosnia declared independence from Yugoslavia.[1] From April 1993 until November 2012, Mustafa ef. Cerić headed it as grand mufti (*raisu-l-ulama* or simply *reis*).[2] The IZ was initially weak, but with the help of Alija Izetbegović, BiH's first president, and key military leaders, it became a pillar of Bosniak national identity.[3] Even his critics acknowledge that Cerić had a huge impact:

> I disagreed with many decisions and statements of … Cerić, but I recognise and respect his contribution for the awakening of Bosniaks. He stepped in when Bosniaks were slaughtered, established the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina from zero and helped Bosniaks to start seeing themselves as a nation.[4]

During his long tenure, the IZ promoted Bosniak culture, politics and identity, with its reach extending beyond the faithful and attracting many who were not practicing Muslims during the Socialist period, as well as Bosniaks living in Serbia's Sandžak region and elsewhere. Cerić paid less attention to the IZ's institutionalisation, focusing instead on Bosniak political and national issues. He emphasised that BiH should protect Bosniaks from a repetition of the genocide he said they suffered during the war that established its independence.[5] He defined himself as "the only one who can represent Bosniaks"[6] and often alienated the state's other peoples, Croats and Serbs, as well as civic-orientated secular citizens.[7]

Cerić has said that the international community, having failed to prevent genocide in his country and then imposed a flawed constitution at Dayton, has a responsibility to help Bosniaks build a strong and viable state.[8] Many Bosniaks expected the U.S. and European Union (EU) to do this, through the Office of the High Repre-

[1] The IZ was formed in 1882. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, its seat was moved from Sarajevo to Belgrade. The decision to move the IZ back to Sarajevo was caused by frustration with the Belgrade-based leadership that seemed distant from the sufferings of Bosnian Muslims. Crisis Group interviews, religious officials and Bosniak intellectuals who participated in the process, Sarajevo, September-October 2012.

[2] In Yugoslavia's 1971 census, Muslims were officially recognised as a distinct nation. In 1993, Bosnia's Muslims adopted the term Bosniak (Bošnjak) to identify their nation more specifically, and this report follows that usage. The most recent (1991) census counted 1.9 million Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks), 43.5 per cent of Bosnia's population, along with 1.4 million Serbs (31.2 per cent) and 760,000 Croats (17.4 per cent). The next census is scheduled for late 2013, and preliminary surveys suggest Bosniaks are now about half of Bosnia's population; see below, fn. 63. A large majority of Bosniaks follow the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. For more on the history of Muslims in Bosnia, see Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York, 1994).

[3] In the "brutal aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina", all "segments of society … including the Islamic Community", were in a state of "total collapse and decapitation". Jusuf Žiga, chairman of the 1993 IZ founding parliament, now professor at Sarajevo University, speech at Gazi-Husrev Beg Library, Sarajevo, 18 September 2012, at www.rijaset.ba.

[4] Crisis Group interview, Sead Numanović, journalist and editor, *Dnevni Avaz*, Sarajevo, 30 August 2012.

[5] Crisis Group interviews, Cerić, Sarajevo, October 2008, March 2009, April 2011.

[6] Crisis Group interview, Sarajevo Mufti Husein Smajić, Sarajevo, 11 October 2012.

[7] Crisis Group interviews, representatives of Bosnian Croats, Serbs, civic-oriented Bosnians, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar, May-December 2012.

[8] According to Cerić, the EU should not say, "just agree among yourselves" on the kind of country you want, because the Dayton set-up makes this impossible. Bosnia needs help just to function: much like the EU needs the U.S. as a "witness" or arbitrator, he says, so Bosnia needs the EU as its referee. Crisis Group interview, Sarajevo, March 2009.

sentative (Bosnia's international supervisor) and other instruments. Those hopes are fading fast, causing disappointment but also anger among some of the more nationalistic Bosniaks.[9] Cerić has warned that "if the international community does not do something drastic" to set BiH on a firm foundation, he and other leaders may not be able to restrain the popular frustration, and "it could get ugly".[10]

A. *Political Parties*

The IZ's important position in Bosniak party politics, which lasted during the decade after the war, is on the wane, as the community's preferences have splintered. No party clearly distinguishes itself as the standard bearer of a pro-Bosniak, religiously conservative agenda, immune to temporary political alliances based mainly on economic interests.

The IZ and the main Bosniak party, the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije, SDA), operated symbiotically during the 1990s.[11] Reis Cerić was an SDA founder.[12] Bosnia's first president and head of the SDA, Alija Izetbegović, played a leading role in the IZ due to his prestige as a Muslim intellectual who had been imprisoned in the 1980s.[13] His controversial 1970 "Islamic Declaration", an essay on the role of Islam in society calling for spiritual renewal and criticising contemporary Muslim states, still influences Croat and Serb views of their Bosniak neighbours.[14] The SDA used the IZ's networks to mobilise voters at the beginning of the 1990s and then to recruit and supply fighters during the 1992-1995 conflict.[15]

[9] Crisis group interviews, Bosniak politicians, intellectuals and Islamic community officials, Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, June-December 2012.

[10] Crisis Group interview, Cerić, Sarajevo, March 2009.

[11] The public quarrel that broke out between the IZ and SDA is described in Crisis Group Balkans Report N°119, *Bin Laden and the Balkans*, 9 November 2001, p. 12.

[12] He was among 40 signatories of the March 1990 press statement that announced establishment of the SDA, www.muzejalijaizetbegovic.ba. He lost the 1991 election to lead the IZ of Yugoslavia. See also dr Šaćir Filandra, *Bošnjaci nakon socijalizma: O bošnjačkom identitetu u post jugoslavenskom dobu* [*Bosniaks after socialism: on Bosniak identity in the post-Yugoslav period*] (Sarajevo, 2012), p. 80.

[13] Izetbegović always took into account the opinions of Cerić but usually took the final decision on key strategic issues. Crisis Group interviews, senior SDA and IZ officials, September-November 2012. Izetbegović was a member of the Young Muslims (Mladi Muslimani), a regional islamist organisation that advocated Bosnian autonomy in the 1930s and 1940s. It was banned in 1949 but re-emerged during a period of political liberalisation in the 1970s. In 1983 Izetbegović and twelve others linked to the group were sentenced to prison for "Islamic fundamentalism" and "Muslim nationalism". Eight of this group played a central part in the SDA's creation. For more, see Xavier Bougarel, "Bosnian Islam since 1990: Cultural Identity or Political Ideology?", paper presented for the Annual Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, New York, 15-17 April 1999.

[14] Alija Izetbegović, "Islamska deklaracija: Jedan program islamizacije muslimana i muslimanskih naroda" ["The Islamic Declaration: A program for the Islamisation of Muslims and Muslim Peoples"], Sarajevo, 1970. For Xavier Bougarel, op. cit., the "Islamic Declaration" is "no more than a summary of the main principles of Islamic faith". But RS President Milorad Dodik calls "The 'Islamic declaration' the basis for terrorism which is today present in BiH", "Dodik: Alija Izetbegović je doveo mudžahedine u BiH" ["Dodik: Alija Izetbegović has brought Mujahidins to BiH"], Banja Luka daily *Nezavisne Novine*, 9 April 2012 (online). "Cilj napada na Hrvate Ljubuškog je provedba ratnih ciljeva Islamske deklaracije" ["The goal of the attack on Croats in Ljubuški was implementation of war goals of the Islamic declaration"], statement from Croat NGO Croatia Libertas, 20 July 2012, www.enovosti.info.

[15] Crisis Group staff interviews in a previous capacity, head of the local IZ, Posavina region, 1993-1996. For background on the IZ's role in supporting the creation of the SDA, see Xavier Bougarel,

The community's strong lay component and local roots give it additional political weight. A loose internal hierarchy affords local IZ officials, muftis and imams relative freedom to deal with local politics with little scrutiny from the top. Elections and politics also play an important internal role.[16]

Rifts deepened between the IZ and SDA after party leadership passed to Sulejman Tihić in 2001, a lawyer who was not part of the religious circle and resisted Cerić's attempts to influence his decisions and appointments.[17] Over time, differences widened. In the 2002 general elections, Islamic Community votes were split between Tihić and Haris Silajdžić, the war-time Bosnian foreign minister and leader of the Party for BiH (Stranka za BiH, SBiH), who had been SDA vice-president until 1997.[18] By the October 2006 elections, the grand mufti and a significant part of the IZ supported Silajdžić, who defeated Tihić.[19] Cerić publicly spoke out against the SDA, which responded in kind.[20]

But by the 2010 general elections, the IZ was itself divided and no longer a political force that parties or candidates could rely on. Cerić apparently supported Bosniak businessman Fahrudin Radončić, who in 2009 established his own party, the Union for a Better Future (Savez za bolju budućnost, SBB).[21] Islamic Community members backed different candidates, and SDA candidate Bakir Izetbegović surprised many by defeating both Radončić and Silajdžić to become the Bosniak member of the state presidency.[22]

By the 2012 local elections, the Islamic Community was too preoccupied with its own elections, and most of its high-level officials had decided that it should get out of partisan domestic politics.[23] IZ and SDA leaders now seem acutely aware of how much they have suffered from the mixing of religion and politics and pledge not to

"Bosnia and Herzegovina – State and Communautarism", in A.D. Dyker and I. Vejvoda (eds.), *Yugoslavia and After: A Study of Fragmentation, Despair and Rebirth* (Essex, 1996), p. 96.

[16] The governing assembly of the local (usually municipal level) *džemat* (congregation) elects its leadership and representation to the *medžlis* (regional group). The *džemat* also elects the IZ parliament, which in turn names most of the *Rijaset*, the supreme fifteen-member leadership of the IZ. The parliament also plays an important role in election of the grand mufti (*raisu-l-ulama*), and on his nomination appoints or removes the nine muftis.

[17] According to a senior IZ member, the first clash between Tihić and Cerić broke out soon after Tihić took over the SDA and refused to appoint Cerić's protégée as Bosnian ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Crisis Group interview, Sarajevo, 25 September 2012.

[18] Tihić won 192,600 votes, Silajdžić 179,700, Election Commission, online.

[19] Silajdžić won 350,500 votes, Tihić 150,600, ibid.

[20] "Bosniaks expect changes so that they get a single political vision which will not be in a service of an interest group, but a vision that will have an ideal and be ready to sacrifice itself in order to achieve the general goal", Cerić interview in "Pogaženi su politički i moralni standardi koje je Alija Izetbegović postavio" ["Political and moral standards set up by Alija Izetbegović have been trampled upon"], *Dnevni Avaz*, 23 May 2009 (online).

[21] Crisis Group interview, Asim Metiljević, journalist for magazine *Slobodna Bosna*, Sarajevo, 7 September 2012.

[22] Bakir Izetbegović received 162,000 votes, followed by Radončić, 142,000, and Silajdžić, 117,000, Bosnian Central Election Commission elections' data. Crisis Group phone interview, Bosniak political and religious expert, 2 December 2012.

[23] "We have allowed political messages to be passed from mosques, which was unacceptable. Cerić was asking [that people] support Haris Silajdžić, and later he switched his support to the SBB. These are things that must not be allowed in the Islamic Community in future. This time [for 2012 elections] there was a tacit agreement within the Islamic Community that we would exclude ourselves from local elections", Crisis Group interview, Sarajevo Mufti Husein Smajić, Sarajevo, 11 October 2012. The IZ apparently was able to "rid itself of political influence", Crisis Group interview, Šačir Filandra, dean of political science faculty, Sarajevo University, Sarajevo, 20 July 2012.

go down that road again.[24] Kavazović, Cerić's successor as grand mufti, seems to lack his predecessor's political appetite and ambition. Neither of the two SDA leaders, party president Sulejman Tihić and BiH presidency member and SDA vice president Bakir Izetbegović, have Alija Izetbegović's strong religious persona, so separating religion and politics may now be possible.

The new grand mufti could focus instead on urgently needed reform: the IZ's constitution is outdated, jurisdiction unclear, and it still needs to sign a memorandum of understanding with the government to regulate its status and financing.[25] In his dealing with political parties, he should reach out and show a commitment to forming broader alliances. The IZ should clarify whether it is a primarily Bosniak organisation (focused on the religious needs of Bosniaks worldwide) or a Bosnian one (focused on Bosnia's Muslims, some of whom may not consider themselves to be Bosniak, for example some Roma) – or, if both, how these two orientations relate to each other.[26]

Leaders of all three of Bosnia's main religious communities often speak in nationalist tones. The IZ frequently feels pressure to respond to outbursts from secular Serb and Croat leaders. They should resist the temptation of resorting to Bosniak nationalist discourse, because in doing so and in associating Bosnia with an Islamic cause, they risk contributing to the further undoing of BiH that Croat and Serb nationalists seek. Instead, the IZ should work to promote inter-religious dialogue and seek common ground with Catholic and Orthodox leaders.

Yet, there is also growing frustration among senior IZ officials with Bosniak politicians. According to Mostar Mufti Seid Smajkić, "people have lost faith in politicians. These people do not care for ordinary citizens, and that is why people turn to the Islamic Community. I would like that politicians take over responsibility, but ordinary citizens do not trust them and ask for our intervention".[27] Another mufti charged that "our politicians are just Yes-men", which leads to "all sorts of frustrations and … a danger of extremism".[28] The turbulent Bosniak political scene is marked by rapidly shifting, often inexplicable alliances with yesterday's bitter enemies.[29] As trust in politicians decrease, distance from local politics may help increase IZ legitimacy.[30]

[24] Crisis Group interviews, IZ and SDA officials, Sarajevo, Travnik, September-November 2012.

[25] The IZ's current constitution dates from 1997, but its institutions, mechanisms and processes have changed over the years. A memorandum of understanding would regulate the status, financing and retirement of officials, recognise marriages performed by imams and open up possibilities for other forms of cooperation with the state. The Vatican and the Serbian Orthodox Church signed such memorandums in 2006 and 2009. Cerić has been criticised by parts of the IZ and leading Bosniak officials, intellectuals and media, for failing to reform and modernise the organisation. Crisis Group interviews, Sarajevo, September-November 2012. IZs in Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia are nominally subordinate to Sarajevo but in practice independent. Crisis Group interviews, members of the Islamic Community and Bosniak intellectuals, Sarajevo, Travnik, August-December 2012.

[26] The largest Bosniak communities outside BiH are in the Sandžak region (190,000), Croatia and Slovenia (about 40,000 each), as well as several hundred thousand in the rest of Europe and the U.S. Several million persons of Bosniak ancestry may reside in Turkey, but most are thoroughly assimilated.

[27] Crisis Group interview, Mostar Mufti, Seid Smajkić, Mostar, 31 October 2012.

[28] Crisis Group interview, Mufti Muamer ef. Zukorlic, Novi Pazar, 14 September 2012.

[29] For example, the Social Democratic Party (Socijaldemokratska partija, SDP) led by BiH Foreign Minister Zlatko Lagumdžija, has flirted with Bosniak national ideas and relied largely on Bosniak votes before the 2010 elections, but it disappointed many in 2012 by striking a deal with leading Croat and Serb national parties at the SDA's expense.

[30] According to Gallup Balkan Monitor research (online), in 2008 72.6 per cent of BiH citizens had trust in religious communities and 58.4 per cent in governments and political parties alike. By 2012

Cerić argues "people do not have an opportunity to get into direct contact with their political representatives and feel that their interests are not represented in the best way", adding the "Islamic Community seems to be one of the rare Bosniak institutions which have remained healthy".[31]

B. *Mostar*

Even though the IZ is less involved in national politics, it can still play a big role in local affairs. Mufti Seid Smajkić has taken the lead in a brewing crisis in his home town of Mostar. The city council has been functioning without a mandate since November 2012, when it failed to participate in the countrywide local elections due to political parties' inability to agree on revisions of the city statute and the BiH election law.[32] All directly-elected local officials' mandates have expired, and Mostar has no lawfully constituted local authority.

During fall 2012, Mufti Smajkić acted as an arbiter among the Bosniak parties, helping them define a common political position vis-à-vis their Croat counterparts: "Our strategic interest is Bosniak unity, and I will not remain passive if some politicians, motivated by their daily political ambitions, jeopardise those interests".[33] The mufti thundered against Croat threats in his Eid ul-Adha sermon:

> This is one of our hardest political battles, which we must win. The people are united in determination not to give in to political extortion, just as they did not give in to military subjugation during the war. The same ultimatums are being sent today, from the same side, from the same people who have not changed at all, so that they could conquer this region and subdue this city.[34]

He retains credibility among the local Bosniak population, which has lost much trust in its home political elites, long dominated by the SDA.[35] The mufti and the SDA agree that Mostar should be divided into several municipalities, while the Croat parties want a unified administration in which they would have the majority.[36] The IZ

trust in religious communities had decreased to 61.7 per cent, while trust in governments and parties had dropped more dramatically to 18.9 and 15.8 per cent respectively.

[31] "Bošnjačko pitanje na Balkanu je nacionalno, a ne vjersko" ["Question of Bosniaks in the Balkans is national not religious one, Cerić interview"], *Saff*, 19 September 2009 (online).

[32] On 9 September 2010 the BiH Constitutional Court ruled that parts of the Mostar city statute – imposed by the Office of the High Representative (OHR) – and BiH election law were unconstitutional since all six electoral units in Mostar have the same political representation, though their population numbers are significantly different. The court gave the BiH parliament six months to fix the problem and finally declared those parts of the statute and election law null and void in its 18 January 2012 decision. Case 9/09 Constitutional Court of BiH. For more on the background, see Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°54, *Bosnia: A Test of Political Maturity in Mostar*, 27 July 2009.

[33] Smajkić referred mostly to the SDP. Crisis Group interview, Mostar, 31 October 2012.

[34] "Hutba muftije Smajkića: Jedinstvo Bošnjaka potrebnije nego ikada" ["Sermon of Mufti Smajkić' at Friday prayers: Bosniak unity is more necessary than ever"], 27 October 2012, on the IZ website, www.rijaset.ba. Smajkić also accused the international community of "tricking" the Bosniaks and argued the BiH Constitutional Court decision invalidating the Mostar city statute had been made "under pressure from outside".

[35] Crisis Group interviews, local officials and experts, Mostar, September-November 2012.

[36] The Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, HDZ) and the SDA have switched positions on the status of Mostar since the end of the war. Now HDZ and its offshoot, HDZ 1990, insist on a unified administration based on one-man-one-vote, expecting that they would have a majority; SDA fears it would lose the little control it now has and prefers division into several main-

facilitated a petition campaign among local Bosniaks in support of their preferred option, gathering signatures in mosques during prayers.

But rather than strengthening the Bosniak position, Smajkić's initiative may weaken it. It goes against the long-held Bosniak view that Mostar should be a unified city and in effect would be a step toward permanent division into Bosniak and Croat halves. The local Social Democratic Party (SDP) has refused to join, causing the mufti to criticise it publicly.[37] The SDP accused Smajkić in turn of protecting SDA, not Bosniak interests.[38] It is highly unlikely Croat parties will accept the IZ position, and mutual intransigence is not breeding a will to compromise. Without agreement, Mostar risks being left without a city administration and budget, and starting in February or March public services may be unfunded.[39] Limited inter-ethnic violence cannot be discounted. Numerous multi-ethnic incidents occurred recently, and in November 2012, neighbourhood watches were reportedly being organised in some areas.[40] On 14 January a war memorial to fallen Bosniak soldiers was blown up in front of the Mostar City Hall. Amid numerous reactions from local and international officials, the IZ remained quiet.[41]

Kavazović, the new grand mufti, may be one of the few who could still persuade Mufti Smajkić to moderate and avoid further deterioration.[42] Smajkić is expected to retire in 2013, and selection of his replacement will be important.

ly monoethnic municipalities with a weak joint administration at the city level as a lesser evil, Crisis Group interviews, party leaders and experts, Sarajevo and Mostar, September-November 2012.

[37] Smajkić openly spoke against it during the main prayer on Friday, 26 October 2012. He also told Crisis Group: "The problem is that SDP, blinded by ambitions to cling to power under any price, has lost the feeling for the general interest of the Bosniak people. It would be good for SDP to adjust its activities with Bosniaks' strategic interests. By refusing to do so, they are directly jeopardising physical survival of Bosniaks in these territories". Crisis Group interview, Mostar, 31 October 2012.

[38] Aner Žuljević, head of the SDP branch in Mostar, who was indirectly called out in Smajkić's speech, alleged that the Mostar mufti acts as "an extended arm" of the local SDA, and they are jointly trying to discipline SDP and increase tensions, which only helps the SDA to detract attention from their record. Crisis Group interview, Mostar, 31 October 2012.

[39] Crisis Group interview, senior diplomat, Sarajevo, 24 January 2013. The (HDZ) mayor may try to impose a budget, citing a legal loophole. Crisis Group interview, senior HDZ official, Mostar, 31 January 2013.

[40] Most incidents were caused by local football hooligans or teenagers, including the beating of four Croat pupils on 8 October 2010; and Bosniak and Croat hooligan clashes on 28 September 2011, 11 November 2011, 28 January 2012, 27 March 2012 and 7 November 2012. "Bosniaks and Croats in Mostar have been acting and behaving like it is 1995, and that is very dangerous". Crisis Group interview, senior U.S. official, January 2013.

[41] The Mostar mayor and all main political parties in the city, as well as the Office of the High Representative, condemned the destruction of the BiH army monument and demanded that the perpetrator(s) be brought to justice as soon as possible. "Brojne osude miniranja spomenika Armije BiH u Mostaru" ["Numerous condemnations of the bombing of the BiH army monument"], *Oslobođenje*, 14 January 2013 (online).

[42] According to several recent surveys conducted in Mostar, over 85 per cent of its population (regardless of ethnic origin) want the political parties to abandon their hard-line principles and reach a compromise that could enable the city's better functioning. Crisis Group interview, Mostar city official, Sarajevo, 14 February 2013.

III. Bosniak Nationalism and Religious Values

Relations between Bosnia's leading parties have shifted so often, with so little explanation, that their ability to articulate a national political vision has been weakened or lost. The predominantly Bosniak parties – the SDA, SBiH, SBB and also the SDP – seem to have abandoned any pretence of principle in favour of a free-for-all struggle for power and patronage. Yesterday's enemy is today's ally; the sequence of – largely unsuccessful – attempts to outmanoeuvre one another has bewildered and dismayed the electorate. Disappointment with the secular Bosniak leadership is driving some toward an exclusive nationalism.

In June 2012, the SDP broke its coalition with the SDA after the latter voted against the SDP-proposed state budget. Wherever it had sufficient votes, it initiated procedures to remove the SDA from state, entity and cantonal levels of government. This led to a series of reshuffles in the cantonal governments that continue in early 2013. In October 2012, the SDP formed a new coalition with the Croat and Serb national parties and the SBB and kicked the SDA out of the state government. In January 2013 the SDP, SBB and Croat national parties initiated a process to reshuffle the Federal government.[43] Political disarray has blocked virtually all productive work at the state level, in the Federation of BiH (the larger of the state's two entities, with a Bosniak and Croat majority) and in many cantonal governments.[44]

A. *Nationalism in Bosnia and the Bosniak Reaction*

Over the past seven years (initially in his 2006 election campaign), President Milorad Dodik of the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska (RS) has bluntly criticised Bosnia, Islam and the Bosniaks. He frequently threatens Bosnia's integrity and calls for RS independence.[45] Cerić often reacted strongly, including through the media, and at least once wrote Western ambassadors asking to declare Dodik "persona non grata" across Europe.[46] The Croat national parties (HDZ and HDZ 1990) have long

[43] In December 2012 and January 2013, the SDP-run coalition collected signatures from members of parliament to initiate a no-confidence vote in the government of the FBiH (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosniak majority of Bosnia's two entities). On 24 January, the SDP-run coalition tried to put this on the FBiH government's agenda but failed since it controls only nine ministers in the eighteen-member government. The SDP vowed to take the no-confidence vote to the Federation parliament, and on 12 February the FBiH House of Representatives passed a no-confidence vote against the FBiH government. On 15 February, the Bosniak caucus of the House of Peoples, in which the SDA holds the majority, vetoed the no-confidence vote on grounds of vital national interest.

[44] "Key reforms have not yet been made. Party differences stand in the way of shared progress", speech by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during joint Sarajevo visit with EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, 30 October 2012. Transcript provided by U.S. embassy Sarajevo.

[45] "BiH is a rotten state that does not deserve to exist. BiH constantly confirms its inability to exist .... I hope to God it dissolves as soon as possible", Dodik statement to RS Radio and Television, RTRS, 30 September 2012 (online). Dodik accused BiH presidency member Bakir Izetbegović of "having brought the mujahidin to BiH". "Izetbegović ojačao vehabije u BiH" ["Izetbegović strengthened Wahhabis in BiH"], B92, 2 November 2011 (online). A list of statements against BiH is in "Political Update", a document prepared for the 29-30 November 2012 meeting of the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board in Sarajevo and provided to Crisis Group.

[46] "Reis Cerić i Dodik u otvorenom ratu" ["Grand Mufti Cerić and Dodik in an all-out war"], daily *Dnevni List*, 20 December 2012 (online). "Cerić: "Dodika proglasiti nepoželjnom osobom" ["Cerić: Dodik should be declared persona non grata"], Deutche Welle, 20 December 2011 (online).

called for a separate Croat entity, though in a more muted register.[47] To this Cerić has said, "there are more and more Bosniaks who think it is high time to say that Bosnia is the country of Bosniaks and others who love it, accept it as their only homeland and their only country, and are ready to fight for a united and sovereign Bosnian state".[48] Many Croats and Serbs see this and similar Cerić statements as evidence Bosniaks believe the state rightfully theirs and not to be shared; they fear becoming second-class citizens in a Bosniak nation-state. Cerić's message resonates with some Bosniaks but is criticised by others.[49]

The rhetorical exchanges between Bosniak leaders and their Serb and Croat counterparts are becoming more heated, showing "a hint of menace" and "militant nationalism", while "RS's attempts to deny genocide and threaten Bosnia's existence send a message to Bosniaks that they could be attacked again".[50] In November 2012, Dodik again spoke of a referendum on RS independence.[51] In response, Sefer Halilović, leader of the Bosnian Patriotic Party (Bosanska Patriotska Stranka, BPS) and former chief of the BiH army, warned, "our patience is coming to an end … and my message to [Dodik] would be that he should stop provoking us. I am very serious, stop humiliating and provoking us, because if he makes us angry, we will finish this business with him very quickly".[52]

B. *The Islamic Community, Secularists and the State*

Secular, civic-oriented Bosniaks are challenging the Islamic Community's role in society. Bosnia is formally a secular state, but religion has played a larger role since the war. The division between religious and secular exists among Croats and Serbs too, but it is not seen as a threat because Catholicism and Orthodoxy are experienced as separate from national identity. Schools are a key battleground between secularists and the more religiously orientated. The politicisation of religious education has contributed heavily to dividing ethnically mixed communities.[53] The IZ, as well as the Catholic and Serbian Orthodox churches, pushed to introduce religious education in primary and secondary schools during the 1992-1995 war; they were given

[47] "Dragan Čović: Želimo treći entitet" ["Dragan Čović: we want the third entity"], RS news agency SRNA, 28 August 2011 (online).
[48] Cerić interview, *Panbošnjak*, 12 April 2012 (online).
[49] "These positions are scientifically irrelevant and politically very harmful for Bosniak people. Neither by his position nor by his education is Mr Cerić invited or competent to make political positions, especially to deal with some national strategies", Šaćir Filandra, dean, Sarajevo University political science faculty, statement for Federal Television, FTV (online), 10 April 2012.
[50] Crisis Group interview, senior European diplomat, Sarajevo, 14 December 2012.
[51] Dodik referred to talk of Scotland and Catalonia declaring independence: "One day this will fall into our hands like ripe fruit from a tree. We are waiting to have examples of how to do this in Europe, so that no one can blame us for anything". Dejan Šajinović, "Dodik i Čović razgovarali u Mostaru: Visoki predstavnik uništava BiH" [Dodik and Čović held talks in Mostar: High Representative is destroying BiH], *Nezavisne novine*, 8 November 2012 (online).
[52] Sefer Halilović interview on TV1 television, 10 November 2012 (online). Halilović elsewhere explained: "I warned Dodik through media that we will never give up on BiH. We Bosniaks, as majority people in the country, are willing to guarantee Croats and Serbs equal rights, …. [But w]e are ready to defend Bosnia, and I prefer that we do that through political means". Crisis Group interview, Sarajevo, 14 December 2012.
[53] "The moment religious education was introduced in schools I knew that multi-ethnic Bosnia was dead. They now teach children that there are divisions among them from the earliest age", Crisis group interview, senior Bosnian law enforcement official, Sarajevo, 19 November 2012.

oversight of its curriculum and teachers in 2003-2004.[54] In 2008, the IZ obtained control over religious education in public kindergartens in Sarajevo, despite more than 5,000 parents signing a petition against it and international criticism.[55]

The Islamic Community also fought a sharp battle with the Sarajevo canton in 2012 to keep performance in religious studies classes part of the calculation of students' official school averages. In 2011 the canton education minister, Emir Suljagić, (SDP) instructed schools to remove religion grades from the calculation and allow students to opt out of the classes. This triggered a strong reaction from the IZ and Cerić himself, who openly threatened Suljagić with public unrest.[56] The minister resigned on 10 February 2012, two days after receiving a threatening letter with a bullet enclosed. The cantonal government postponed implementation of his instructions until September 2012.

This affair has helped alienate Bosnia's secular, civic-orientated representatives, who readily criticise the IZ for taking up issues that should remain the state's responsibility. The IZ in turn does not hesitate to call that criticism the consequence of "Islamophobia". It issued two reports on that topic, in April 2011 and March 2012, accusing a wide range of local and international officials, organisations and media of intolerance, discrimination, hatred or fear of Muslims in Bosnia.[57] This led to heated public debates and attempts to separate "good" from "bad" Bosniaks, further polarising the Bosniak community.[58] Even Bakir Izetbegović, the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency and vice president of SDA, spoke out: "I disagree with the Islamic Community report, because not every criticism is Islamophobia".[59]

But the real battle between the secularists and the IZ is likely to accompany the long-awaited census in Bosnia, planned for October 2013.[60] On 12 November 2012, the Rijaset (the IZ leadership) issued a proclamation instructing members of the community to register as Bosniaks.[61] Civic-oriented organisations plan to campaign

[54] Religious education was introduced in primary and secondary schools across BiH in the middle of the war, without strategy, systematic approach or quality control. It became obligatory in schools in Republika Srpska (RS) in 1992 and voluntary and later obligatory across the Federation as of 1994. "Vjera po glavi djeteta" ["Religious education per child capita"], *Dani*, 26 January 2001.

[55] "Vjeronauka u vrtićima podijelila javnost" ["Religious education in kindergartens divided public"], Radio Free Europe, 12 April 2008 (online). "In a multi-national and multi-confessional country such as BiH, this threatens to work against the fundamental freedoms guaranteed in the country's own constitution", Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) statement, transcript of international agencies' joint press conference, 12 February 2008, OHR web site. Cerić was later quoted saying he was "taken by surprise by the notion that OSCE is completely oriented against Islam", Muslim information news agency MINA, 13 February 2008.

[56] "Reis Cerić prijeti ministru zbog odluke o vjeronauci" ["Grand Mufti Cerić makes threats against the minister over the decision about religious education"], Radio Free Europe, 18 March 2011 (online).

[57] "First Report on Islamophobia: 2004-2010"; "Second Report on Islamophobia: 2011"; both available on the IZ website (www.rijaset.ba).

[58] "'Good Bosniaks", according to this sentiment, are those who espouse conservative political and religious ideals. More moderate and secular ideals are, by implication, held by "bad Bosniaks". "Bosnia: Good Bosniaks, Bad Bosniaks, Good Muslims, Bad Muslims", U.S. Sarajevo embassy cable, 27 January 2009, as made public by WikiLeaks.

[59] Post by Bakir Izebegović on his web site, www.bakirizetbegović.ba, 1 September 2011.

[60] This will be the first census in BiH since 1991 and will provide quantitative data needed for managing the country and its EU accession path, as well as insights into ethno-demographic changes since the war crucial for distribution of key judicial, legislative and executive posts.

[61] "Just as every Englishman knows that he is British in the state, but not the ethnic or national sense ... so every Bosniak should know that 'Bosnian' is neither his ethnic nor national name, nor is

closer to the date of the census for citizens to register rather as Bosnian and Herzegovinians, a non-religious identity.[62] The IZ warns that this risks costing Bosniaks their status as the state's majority community, because they, but not Croats and Serbs, are most likely to go for this option.[63]

C. *The Islamic Community in the Region*

Since its move to Sarajevo in 1993, the IZ has debated whether its role is to assist Muslims in Bosnia (many but not all consider themselves Bosniaks) or Bosniaks throughout the former Yugoslavia (many Muslims in the Sandžak region of Serbia claim to be Bosniak) and beyond. Cerić has claimed that unlike the late Alija Izetbegović, who wanted to Islamise Muslims around the world, his ambition is "to nationalise Bosniaks".[64]

Serbia's Sandžak's Bosniaks are deeply divided: two Islamic Communities and two National Councils operate there.[65] As grand mufti, Cerić played a key role in Sandžak for years, openly supporting Mufti Zukorlić from Novi Pazar against his rival, Adem Zilkić.[66] In 2011 he went so far as to state that Zukorlić "is the leader whom I follow in the Bosniak awakening and pan-Bosniak movement" despite being officially superior to him in the IZ hierarchy.[67]

Over the past year, Cerić and Zukorlić advocated Bosniak participation in the Montenegro census and the one planned in Bosnia in 2013, issuing religious judicial decisions (*fatwa*) and giving televised statements on how Bosniaks should register.[68] Both have played on war-time grievances and ongoing Croat and Serb provocations to encourage Bosniaks to unite and demand more political rights throughout the region.

Cerić and Zukorlić jointly established the World Bosniak Congress (Svjetski Bošnjački Kongres, SBK) in Sarajevo on 29 December 2012. Its founding assembly comprised mostly Bosniaks from the diaspora and a few intellectuals and was conspicuously ignored by the Bosniak parties, IZ officials and the media. The SBK chose

'Muslim' his ethnic or national identity". "Proclamation of the Rijaset of the Islamic Community on the Census", 12 November 2012.

[62] Crisis Group interview, activist Darko Brkan, Freising, Germany, 17 November 2012.

[63] A recent survey showed that most BiH citizens plan to register as Bosniaks, Croats or Serbs. Depending on how the question is formulated, about half identified as Bosniaks and about a third as Serbs, while Croats were about 10 per cent; only between 1.7 and 4.3 per cent of interviewees said they would register as Bosnians or something else. Prism Research, press release, 14 February 2013.

[64] Cerić speech at the academy celebrating twenty years of the Association of Sandžak-born people living in the Federation, 20 April 2011, on YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5mdYF0Z8gs.

[65] Until 1912, the Sandžak of Novi Pazar was an Ottoman administrative region stretching across modern-day south-western Serbia and northern Montenegro. The Serbian state refers to the area as Raška. For more details, see Crisis Group Europe Reports N°162, *Serbia's Sandzak: Still Forgotten*, 8 April 2005, and N°48, *Sandzak: Calm for Now*, 9 November 1998. The Islamic community in the region has been divided since 1993, when one group decided to remain allied to the IZ in Serbia, while the other chose to follow the IZ in Sarajevo. In 2007, this led to several armed clashes, as both sides claimed to represent Muslims in Sandžak.

[66] Even two days before the official end of his mandate, Grand Mufti Cerić undermined the fragile entente nurtured between Zukorlić and Zilkić by strongly criticising the latter.

[67] Cerić speech at the academy celebrating Association of Sandžak-born people, op. cit.

[68] Many Bosniak leaders fear some Bosniaks will register as Bosnians, others as Muslims. "Poruka Bošnjacima Crne Gore" ["Message to the Bosniaks of Montenegro"], YouTube, 27 March 2011, online (www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AfUnDAZ0wg).

Cerić as its president, with Zukorlić as speaker of the assembly, and adopted strategies that many Bosniaks perceived as highly nationalistic.[69]

The founding documents claim that "Bosnia and Herzegovina is the homeland of all Bosniaks", and that Bosniaks wish to have "all that the other peoples of the Balkans also have: a self-aware nation and a sovereign state".[70] The SBK defines itself as a "national, supra-party organisation" that will monitor "national policy in securing the vital national interests of the Bosniaks, the majority people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Sandžak".[71] It calls for replacing decision-making in BiH by consensus among its three constituent peoples with majority rule. This creates, a local journalist cautioned:

> … an explosive mix of Islam and nationalism in BiH and Sandžak [that can easily get out of control]. One Islamic terrorist can certainly make some damage if he is allowed to carry out his act, but it is nothing compared to the damage which Reis Cerić can make fuelling Bosniak nationalism and frustrations.[72]

Although the SBK's founding assembly, in the absence of any major political or religious leader, seemed to have very limited immediate impact, it triggered concerns and public criticism. A Mostar daily reported that Cerić and Zukorlić plan to use the SBK to take responsibility for relations with the global Islamic community away from the new grand mufti, Kavazović, and sideline the SDA by establishing a new political party for the 2014 elections.[73] This would likely further divide the Bosniak political scene and add to growing Bosniak nationalism, since Cerić still enjoys moral authority, while most Bosniak politicians' popularity is waning.[74] Establishment of the SBK also opens the door wider for Mufti Zukorlić to enter the BiH political scene, using his SBK function as a mandate. Some IZ officials view this as a dangerous prospect that the new grand mufti should stop.[75]

[69] "These Bosniaks who sign up to these documents have given up on multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina". Crisis Group phone interview, Bosniak theologist, 18 December 2012.
[70] "Osnivačka deklaracija" ["Founding declaration"], 29 December 2012, on SBK website (www.sbk.eu.com).
[71] Ibid. Bosniaks are only a majority in the three eastern municipalities of the Serbian Sandžak and two eastern municipalities of the Montenegrin Sandžak; the western municipalities, which adjoin BiH, have Serb majorities.
[72] Crisis Group interview, Esad Hećimović, publicist, journalist, Sarajevo, 23 November 2012.
[73] "Mustafa Cerić protiv Raisa Kavazovića i SDA?" ["Mustafa Cerić against Rais Kavazović and SDA? "], *Dnevni List*, 8 January 2013 (online).
[74] Crisis Group interviews, Bosniak experts and intellectuals, Sarajevo, Mostar, Travnik and Banja Luka, September-December 2012.
[75] "Although his position in IZ limits his mandate to Sandžak and prevents him from operating in BiH, Mufti Zukorlić used his new function in SBK to tour Bosniak communities and give speeches across BiH in early 2013. The new reis has to stop this practice", Crisis Group interview, senior IZ official, Sarajevo, 14 February 2013.

IV. New Islamic Groups and Influences

During and immediately after the war, new Islamic groups, often conservative and some adhering to Salafist teachings, appeared in BiH, especially in Sarajevo, Zenica, Mostar and parts of Central Bosnia.[76] Muslim foreign fighters were given an official status, when the El Mujahed unit was established as a part of the ABH 3rd Corps in 1993.[77] Between 2,000 and 5,000 fought in BiH before the 1995 Dayton peace accord, after which most were expelled under strong U.S. pressure.[78] Some are alleged to have committed war crimes against Croats and Serbs, as described at the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY).[79] Several Gulf countries and Iran gave substantial financial support, including for several Muslim organisations to engage in religious activities.[80] Some funds most likely also went into private pockets and helped reinforce the influence of Bosniak officials in charge of distribution.

Immediately after the war, foreign fighters were accused of several attacks on civilians, leading to detentions, arrests and seizure of weapons, explosives and other equipment.[81] More recently, violent incidents linked to Muslim extremists (see Appendix A) have generally been perpetuated by isolated, mentally-challenged individuals, criminals or Bosnian émigrés who joined radical groups in Europe and the U.S.[82]

The most striking event occurred on 28 October 2011, when Mevlid Jašarević fired at the U.S. embassy in Sarajevo for over 40 minutes, wounding a local policeman. He had a juvenile criminal record (in Austria and Sandžak) and spent some time in the Salafi community in the northern Bosnian village of Gornja Maoča.[83] On 6 December 2012, he was sentenced to eighteen years in prison – the single longest sentence for terrorism in Bosnia. Jašarević justified his action by his faith.[84] Some Salafis suspect

[76] For background on political Islam in general, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°37, *Understanding Islamism*, 2 March 2005.

[77] International War Crimes Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia,ICTY, Judgement Summary, case against General Rasim Delić (IT-04-83), On 15 September 2008, Delić was sentenced to three years in prison for "cruel treatment as a violation of the Laws or Customs of War", for not having prevented events in Livade and the Kamenica Camp in July and August 1995, ibid. Delić died on 16 April 2010, at home on provisional release pending resolution of appeals.

[78] NATO-led forces on 16 February 1996 raided an alleged terrorist camp near Pogorelica in central Bosnia, where, according to some reports, Iran was training Bosniak special forces. Several Bosniak officials said it was a simple police training camp. "Globalni terorizam i/li čaršijska osveta" ["Global terrorism and/or revenge"], *Dani*, 19 April 2002. Crisis Group interviews, domestic and international security officials, Sarajevo, September-November 2012.

[79] During the trial of Rasim Delić, the prosecution presented evidence of several separate incidents carried out by Muslim fighters against captured soldiers and civilians, including the killing of 24 Bosnian Croat civilians and soldiers and wounding of six in June 1993 in the village of Bikoši near Travnik; killing of three RS soldiers; the cruel treatment of RS army captives in July and August 1995 in two camps near Zavidovići; and killing of approximately 60 Bosnian Serb soldiers and civilians at the Kamenica Camp between 11 September 1995 and 14 December 1995. Judgment summary, op. cit.

[80] Crisis Group interview, Bosniak academic Muhamed Filipović, Sarajevo, 28 October 2012.

[81] Crisis Group Report, *Bin Laden and the Balkans*, op. cit., pp. 9-15.

[82] Experts underline that it is often very difficult to clearly differentiate between genuine terrorist, criminal or other attacks. Crisis Group interviews, security experts, Sarajevo, September-November 2012.

[83] "Odgođeno suđenje Mevlidu Jašareviću" ["Trial of Mevlid Jašarević postponed"], Radio Sarajevo, 8 October 2012 (online).

[84] "I do not have to provide any explanation why I am attacking Americans. They have stood up in battle against Islam and Muslims in the entire world …. What is happening in this region? Americans are preparing a new slaughter of Muslims together with Croats and Serbs. … I warn Muslims of

he was a provocateur or assert the incident was staged, but few defend his actions.[85] Yet, some RS officials continue to talk as though the country faces an organised extremist threat: "Not all Wahhabis are terrorists, but all terrorists are Wahhabis", one told Crisis Group.[86]

Salafi groups in Bosnia remain small, though numbers of followers are difficult to determine.[87] They can be differentiated according to their relationship to the Islamic Community, BiH and violence.[88]

A. *Incorporated Islamists*

Many conservative Muslim, who often identify as Salafis, accept the IZ and the Bosnian government's authority. Their main concern is the purity of Islamic faith and practice, but some, notably a number of veterans of the El Mujahed and other BiH army units, are also fiercely patriotic. The role model for many is the former military commander, Nezim ef. Halilović, the charismatic preacher at the King Fahd Mosque in Sarajevo. Halilović himself is not Salafi but an established IZ leader, director of its annual pilgrimage to Mecca. His fiery sermons – reproduced on the IZ website and available on video – are a distinctive fusion of "the decisive struggle for faith, honour and the state".[89]

Halilović taps into deep-rooted Bosniak anger fed by memories of the war. On anniversaries of key wartime events, he has excoriated the "aggressors and domestic traitors and criminals" who, he says, committed atrocities against Bosniaks, as well as the international community that abetted them by denying Bosnia arms for self-defence.[90] He has a unique ability to combine a vision of renewal with righteous anger:

> Brothers and sisters, we must fight for Srebrenica and our beautiful eastern Bosnia politically, by registering and voting there, by rebuilding houses and working the fields. But our struggle is also through prayer, tears and sighs, and that is why we pray that all trace of the criminals be lost, that Allah, dželle še'nuhu [Glory be

Bosnia, … Muslims in Bosnia to Macedonia, to wake up, to be careful and take up the Koran". Mevlid Jašarević, statement recorded on the day of attack, 28 October 2011, shown on FTV program "60 Minutes" on 19 March 2012 (online). Jašarević also threatened Germany, saying it had one month to pull out of Afghanistan.

[85] Crisis Group interview, members of Salafi group, Novi Pazar, 9 November 2012.

[86] Crisis Group interview, senior RS law enforcement official, Banja Luka, 2 April 2012. Many Salafis consider the term Wahhabi derogatory.

[87] Experts offer different numbers. Some thousands are incorporated in local communities and recognise and respect Bosnia's governments and IZ rules. The number of un-incorporated, more extreme Salafis, most of whom live in separate and remote communities, is smaller, not exceeding a couple thousand, including women, children and elderly, Crisis Group interviews, local and international experts, August-November 2012.

[88] Crisis Group interview, Vlado Azinović, professor, Sarajevo University, Sarajevo, 10 October 2012.

[89] Nezim ef. Halilović, "Dvadesetogodišnjica Armije RBiH" ["The twentieth anniversary of the Army of the Republic of BiH"], *hutba* (Friday sermon), 13 April 2012 (online). During the war, he served as the main imam at Konjic Mosque, as well as commander of the famous 4th Muslim brigade; he was wounded twice and received the top military award, the Zlatni Ljiljan (Golden Lily).

[90] "When the Serbian criminals in Bijeljina could not distinguish Bosniak from non-Bosniak, they killed all the circumcised men"; instead of arms, the U.S. dropped "Bibles, and lunch packets with pork". Nezim ef. Halilović, "Dvadeset godina od početka oružane agresije i genocida u republici Bosni i Hercegovini" ["Twenty years since the start of armed aggression and genocide in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina"], *hutba* (Friday sermon), 6 April 2012 (online).

> to His Supreme Being], punish them with the punishment they deserve, and they deserve to be totally destroyed … just as they killed all the male descendants of my people![91]

Yet, Halilović is also comfortable with Bosnia's religious and national diversity. "There are more half-naked women on the streets of Sarajevo and more covered women in Germany and England", he has said. "Bosnia is a free country, and [we] are open to differences".[92]

This union of patriotism and conservative Islam is the hallmark of veterans of the Active Islamic Youth (Aktivna Islamska Omladina, AIO), an organisation closed in 2006 due to lack of funds, as well as of its magazine, *Saff*, which is still published online. Although it includes many former soldiers, it is not violent, and its members are well integrated in society. They participate in elections and tend to support the SDA, though they avoid openly endorsing any political party. Some dream of the introduction of Islamic law (Sharia) but understand this is not realistic now.[93]

The informal group is keen on promoting Islam and what it considers to be Bosniak patriotism, but what Croats, Serbs and more moderate Bosniaks sometimes perceive as exclusionary nationalism; however, its members are almost equally focused on Islamic religious issues, Bosniak national interests and the future of BiH. Halilović reminds his audiences that the war-time Srebrenica atrocity "is teaching us to be dignified, moral, incorporated in local community (*džemat*), religiously, nationally and politically mature. It teaches us to remember and to pass that remembrance to our descendants".[94] Nevertheless, he explained to Crisis Group, this does not mean being obsessed with vengeance:

> There is no compromise [to be made] when it comes to BiH's territorial integrity. But Bosniaks do not want Bosnia only for themselves; our goal is to preserve multiethnic B[osnia and H[erzogovina], because any attempt to break [it] apart would mean a new war …. But we do not want that to happen, and that must not happen".[95]

Semir Imamović, editor of *Saff*, promotes similar positions:

> If Bosniaks grow more nationalist, we will become like Palestinians, people without a state. We do not want a state only for ourselves. The only way forward is without major changes, without major centralisation, without the abolishment of Republika Srpska. A joint platform has to be found.[96]

[91] Nezim ef. Halilović, "Neka su prokleti ubice naroda mog" ["Let the murderers of my people be cursed"], *hutba* (Friday sermon), 13 July 2012 (online).
[92] Crisis Group interview, Sarajevo, 14 November 2012.
[93] Crisis Group interview, Ezher Beganović, *Saff* journalist, Travnik, 8 October, 2012.
[94] Nezim Halilović, "Neka su prokleti ubice naroda mog" "[Damned be killers of my people"], *hutba* (Friday sermon), 13 July 2012, online.
[95] Crisis Group interview, Sarajevo, 14 November 2012.
[96] Crisis Group interview, Bugojno, 8 October 2012.

B. *Unincorporated Islamists*

Several smaller Salafi groups exist that do not accept the supremacy of the IZ or the state. They advocate the introduction of Sharia and do not recognise the Bosnian government, legislation or electoral system.[97] The main concerns of the incorporated Islamists – justice for wartime crimes, Bosnia's survival as a strong state, the fate of the Bosniak people – mean little or nothing to them. Their primary or exclusive focus is the purity of faith and practice. Cut off from domestic sources of religious instruction and authority and often linked to self-taught preachers, some adopt eccentric or extreme interpretations of Islam and regard most Bosniaks as heathens. Insofar as they attend to politics, it is to the *umma* (the global Islamic community) and issues such as Palestine and the war in Syria. A prominent representative is Muhamed Fadil Porča, imam of the Islamic Community Tewhid in Vienna. Several other such groups operate in or from Austria, Sweden and Sandžak. Two other prominent leaders are Bilal Bosnić in Bihać and Nusret Imamović, who runs a community in Gornja Maoča.[98]

Most unincorporated Islamists choose to live in secluded and remote areas, because of their belief that true Muslims who reside in an apostate state should resort to *hijra* (exodus) from the infidel world.[99] They operate through numerous web portals that are maintained by only a few persons but suggest a relatively large following and financial support.[100] These websites are often associated with certain groups and leaders, or with themes. For example, putvjernika.com (The path of believers) is strongly focused on global jihad; others, like essunne.com, post information on a mix of topics from jihad to theological questions; there are also those, such as studiotewhid.it.gg and sahwa.info, that are much more focused on more practical, less militant themes, such as healing or education. The balkanskiemirat.com (The Balkans Emirate) site appears to have affinities with the North Caucasus insurgency in Russia, the Caucasus Emirate.[101]

In some communities, unincorporated Salafis cause trouble by encouraging Bosniaks to denounce other Muslims as non-believers, a practice known as *takfir*. Bosnian folk Islam contains many traditions that the IZ considers superstitions; there is a history of tension between traditional village practice and official Islam, though the two largely coexist.[102] For mainstream conservative Muslims, "people like [Bilal] Bosnić [see below] and [Nusret] Imamović are enthusiastic, but they do not live in the real world, and because of that, they can cause much damage to the Bosniaks and Bosnia".[103]

[97] An exchange on the Rijaset website shows this line of thinking; a questioner urges the faithful to reject voting: "a great idolatry for which [they] go eternally to hell and that we should finally put a stop to and break off from supporting un-Islamic structures even at the cost of our lives". The IZ official replies that "Not all parties and candidates are the same …. With that kind of thinking you do more harm than good to Islam and Muslims". Enes Ljevaković, questions and answers. www.rijaset.ba.

[98] Crisis Group interview, Vlado Azinović, professor, Sarajevo University, 26 November 2012.

[99] The *Hijra* (also *Hijrat* or *Hegira*) is the migration or journey of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 to establish the first Islamic state.

[100] Crisis Group interview, Vlado Azinović, professor, Sarajevo University, 26 November 2012.

[101] For information on the Caucasus Emirate, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°221, *The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (II), Islam, The Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*, 19 October 2012.

[102] See Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village* (Princeton, 1995).

[103] Crisis Group interview, Nezim ef. Halilović, imam, King Fahd Mosque, Sarajevo, 14 November 2012.

Some officials, especially in RS, find it disturbing that some Islamist settlements are near inter-entity borders or arms depots.[104] They fear extremists could be strategically positioning themselves in case of another conflict to serve as a Bosniak military vanguard, but Islamist experts strongly disagree and say these areas are chosen because they are cheaper. "Bosniak nationalism and Islamic radicalism are not connected in that way. As a matter of fact, these Salafi and *takfiri* concepts are directly opposed to the Bosnian national concepts. They [the Salafis] do not recognise any administration or laws that are man-made and would certainly not fight for one".[105] Bilal Bosnić has also reflected this position.[106]

In 2007-2008 a group led by Jusuf Barčić caused suspicion against "the unincorporated" to rise, when it first occupied a mosque in a village near the north-eastern town of Kalesija and later tried to forcibly enter one of the biggest and oldest Sarajevo mosques, Careva džamija (the Emperor's Mosque).[107] After a few days of deadlock and confrontation with local police, the group was removed, and the IZ reestablished full control. Some within the Barčić group may justify violent jihad, but they generally say that the time is not suitable to take up arms, though it is appropriate to prepare for holy war.[108]

Bosnić and Nusret Imamović, on the other hand, have recently publicly called for non-violence, possibly due to increased police scrutiny and investigations into their activities. Immediately after Jašarević's attack on the U.S. embassy, Imamović criticised it:

> This action was incorrect, and we do not support it. We do not invite people to behave like this, and we do not teach people to go down that road. There can be no excuse for this …. Muslims are weak and oppressed and must not use force, because people could only get confused and would turn their heads even more away from this religion …. This was aimless bloodshed which is not prescribed by the religion. The religion prescribes jihad, which is the fight on the path of Allah, the fight to elevate Allah's faith.[109]

[104] Crisis Group interview, RS officials, Banja Luka, January-November 2012.

[105] Crisis Group telephone interview, Islamic expert, 2 December, 2012 He also stressed that the conflict between Bosnian national and Islamic radical concepts turned away many mujahidin who came to fight for Bosnia and were disappointed after realising that Bosnian Muslims were not fighting for Sharia but for the defence of their national space and identity.

[106] "How can we work and cooperate with those who give advantage to nationalism over Islam and Islamic regulations?", in speech, at http://sahwa.info.

[107] "Vehabije siju strah u Federaciji" ["Wahabbis spread fear in Federation"], Banja Luka daily *Nezavisne Novine*, 18 February 2007; "Vehabije jurišaju na džamije" ["Wahhabis charge on mosques"], *Nacional*, 13 March 2012.

[108] "If I hear the news that people are called up to jihad to create this state as an Islamic state, I will answer immediately, not only 10,000 Bosnian mujahidin but the entire Europe of mujahidin will answer", statement by Muradif Hamzabegović, FTV special documentary "Braća" (Brothers), www.youtube.com/watch?v=eu8BExLulyQ. "Muslims have to have their own strength and have to know when this war comes … they must be ready and must be united", statement by Bilal Bosnić and Ibrahim Delić, published on 7 June 2012 by Safimedia.balkan, www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Pmu7IxP6E.

[109] "Nusret Imamović: Mevlid Jašarević nanio nam je štetu, takav postupak ne može se opravdati" ["Nusret Imamović: Mevlid Jašarević has inflicted damage upon us, such action cannot be justified"], news report and video on Bportal.ba, 30 October 2011.

Bosnić and Imamović also jointly appeared in September 2012, during a large conference in Sarajevo, at a roundtable entitled "Extremism, terrorism – extent and definitions",[110] and "spoke in favour of Sharia but not of jihad". Islamist experts believe that they do not reject jihad altogether but want to time it correctly.[111]

Ultimately, most international experts concur, Bosnia and the rest of the Balkans are not key regions for harbouring or funding terrorists. They have only a secondary role, as a transit or recuperation area. Nevertheless, Bosnia's continuing problems "make it vulnerable to terrorist groups in the future".[112] A senior Bosnian law enforcement official summarised:

In BiH, like in every other country, there is always a possibility of a terrorist attack by an individual, like what we have seen in the case of Mevludin Jašarević. However, if we are talking about organised terrorist groups – we do not see them here at the moment.[113]

V. Conclusion

Acts of violence in recent years by Bosniaks are not a symptom of Islam's rise in the Balkans but a reflection of stress and fragmentation of traditional Islamic society and the ongoing morass that is Bosnian politics. Virtually all identified perpetrators come from places where the influences of mosque, community and family have broken down: the European diaspora and the margins of Bosniak society. The heart of Bosnian Islam remains in Sarajevo, which produces much fiery preaching but no violence.

The threat of Islamic terrorism has been exaggerated and misused in BiH for years. Media campaigns, mostly run by RS leaders, keep alive the memory of crimes committed by mujahidin fighters during the 1992-1995 war long after most perpetrators have left the country. Occasional attacks such as that against the U.S. embassy help create the false impression that Bosnia is falling increasingly under the influence of jihadis. The vast majority of the country's small Islamist population eschews violence, and political integration even of those tempted to it would be "the best option with which to defuse radicalism".[114]

Bosniak national ideology stands on two legs: allegiance to the Bosnian state and affiliation with Islam, the latter a cultural identity shared by practising and secular alike. Traditionally, the Islamic component has drawn Bosniaks inward, encouraging a focus on community prosperity and a neighbourly attitude toward Croats and Serbs. Loyalty to the state pulls outward and causes tensions with Serbs, most of whom see BiH as a necessary evil and would prefer RS to be independent, and with many Croats, who desire an autonomous entity of their own. The role of Islam has been shifting toward a patriotic embrace of the state, under the influence of former fighters and the IZ's attempts to fill what it considers a political vacuum left by secular Bosniak parties. Much depends on that shift and on whether it succeeds in framing a

[110] Audio recording available on www.essunne.com, 22 September 2012, online (http://archive.org/details/ExtremizamTerorizamNusretImamovicEssunne).
[111] Crisis Group phone interview, Islamic expert, 2 December 2012.
[112] "Islamic Terrorism and the Balkans", U.S. Congressional Research Service, 15 January, 2008, made public by WikiLeaks.
[113] Crisis Group interview, Sarajevo, 19 November 2012.
[114] Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam, The Search for a New Ummah* (New York, 2004), p. 64.

vision of Bosnia that can be shared by Croats and Serbs. Having stepped into the political arena, the Islamic Community has a responsibility to push Bosnian politics in that direction.

Sarajevo/Brussels, 26 February 2013

Appendix A: Attacks in Bosnia and abroad generally connected with Bosniaks (1997-2011)

- On 12 April 1997, during the visit of Pope John Paul II to Sarajevo, local police discovered and removed an explosive device under the bridge over which he was to drive. Although the perpetrators were never discovered, police subsequently said they suspected Islamic insurgents (mujahidin).[115]
- On 17 September 1998, in Mostar (west), four suspected insurgents detonated a car bomb in front of a police station, wounding over 50 people.[116]
- On 24 December 2002, a self-declared "Wahhabi", Muamer Topalović from Konjic, entered the house of Croat returnee family Anđelić in the village of Kostajnica and killed three members. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison.[117]
- On 20 October 2005, Federation [the majority Bosniak of the state's two entities] police arrested four Bosniaks, Mirsad Bektašević, Abdulkadir Cesur, Bajro Ikanović and Senad Hasanović, for possession of almost 20kg of explosives and other equipment. On 21 May 2007 a state court found them guilty of plotting terrorist activities and gave them sentences ranging from six months to eight years.[118]
- On 27 February 2006, Vedad Hafizović killed his mother, because she did not want to pray with him. He was placed in an institution after he was determined to be mentally unstable.[119]
- On February 12, 2007, Bosnian-born teenager Sulejman Talović killed five and wounded four at a mall in Salt Lake City (U.S.), before being shot dead by police. No evidence has been found of ideological or political motivations for his attack.[120]
- On October 9, 2008, a bomb detonated in a shopping mall in the central Bosnian town Vitez, killing one and wounding one. The case was prosecuted before the state court as an act of terrorism, although officials and media suggested it was more likely related to organised crime.[121] Suvad Đidić and Amir Ibrahimi, were sentenced to nine years and two years in prison respectively.[122]
- On July 27, 2009, Anes Subašić, a Bosnian immigrant and U.S. citizen was arrested with six others in North Carolina (U.S.) and subsequently sentenced to 30 years in prison for unlawful procurement of citizenship and conspiring to provide material support to terrorists.[123]

[115] "Munir Alibabić tvrdi da su mudžahedini planirali atentat na papu Ivana Pavla II" ["Munir Alibabić Munja claims that mujahidin were plotting assassination of Pope John Paul II"], *Vijesti*, 11 November 2002 (online).
[116] "Da se ne zaboravi: 15. godina od terorističkog napada na Mostar" ["Not to be forgotten, 15 years since the terrorist attack in Mostar"], Hercegovina.info and other web portals, 18 September 2012.
[117] "Dossier: Svi vehabijski slučajevi i ispadi" ["Dossier: All Wahhabi cases and incidents"], Radio Sarajevo, 30 June 2010 (online).
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] "Trolley Square: A search for answers", *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 February 2007 (online).
[121] Crisis Group interview, senior Bosnian intelligence official, 19 November 2012.
[122] BiH Court press releases, cases against Đidić and Ibrahimi, 30 July 2009, 3 March 2010 (online).
[123] "North Carolina Resident Anes Subasic Sentenced for Terrorism Violations", Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), press release, 24 August 2012 (online).

- On 5 November 2009, Federation police carried out a series of raids in Sarajevo and Bugojno and arrested three Salafis, Rijad Rustempašić, Abdulah Handžić and Edis Velić, who had been previously arrested and were under police surveillance. Two years later they were sentenced to four and a half years, three years and four months respectively for illegal possession of weapons.[124]
- On June 27, 2010, a car bomb exploded in front of the police station in the central Bosnian town of Bugojno. A local police officer was killed and six other persons] injured. The main suspect, Haris Čaušević, and a few of his associates were arrested. Čaušević is a former member of the local Salafi community with a criminal record. His trial is still ongoing.[125]
- Adis Medunjanin, a Bosnia-born U.S. citizen was arrested in August 2010 and sentenced to life in prison in November 2012 for a foiled suicide bomb attack on New York subways.[126]
- On 28 October 2011, Mevlid Jašarević fired at the U.S. embassy in Sarajevo with an AK-47 rifle for over 40 minutes, wounding a local policeman. Jašarević had a criminal record and had spent some time in the Salafi community in Gornja Maoča.[127] On 6 December 2012, he was sentenced to eighteen years in prison – the single longest sentence for terrorism in Bosnia. The decision is still open to appeal.

[124] "Rustempašić, Handžić i Velić osuđeni za terorizam i udruživanje radi činjenja krivičnih djela" [Rustempašić, Handžić and Velić convicted for terrorism and association for criminal activities], Sarajevo daily *Dnevni Avaz*, 10 November 2011 (online).
[125] "Bugojno: Haris Čaušević, zvani Oks priznao teroristički napad, hapšenje saučesnika…" ["Bugojno: Haris Čaušević, nicknamed Oks, admitted committing the terrorist attack, culprits arrested"], Tuzla canton radio and television, 27 June 2010 (online).
[126] "New York man gets life in prison for subway bomb plot labelled one of the closest calls since 9/11", *Daily Mail*, 17 November 2012 (online).
[127] "Odgođeno suđenje Mevlidu Jašareviću" ["Trial of Mevlid Jašarević postponed"], Radio Sarajevo, 8 October 2012 (online).

Appendix B: Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina

International Crisis Group
WORKING TO PREVENT CONFLICT WORLDWIDE

International Crisis Group
Headquarters
Avenue Louise 149
1050 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 2 502 90 38
Fax: +32 2 502 50 38
brussels@crisisgroup.org

New York Office
newyork@crisisgroup.org

Washington Office
washington@crisisgroup.org

London Office
london@crisisgroup.org

Moscow Office
moscow@crisisgroup.org

Regional Offices and Field Representation
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