

CEE ACTIVITIES OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD – FINAL REPORT: NORTH MACEDONIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, & CONCLUSIONS FOR THE REGION

National Security Programme



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Cover photo from a protest in Tunisia of an individual flashing the Rabia sign.
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INTRODUCTION

Does political Islam as presented by the Muslim Brotherhood have space to be successful in countries with indigenous Muslim populations and would its success vary according to these countries' forms of Islamic religiosity, institutional setup of Muslim communities, and level of integration, discrimination, or presence of radical Islamist forces? GLOBSEC with the Counter Extremism Project (CEP) started the project, CEE activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, to help answer these questions and more in the context of five Central and Eastern European countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, North Macedonia, Poland, and Serbia. Each constitutes a different landscape of Muslim communities and their representative religious organisations, and they represent distinct case studies to map the activities of the Brotherhood movement and its success and failure over time. The two previous reports within this project elaborated on the methodology of this endeavour and detailed the cases of three countries (the Czech Republic, Poland, and Serbia).

This report focuses on organisations in two additional countries, namely North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The countries covered in the previous report had certain trends that have parallels in all five countries. The same, however, cannot be said about the state of the Islamic circles in the two countries at the center of this report. North Macedonian Muslim communities are exposed to a rich variety of influences, some Islamists that have faded over time, and others have come from Turkey. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, is vastly different due to its longer history of exposure to the

Muslim Brotherhood, although it has not been a very successful or straightforward process. However, some of this movement's inspiration remains among a certain segment of the local Muslim population.

The report concludes with a summary of the four types of groups uncovered by the research in all five countries at the center of this project, organised into broad categories. Each category represents a different typology in their modus operandi, their goals, and most importantly their links to the Muslim Brotherhood. The first are student and youth organisations. In most cases these were set up decades ago and gradually started occupying a marginal space in Islamic communities as their leaders withered away from the scene. The second category of organisations are the mainstream groups and have the widest reach. However these groups only briefly "dabbled in Islamist waters" at some point in their past by connecting to mostly Western-based institutions that supposedly are linked to the Muslim Brotherhood. The third category contains several loosely organised political activists and a youth organisation, all of whom openly supported the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt, in particularly around the so-called Arab Spring in Egypt in 2011-2013, or take inspiration from ideologues of the Muslim Brotherhood, maintaining links to them and their Brussels-based institutions. The last category includes organisations that are slowly approaching the sphere of political Islam with the help of actors other than the Muslim Brotherhood.

NORTH MACEDONIA

According to the last census conducted in 2002, one-third of the North Macedonian population is Muslim.¹ They are further divided across ethnic lines, with the largest part being ethnic Albanians (25%), followed by Turks, Bosniaks, and Torbeši.² However, this information is considered outdated by many, suggesting that the current population of Muslims in North Macedonia comprises somewhere between 36.6%³ and 43.6%⁴.

The main religious authority for Muslims in North Macedonia is the Islamic Religious Community (мак. Исламска верска заедница, alb. Bashkësisë Islame, IVZ), which holds the official status of a religious community. The IVZ was established in 1991 and recognised by the government in 1994.⁵ The official website of the IVZ strongly propagates peace, and they have previously denounced radical actors and actions in North Macedonia.⁶

Muslim Brotherhood presence in North Macedonia

Similar to Serbia, there is a large gap in academic and policy research that focuses on the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood as a movement of political Islam in the country.⁷ However, during the research conducted for this study concerning North Macedonian organisations connected to the Muslim Brotherhood network, one was found to be a member of the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO). The organisation is called Forumi Rinor Islam (eng. Islamic Youth Forum, FRI), headquartered in Tetovo.⁸ Its representatives have attended FEMYSO events and conferences, and were elected members of FEMYSO's leadership

team.⁹ The FRI is described as a non-governmental youth organisation, established in 2000 as a result of the activity and will of youth.¹⁰ The organisation has a presence online via a website and social media pages, including a YouTube channel, Facebook page with over 5,000 followers, and Instagram with 1,700 followers.¹¹ The FRI also controls an old web domain that is currently not used nor accessible.¹² Unlike the FEMYSO member from Bosnia and Herzegovina, AKOS, the FRI website contains few articles on the topic of the Muslim Brotherhood. The vast majority of those that do, around 15 articles, are dated from between 2012 and 2016 and cover the events surrounding the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.¹³ One interview with Intissar Kherigi, president of FEMYSO and daughter of Tunisian Ennahda Party¹⁴ leader Rached Ghannouchi, is also presented on the website, although without any mention of political Islam or the Brotherhood.¹⁵ The FRI website also shows just one article on the life and work of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna.¹⁶

FRI's activities revolve mainly around education and humanitarian aid, as is evident on their social media outputs. The organisation offers multiple trainings for youth on the topics of health and education,¹⁷ and gives awards, such as the "Young Scientist of the Year", during its annual Islamic New Year celebration.¹⁸ The FRI organises humanitarian aid actions, the last of which was the collection of funds for food and hygiene products for families in need across North Macedonia.¹⁹ There is no information available under the "activism" tab on its website. In terms of addressing political topics, only pleas to the organisers of the LGBT Pride parade and youth in



1 Lyubcho Neshkov, "There Is No Internal Islamic Threat in Macedonia, Foreign Forces Import Radical Islam," ed. Lyubomir Kyuchukov (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, n.d.), 1–115, p. 74.
 2 See: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf>.
 3 See: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/republic-north-macedonia/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions_en.
 4 See: http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/republic-of-macedonia/#/?affiliations_religion_id=16&affiliations_year=2020®ion_name=All%20Countries&restrictions_year=2016.
 5 See: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf>.
 6 Lyubcho Neshkov, "There Is No Internal Islamic Threat in Macedonia, Foreign Forces Import Radical Islam," p. 74.
 7 North Macedonia (NM) Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 2, 30 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 3, 1 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 5, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 6, 2 October 2020, Skopje.
 8 See: <https://femyso.org/member-organisations/>; <https://femyso.org/profiles/forumi-rinor-islam/>.
 9 See: <https://fri.org.mk/femyso-zgodhi-krjesine-e-re/>.
 10 See: <https://www.facebook.com/ForumiRinorIslamDegaTetov/>.
 11 See: https://www.facebook.com/ForumiRinorIslam-Islamic-Youth-Forum-112486983454108/photos/?ref=page_internal;https://www.instagram.com/forumirinorislam/.
 12 See: <https://www.fri.mk/>.
 13 See: <https://fri.org.mk/?s=v%C3%ABllaz%C3%ABria+muslimane>.
 14 The Tunisian Ennahda Party is thought have been inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood.
 15 See: <https://fri.org.mk/intervista-e-intissar-kherigi-udheheqese-e-femyso/>.
 16 See: <https://fri.org.mk/hasan-el-benna-ylli-i-thirresve-2/>.
 17 See: <https://fri.org.mk/fri-tetove-sektori-i-femres-organizoi-ligeraten-me-teme-preventimi-i-semundjeve/>.
 18 See: <https://portalb.mk/325897-forumi-rinor-islam-dekoroi-me-te-miret-me-rastin-e-vitit-te-ri-islam/>.
 19 See: https://www.launchgood.com/project/shporta_e_ramazanit_1#!/.

Macedonia were found, calling for an end to practices that lead to an “unbalance of moral components”.²⁰

While FRI is not officially connected to any political party in North Macedonia, experts suggested that the organisation generally operates in the domain of political Islam.²¹ A conference organized by FRI in August 2011 titled “Islam in Europe (Danger or Salvation)” attracted significant public attention due to its suspected connections to Islamic radicalism, as the guest speaker was Hani Ramadan, brother of Tariq Ramadan and grandson of Hassan al-Banna.²² The IVZ in North Macedonia expressed concerns over these events as they believed that NGO involvement in the organisation of religious meetings and lectures as well as fundraising activities signify interfere in religious affairs, which are the responsibility of the community.²³

It is interesting to note that there is no mention of this conference on FRI’s current social media accounts, except for the recording on its YouTube channel.²⁴ Furthermore, the latest available posts are from eight years ago, which could signify the organisation distancing itself from this past event and its repercussions. A expert interviewee suggested that FRI currently holds a good reputation and that the organisation is not considered to be linked with the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁵

In addition, Legis, a North Macedonian NGO, attracted attention due to the involvement of Jasmin Redžepi, the former president of the group and husband of the current president, in the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in 2010, which sparked controversy for its possible connections to the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁶ Operating since 2009, LEGIS has been working both on the national and international levels, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Gaza, Somalia, Myanmar, Syria, and Greece, through gathering and delivering of aid to alleviate the effects of natural disasters such as

floods and to assist migrants and refugees.²⁷ The Muslim Brotherhood connections come through two Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members, Dr Mohamed Beltagui and Dr Hazem Farouk, who were arrested on board the flotilla ship and held in an Israeli prison following the Israeli commandoes’ raid of the Freedom Flotilla.²⁸ Redžepi, who was on the flotilla ship Mavi Marmari, denied that he has connections to the Muslim Brotherhood, stating that he is a distinguished humanitarian who was tending to cargo of humanitarian assistance manned by “human rights activists”.²⁹ Beyond speculations, no additional indications to substantiate the claims of ties to the Muslim Brotherhood were found.

Foreign influences

Despite a lack of signs of the Muslim Brotherhood in North Macedonia, other foreign influences have been cited that have significant impact on the political and religious contexts in the country. In all conversations, the influence of Turkey and its ruling AKP party was outlined as significant. Similar to Serbia, Turkey’s impact is described as institutionalised and systematic.³⁰ One interviewee stated that “TİKA³¹ is always in the background of significant developments in North Macedonia”.³² This is ascribed to the connections to Turkey via the historical and cultural impacts of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, and particularly North Macedonia, as well as a noteworthy percentage of ethnic Turks in the population. In addition, personal connections of the Macedonian population to Turkey are visible—many ethnic Albanians have family and friends in Turkey,³³ but also many have been educated in Turkey.³⁴ For example, Turkey finances the rebuilding of mosques in North Macedonia, such as the historic 16th-century Ali Pasha Mosque in Ohrid.³⁵ In addition, Turkey donates money for animals used during the annual Qurban as the IVZ has limited funds. This has

served to uphold Turkey’s good reputation in North Macedonian communities.³⁶

Turkey’s influence has also been alleged to be connected to the setting up of the Besa political party. A centre-right ethnic Albanian political party operating since 2014, the Besa Movement (Macedonian: Движење Беса; Albanian: Lëvizja Besa) won four seats in the Macedonian parliament in the 2020 election.³⁷ According to multiple accounts, Besa has an Islamic background and is financed by foreign states, in particular Turkey.³⁸ While Besa’s leadership denies direct links, they are known and established editors of a pro-Erdogan media outlet and openly follow Erdogan’s line.^{39 40} For example, during the interviews for this study, it was suggested that while rallying votes on the community level, they were evoking the “Erdogan card”, but among the elites and at the national level, their rhetoric revolved around ethnic lines and the “promotion of Albanian causes and values”.⁴¹ To further develop its influence, Turkey traditionally maintains good relations with the Turkish national minority in North Macedonia, as well as with the small Macedonian Muslim group Torbeši due to the similarity of their conservative political views.⁴² However, as mentioned in the first section of the report, ethnic Albanians comprise the largest population of Muslims in the country and carry significant political and societal weight. Interview partners for this report suggested that Turkey intends to use to use this influence as part of its strategic goal of a neo-Ottomanisation.⁴³ In the same context, it was mentioned that around 2011-2014, Turkey organised political academies for young people in Ankara, including from North Macedonia, where other members of the AKP were present.⁴⁴ This timeline is parallel to allegations about AKP’s mobilisation of Muslim Brotherhood youth, suggesting that it was time to “join a political party”.⁴⁵ Besa, however, has not used the rhetoric

of political Islam in its public political discourse, but rather advocates for a “redefinition” of North Macedonia to win more rights and respect for ethnic Albanians in the country, as these are often undermined or neglected.⁴⁶

The Besa party is also tied to the publishing house Logos-A,⁴⁷ mentioned in interviews because it carries books by Hassan al-Banna and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, among many other authors.⁴⁸ These books are almost exclusively translated into Albanian.⁴⁹ For example, advertisements for al-Qaradawi’s book entitled *Halal and Haram in Islam* were found on Logos-A’s Facebook page.⁵⁰ Due to its connections with Besa, Logos-A was allegedly under attack by other political parties in Macedonia, namely VMRO-DPMNE⁵¹, because it published books and inspired a new intellectual movement in politics.⁵² An expert interviewee confirmed connections between Besa and Logos-A, suggesting that one current within Besa is very focused on the development of ideological advancements through books and education while simultaneously sympathetic to former Turkish Prime Minister Davutoğlu and holding strong personal connections with individuals from Qatar.⁵³

The presence of the Gülen movement, which has been in conflict with Erdogan’s government, was also highlighted in interviews regarding North Macedonia. The Gülenists are present mainly in the education sector through schools such as the Yahya Kemal College in Skopje, which was threatened with closure in August 2016 due to its connections to the Gülen movement.⁵⁴ A personal account of an interviewee revealed allegations that Turkey instigated persecution of Gülen movement members in North Macedonia in return for influencing the acceptance of the rising political party Besa into the coalition with the then-ruling VMRO-DPMNE party.⁵⁵ In addition, it is suggested that Logos-A is strongly

20 See: <https://fri.org.mk/fri-reagon-ndaj-parades-se-krenarise-organizuar-nga-komuniteti-lgbt/>; <https://fri.org.mk/fri-reagon-ndaj-parades-se-krenarise-organizuar-nga-komuniteti-igbt/>.

21 Atanas Panovski, “The Spread of Islamic Extremism in the Republic of Macedonia” (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/10666>, p. 43.

22 See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWwBo9zplWU&ab_channel=ForumIRinorIslam.

23 Atanas Panovski, “The Spread of Islamic Extremism in the Republic of Macedonia” (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/10666>, p. 43.

24 See footnote 21.

25 NM Interview 5, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

26 NM Interview 6, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

27 See: <http://www.legis.mk/history>.

28 See: <https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=25023>.

29 See: <https://english.republika.mk/news/macedonia/jasmin-rexhepi-denies-report-of-his-terrorist-ties-claims-that-the-gaza-flotilla-he-participated-in-was-a-humanitarian-operation/>.

30 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 3, 1 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 5, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 6, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

31 TİKA or the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (turk. Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon İdaresi Başkanlığı) is a government department under the Prime Ministry of Turkey, which is responsible for a significant portion of Turkey’s official development assistance for developing countries.

32 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje.

33 NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

34 NM Interview 3, 1 October 2020, Skopje.

35 Daily Sabah, “Turkey Completes Restoration of Ohrid’s Ali Pasha Mosque,” Daily Sabah, November 26, 2019, <https://doi.org/https://www.dailysabah.com/history/2019/11/26/turkey-completes-restoration-of-ohrids-ali-pasha-mosque>.

36 NM Interview 5, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

37 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 5, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

38 Orhan Ceka, “European Islamophobia Report 2019,” p. 571.

39 Alon Ben-Meir, “Erdogan’s ‘Trojan Horse’ In Macedonia,” The Jerusalem Post | JPost.Com, n.d., <https://doi.org/https://www.jpost.com/blogs/above-the-fray/erdogans-trojan-horse-in-macedonia-560006>.

40 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 6, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

41 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje.

42 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje; Neshkov, “There Is No Internal Islamic Threat in Macedonia, Foreign Forces Import Radical Islam,” p. 77.

43 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje.

44 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje.

45 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje.

46 See: <https://balkaninsight.com/2016/05/09/besa-recasting-the-albanian-politician-in-macedonia-05-05-2016/>.

47 See: <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/makedonija-politicka-hajka-protiv-knjige>.

48 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 3, 1 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

49 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 2, 30 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 5, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

50 See: <https://www.facebook.com/ShtepiaBotueseLogosA/photos/a.847736821972015/879863495426014>.

51 VMRO-DMPNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity; mac. Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство) is political party in North Macedonia, presenting as Christian-democrat, but considered to be nationalist. The party’s support is primarily from ethnic Macedonians.

52 See: <http://shekulliagency.com/opinionanaliza/efekti-besa-si-i-eshte-versulur-shteti-maqedon-entit-botues-logos-a/>.

53 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje.

54 Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje.

55 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje.

connected to Besa, secondarily suggesting links to Turkey's ruling AKP party.⁵⁶

It has been noted that "Turkey's internal turmoil always reflects in North Macedonia politically".⁵⁷ The sentiments were reaffirmed in all interviews, which has led to a further discussion of Macedonia's susceptibility and sensitivity to global developments. This was described as of paramount importance, as it is suggested that "there is a fight for the new caliphate happening in the world right now", referring to the relations between Turkey and the Gulf States.⁵⁸ It is important to note that when this remark was made, the interviewee explained that, in their view, the AKP is the Turkish Muslim Brotherhood.⁵⁹

Both the interviews and literature suggested that other foreign influences have made their way into North Macedonia, from namely Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates (UAE)—all been listed as influential in some way, although significantly less than Turkey. Oftentimes, these influences are conveyed through the preaching of various imams who had been educated in these countries.⁶⁰ Although the influences from the Gulf States is more covert, and it is difficult to follow the money to see where it is ending up, the architecture of certain mosques around North Macedonia is a strong indicator.⁶¹ An increase in "bearded Wahhabis", who receive financial support from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and UAE, is visible in Torbeši villages.⁶² In addition, the presence of Saudi-backed NGOs and charity funds, such as Al Waqf Al Islami, has been a topic of discussion since the 1990s.⁶³ Fundamentalist Islamist extremists first entered the Western Balkans during the civil wars in the 1990s, which led to the establishment of a link with the Gulf.⁶⁴ Today, North Macedonia's links to Kosovo are important in this regard, as it was suggested that

much of the Wahhabi currents are a spillover effect from there.⁶⁵

However, while the research has not indicated the presence of political Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood, the interviews revealed that there have been changes that could play a significant role in the potential development of political Islam in North Macedonia. Specifically, the past and present absence of political Islam is attributed to religion not being a significant factor in shaping the identity, yet, an ongoing shift is visible. With the fall of communist rule in the former Yugoslavia (SFRY), religion came into play as an identity-building factor. In consolidating the Albanian identity, which is perceived to be under threat by the Albanian minority due to the efforts to strengthen the Macedonian national identity,⁶⁶ the Albanian political and intellectual elites have begun to include Islam as a crucial factor. Kosovar Centre for Security Studies' research indicated that representatives, including imams, of the Islamic community in Macedonia, credit Islam as the element that preserved the Albanian identity in Macedonia.⁶⁷

The narrative shift from "identity based on language and culture" to "identity based on language, culture, and Islam" is increasingly visible in the political discourse, such as that of representatives of the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), Albanian Political Party (PDSH),⁶⁸ and Besa political parties.⁶⁹ Besa, for example, stipulates that Islam is an "indispensable part of the Albanian community's national identity".⁷⁰ These instances are seen as significant because, as one of the interviewees stated, "the second half is awaited", alluding to the continuation of the 2001 ethnic conflict between Albanians and Macedonians.⁷¹

These shifts tie in with current developments on the global level. As one expert interviewee noted,

Turkey has been seemingly placing a higher value on its Islamic identity in recent years, which the expert predicted would also be reflected in the North Macedonian context in the years to come due to the interconnectedness of the two countries.⁷² In particular, younger generations are perceived as particularly susceptible to such potential developments as they are more likely to fight for the "Muslim cause" than the "Albanian cause" as the older generation has done.⁷³ To sum up the words of an expert interviewee, "the current lack of political Islam does not exclude the potential for it to develop in the future".⁷⁴

56 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 3, 1 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

57 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje.

58 NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

59 NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

60 NM Interview 3, 1 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 5, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

61 NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 5, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 6, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

62 Neshkov, "There Is No Internal Islamic Threat in Macedonia, Foreign Forces Import Radical Islam," p. 77.

63 See: Filip Stojkovski and Natasia Kalajdziovska, Extremism Research Forum - Macedonia Report (British Council, n.d.), <https://wb-iisg.com/docs/extremism-research-forum-macedonia-report/>, p. 25; Q Florian Qehaja and Seknder Perteshi, The Unexplored Nexus: Issues of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Macedonia.

64 See: Danuta Gibas-Krzak, "Contemporary Terrorism in the Balkans: A Real Threat to Security in Europe," The Journal of Slavic Military Studies 26 (n.d.): 203–218.

65 See: Filip Stojkovski and Natasia Kalajdziovska, Extremism Research Forum - Macedonia Report (British Council, n.d.), <https://wb-iisg.com/docs/extremism-research-forum-macedonia-report/>, p. 25; Florian Qehaja and Seknder Perteshi, The Unexplored Nexus: Issues of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Macedonia.

66 Florian Qehaja and Seknder Perteshi, The Unexplored Nexus: Issues of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Macedonia (Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, n.d.), <http://www.qkss.org/en/Reports/The-unexplored-nexus-issues-of-radicalisation-and-violent-extremism-in-Macedonia-1070>, p.20.

67 Florian Qehaja and Seknder Perteshi, The Unexplored Nexus: Issues of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Macedonia, p.20.

68 DUI and PDSH members are alleged to have links to the former National Movement of Kosovo (LPK), considered to be the political wing of what became the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and National Liberation Army (NLA). [Qehaja, Florian, and Seknder Perteshi. 2018. "The Unexplored Nexus: Issues of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Macedonia." Kosovar Centre for Security Studies. <http://www.qkss.org/en/Reports/The-unexplored-nexus-issues-of-radicalisation-and-violent-extremism-in-Macedonia-1070>, p. 21].

69 Florian Qehaja and Seknder Perteshi, The Unexplored Nexus: Issues of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Macedonia, p.21.

70 Florian Qehaja and Seknder Perteshi, The Unexplored Nexus: Issues of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in Macedonia, p.21.

71 NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

72 NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

73 NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje.

74 NM Interview 1, 29 September 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 4, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 5, 2 October 2020, Skopje; NM Interview 6, 2 October 2020, Skopje.



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina is comprised of several ethnic communities: 50.1% Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) followed by 31% Serbs, 15.5% Croats, and 3.7% others.⁷⁵ Islam has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the 15th century, further entrenching itself in Bosnian society during its time as a vilayet of the Ottoman Empire from 1463 to 1878.⁷⁶

The chief religious authority for Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ICBiH), headquartered in Sarajevo. Established in 1882 while Bosnia was under Austro-Hungarian rule, it was part of the Islamic Community of SFRY until 1992.⁷⁷

Islamic revival, foreign influence, and radicalisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Islamic revival began in the 1970s in Yugoslavia, with the phenomena often attributed to the opening of educational exchanges for Muslim intellectuals.⁷⁸ Additionally, Yugoslavia's financial growth as well as remittances and donations from Bosnian guest workers, i.e., Gastarbeiter, prompted the construction of mosques, masjids, and other religious building across the federation.⁷⁹

However, events took an unfortunate turn with the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and the subsequent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995. The bloody ethnic war led to a complete disruption of Bosnian society, with thousands of lives lost and more than 1,000 Muslim religious objects ruined. It was during this time that the first foreign influences in Bosnia and Herzegovina were identified, primarily coming from Arab countries via humanitarian aid organisations. The war opened the

door for external actors, and with that, also different *madhabs*⁸⁰ or schools of jurisprudence (including Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali).⁸¹ In 1992, the so-called mujahedeen entered Bosnia and Herzegovina—a small number are still present in the country, bringing Salafi and other non-traditional readings of Islam.⁸² Humanitarian aid was not limited to food and other supplies but also included Islamic readings from the Middle East, deemed necessary to “re-Islamise” the deeply secularised Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸³ Following the end of the war, foreign influences in the country continued to rise, largely through donations and the building of mosques.⁸⁴ The around 1,000 Muslim religious objects, such as mosques and madrasas, destroyed in the war were neglected for financial reasons, with ICBiH and state institutions unable to offer support for their repair.⁸⁵ It was at this time that countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan opted to pursue their foreign policy goals through opening and re-building mosques around the country.⁸⁶

Saudi Arabia and Iran were the two first two countries to help Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war. Turkey did not offer assistance immediately despite it being considered Bosnia and Herzegovina's “kin state”.⁸⁷ With Saudi Arabia's assistance came revivalist influence, mainly as Wahhabi and Salafi currents. They financed kindergartens, schools, and mosques, but also disseminated Salafi literature and books, as well as scholarships to study in Saudi Arabia.⁸⁸ Post-1995, the Active Islamic Youth (AIO), composed of former members of the El-Mujahid unit, and their publication SAFF, became the most prominent outlets of Salafi doctrine.⁸⁹

Similarly, Iran's influence was also very prominent during the 1990s, coming in the form of humanitarian

aid but also financial and military aid, including weapons, military instructors, and intelligence officers.⁹⁰ The influence of Iran and Shi'ism in the post-war period was significant, although coming from a small group. Bosnia and Herzegovina has since significantly reduced its previously close ties with Iran, but still nurtures cultural links through the Cultural Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran, including academic exchanges and publications like the cultural journal *Beharistan*.⁹¹

Turkey's influence on Bosnia and Herzegovina is often believed to be significant due to historical connections via the Ottoman Empire. It is believed that some two-thirds of the Bosnian Muslim population consists of conservatives who are pro-Turkey.⁹² However, it is noted that Turkey was not among the first states to help Bosnia during the ethnic war.⁹³ While a shift can be discerned under the AKP rule, with Turkey's foreign policy reflecting more interest in the Balkans in general,⁹⁴ it is believed that Bosnia enjoys less attention in terms of development aid than Serbia does (approximately 30% less).⁹⁵ Since 2002, TIKA has been the most present Turkish institution in Bosnia, yet, it is also interesting that in 2004, the Turkish Directorate for religious affairs, commonly known as Diyanet, and the ICBiH signed a memorandum of understanding declaring that the two organisations would cooperate closely on questions of Islam on the basis of common tradition and experience.⁹⁶ Furthermore, accounts of disagreements between the political elites of the countries suggest that the relationship between Turkey and Bosnia isn't as close as widely believed. Followers of Fethullah Gülen have also had a significant impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina, primarily through education and especially schools, as well as the Hizmet foundation, which is still present, for example, the publication *Novo Vrijeme*. Similar to North Macedonia, Turkey's influence in Bosnia related to the Gülen movement has had significant impact. Namely, the AKP and Gülen movement rift in 2013 caused a deterioration of relations between the main Bosniak political party

‘Stranka Demokratske Akcije’ (SDA) and ICBiH, who were strongly influenced by AKP policy, and the Hizmet foundation.⁹⁷ This led to the Gülen movement becoming isolated from the Islamic scene in Bosnia, and many personal connections were broken, such as children of ICBiH-affiliated people leaving Hizmet schools.⁹⁸

With different foreign influences present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, coupled with other factors such as a number of foreign fighters who left the country to fight in Syria, the Muslim population of Bosnia and Herzegovina is perceived as vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism.⁹⁹ In the book *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West*, Bosnia and Herzegovina is described as the “cradle of terrorism in Europe”.¹⁰⁰ The securitisation of Bosnian Muslims is present both within and outside the countries' borders, as political elites of neighbouring countries express their concern.¹⁰¹ The increase in securitisation of the Bosnian Muslim population was also brought up during the interviews, with interviewees reflecting on the perpetual securitisation by both opposing groups in the country, and globally because of the number of foreign fighters from Bosnia. Two security experts highlighted that while there was an increasing number of Wahhabis and Salafis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the threat this development was posing was largely exaggerated.¹⁰²

The ICBiH plays a significant role in limiting the foreign influences and prevention of religious radicalisation in the country. In 1993, the then Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić issued a *fatwa*¹⁰³ on mandatory compliance with Hanafi madhab in all religious rituals in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was a way for the ICBiH to limit the influence of foreign actors by ensuring that the practice of Islam in the country remains within the limits of the tradition. However, the fatwa did not encompass publishing, leaving space for external actors to disseminate their ideology through publications.¹⁰⁴ As foreign influences continued to strengthen in Bosnia during

75 See: <http://www.statistika.ba>.

76 Harun Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina: International Actors and Activities,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no. 4 (December 2010): 519–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2010.533450>, p. 520

77 Hamza Preljević, “Preventing Religious Radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Role of the BiH Islamic Community,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 371–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2017.1405503>.

78 Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina: International Actors and Activities,” p. 523.

79 Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina: International Actors and Activities,” p. 523.

80 A madhab is a school of thought within *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence. The major Sunni madhabs are Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali.

81 Preljević, “Preventing Religious Radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Role of the BiH Islamic Community,” p. 377.

82 Preljević, “Preventing Religious Radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Role of the BiH Islamic Community,” p. 377.

83 Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 519.

84 Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 523, 525.

85 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo.

86 Preljević, “Preventing Religious Radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 377.

87 Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 520.

88 Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 525.

89 Babić, p. 184.

90 Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 528.

91 Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 528.

92 Dino Mujadžević, “Turkey's Role in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (St. Gallen: University of St. Gallen, 2017), [gce.unisg.ch > gce > mujadzевич_euxeinos_23_2017](https://www.gce.unisg.ch/gce/mujadzевич_euxeinos_23_2017), p. 26.

93 Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 520.

94 Mujadžević, p. 26.

95 Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo.

96 Mujadžević, “Turkey's Role in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 30.

97 Mujadžević, “Turkey's Role in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 30.

98 Mujadžević, “Turkey's Role in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 30.

99 Preljević, “Preventing Religious Radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 371.

100 Christopher Deliso, *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West*, London: Praeger Security International, 2007, p. 12

101 For example, former Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović stated that the type of Islam in BiH is changing and becoming increasingly radicalised, which is having security repercussions on Bosnia, but also on Croatia. Sebastian Kurz, Austria's Chancellor, also expressed problematic sentiments regarding Muslims in Bosnia, unfoundedly stating that “young women and girls in Sarajevo and Pristina are being paid to cover their heads”. Statements such as these demonstrate that Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims are also being securitised beyond the country's borders. See: Preljević, “Preventing Religious Radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

102 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo; BiH Interview 4, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo.

103 In Islam, a fatwa is a formal ruling or interpretation of a point of Islamic law, given by a qualified legal scholar, known as a mufti.

104 Preljević, “Preventing Religious Radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 381.

and after the war, the ICBIH continued to work on limiting the influence of extremists and preventing religious radicalisation. In 2007, the ICBIH adopted Article 5 to its constitution regarding Hanafi madhab as practice in all mosques and masjids, to reduce other interpretations of Islam.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the ICBIH also founded the Al-Wasatiyyah Centre for Dialogue to promote peacebuilding and inter-religious dialogue among the members of the Bosnian society.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the ICBIH has clear guidelines when it comes to donations from foreign actors. In particular, the ICBIH stipulates that while donations are accepted, they are very clear about their authority regarding the activities in the objects built through the donations. For example, the Gazi-Husrev library in Sarajevo was built with a donation from Qatar, yet it is fully under the control of the ICBIH in terms of the publications and activities held there.¹⁰⁷

Despite the ICBIH's efforts to prevent radicalisation, it is often criticized as having a weak response to the spread of unwanted foreign influences. Former Reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić has been accused of allowing Wahhabis to settle in Bosnia and spread their ideology.¹⁰⁸ Diverging opinions are present in both academic and policy circles, with some arguing that the ICBIH has taken many steps to prevent radicalisation, and others suggesting that Cerić was more concerned with advancing his own political position in the country.

Muslim Brotherhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Unlike Serbia and North Macedonia, the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a topic of interest, particularly for the tabloid media and those wishing to capitalise on it by associating their political opponents with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The initial connections of Bosnian individuals and groups with the Muslim Brotherhood dates to the 1940s with the founding of the group Young Muslims (BHS: Mladi Muslimani). It was an organisation of

Muslim intellectuals, often described as an illegal group of Islamist activists, founded in 1939.¹⁰⁹ The organisation is alleged to be modelled after the Muslim Brotherhood.¹¹⁰ Young Muslims were faced with disapproval of the Yugoslav government, followed by the Sarajevo Process, a court trial against 13 Muslim intellectuals in 1983 during which members of the organisation were accused of Islamic fundamentalism, primarily “offenses as principally hostile activity inspired by Muslim nationalism, association for purposes of hostile activity and hostile propaganda”.¹¹¹

Among the founding members—sentenced to 14 years in prison (pardoned after two)—was Alija Izetbegović (later, the first president of Bosnia and Herzegovina following its declaration of independence in 1992).¹¹² Prior to becoming a prominent political figure as the leader of the SDA political party and as president, Izetbegović's sentence was connected to his essay titled “Islamic Declaration” written in the 1970s and re-published in 1990. The content of the Islamic Declaration is at times described as based on Islamist ideology akin to that of the Muslim Brotherhood,¹¹³ and its contents remain controversial until this day.¹¹⁴

The saga of the Muslim Brotherhood's presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina continued with the founding of the SDA, with many Young Muslims—and Izetbegović—at its core. After the death of Alija Izetbegović, his son Bakir took leadership of the party and has since also been affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.¹¹⁵ In 2014, according to news reports, many in tabloid newspapers, Bakir Izetbegović welcomed a “delegation of the Muslim Brotherhood” in the presidency. The articles also featured a picture of Bakir Izetbegović using the Rabia symbol, a known gesture of the Muslim Brotherhood. There are no official records of this meeting on the presidency's website. This meeting has continued to be a topic of discussion—in 2016, the Serbian newspaper Politika published an article titled “Bakir Izetbegović under the scrutiny of the American secret services”. Politika's article argues that Bakir's connections with Muslim Brotherhood leaders have placed him under the watch of the American government following the

announcement that the U.S. considered the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization.¹¹⁶

Following the sentencing of Mohammed Morsi to death in 2015, Bakir Izetbegović issued an official presidential statement calling on Egypt to respect human rights and ensure that Morsi has a fair trial. In his statement, he said that Morsi was legally elected but then “was overthrown by a military coup, then deprived of freedom and submitted to politically framed court proceedings the aim of which was a brutal clash with political rivals and those with different views, ending in their physical elimination”.¹¹⁷

However, the affiliation of the Young Muslims with the Muslim Brotherhood has often been contested, stating that the reason for this group's rebellion was a response to the Cvetković-Maček agreement,¹¹⁸ rather than their “pan-Islamist ties”.¹¹⁹ Evidence suggests that the members of the Young Muslims were intellectuals who were, at the time of socialist Yugoslavia, exploring their relationships with Islam and through this acting in opposition to the government. Their explorations led them to meet people from other countries in similar circumstances, that is, living in regimes that did not allow space for religion, such as Turkey, and that these circumstances are today used as an indication of their links to the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups.¹²⁰ The Sarajevo Process of 1983 demonstrated the persecution of these intellectuals to be based on their opposition to the government, rather than their planning an Islamist revolution.¹²¹ In the opinion of Dr Rajko Danilović, the defence lawyer of some of the accused, the evidence for their sentencing was either fabricated or overstated.¹²² To describe the Young Muslims in reference to today's societal structures, an expert stated that “they were nothing more than a Viber¹²³ group”.¹²⁴

Furthermore, according to the accounts of those involved in minimising the repercussions of Bakir Izetbegović's 2014 meeting with the representatives of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Rabia

sign, the act was a manifestation of ignorance, rather than a show of support for the Muslim Brotherhood: Bakir Izetbegović had previously had the opportunity to meet with some Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated members via his father and his personal connections, and thus shaken by the events in Cairo, he misacted in expressing his support for those who suffered from the tragedy.¹²⁵

Furthermore, the European Council for Fatwa and Research held multiple Ordinary Sessions for the organisation in Sarajevo, in 2007¹²⁶ and 2013.¹²⁷ The Muslim Brotherhood's ideologue, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, was present at the 2013 conference, alongside Bakir Izetbegović and Reis-ul-ulema Husein ef. Kavazović.¹²⁸ While there are multiple avenues that connect al-Qaradawi with Bosnia and Herzegovina and individuals from the country, the ICBIH has been aware of the controversy that is connected with his persona, thus creating distance between the community and him. For example, the ICBIH rejected the opportunity to interview al-Qaradawi and publish his text via their media outlets.¹²⁹

Another prominent figure in Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Reis-ul-ulema Dr Mustafa Cerić, has been alleged to hold connections with the Muslim Brotherhood and its leadership. Cerić is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood-linked European Council for Fatwa and Research, alongside al-Qaradawi and other prominent Muslim Brotherhood figures. In addition to this, he is a member of the UK-based organisation “Radical Middle Way”, through which he has had the opportunity to connect with various scholars associated with the Muslim Brotherhood.¹³⁰ However, Cerić's membership and presence at such conferences is attributed to his “chameleon-like personality”, as mentioned in the previous report from this series. His keenness to be included in political processes as well as his shifting attitudes and opinions were also confirmed in conversation with Bosnian and Herzegovinian experts.¹³¹ For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the strong relationship between the ICBIH and SDA is also attributed to

105 Preljević, “Preventing Religious Radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 378.

106 Preljević, “Preventing Religious Radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, p. 378.

107 BiH Interview 3, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo.

108 See: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/1380862.html>; <https://www.dw.com/bs/dr-mustafa-ceric-od-pohvala-do-osuda/a-16384747>

109 Some accounts date the idea for the organisation as 1939, and the founding as 1941; “Ko Su Bili Mladi Muslimani?”, www.mm.co.ba, accessed October 25, 2020, <http://www.mm.co.ba/index.php/bs/organizacija/54-historijat/238-ko-su-bili-mladi-muslimani>.

110 See: Nedim Jahić, “The Evolution of the SDA: Ideology Fading Away in the Battle of Interests,” *Balkanist*, May 27, 2015, <https://balkanist.net/the-evolution-of-the-sda-ideology-fading-away-in-the-battle-of-interests/>.

111 Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention: Crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1990-93* (Routledge, 2015), p. 67.

112 Leslie S. Lebl, *Islamism and Security in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2014), 1–73, p. 23.

113 Lebl, *Islamism and Security in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 21.

114 See: <https://kedisagr/en/izetbegovic-and-the-muslim-brotherhood/>.

115 See: <https://www.dnevnik.ba/teme/izetbegovic-i-muslimansko-bratstvo>.

116 See: <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/370998/Bakir-Izetbegovic-pod-lupom-americkih-tajnih-sluzbi>.

117 See: <http://www.predsjednistvobih.ba/saop/default.aspx?id=66001&langTag=en-US>; <https://www.index.ba/izetbegovic-morsi-je-najprije-izgubio-slobodu-a-sada-i-zivot-u-borbi-za-slobodu/>.

118 The agreement established the Banovina of Croatia, drawn to include as many ethnic Croats as possible, which effectively created a Croatian sub-state in Yugoslavia, a demand of Croat politicians since the 1918 founding of Yugoslavia.

119 Tarik Dautović, “Mladi Muslimani: Nastanak i Pokretači,” www.preporod.com, January 12, 2016, <https://www.preporod.com/index.php/sve-vijesti/drustvo/aktuelno/item/2222-mladi-muslimani-nastanak-i-pokretaci>.

120 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo.

121 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo.

122 See: Rajko Danilović, *Sarajevski Proces 1983* (Tuzla Bosanska Riječ, 2006).

123 Instant messaging application, similar to WhatsApp.

124 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo.

125 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo.

126 See: <https://www.e-cfr.org/en/2020/06/23/the-seventeenth-ordinary-session-of-the-european-council-for-fatwa-and-research/>.

127 See: <https://sandzakpress.net/sejh-jusuf-el-karadavi-dolazi-u-sarajevo/comment-page-1/>.

128 See: <https://vijesti.ba/clanak/153439/izetbegovic-u-bih-tragamo-za-formulom-suzivotu>

129 BiH Interview 3, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo.

130 Lebl, *Islamism and Security in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 27; See: <https://www.facebook.com/RadicalMiddleWay/posts/bosniaa-deeply-intimate-and-informative-conversation-with-the-former-multi-of-bo/10157043377237440/>.

131 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo; BiH Interview 3, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo; BiH Interview 4, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo.

Cerić, as the longest-ever serving Reis-ul-ulema, which further demonstrated his interest in politics.¹³² During and after the war, the ICBIH supported the SDA's policies to give them legitimacy. In the same manner, SDA repaid the favour by mainstreaming religion into public events, including by sponsoring mosque (re)constructions from various SDA-majority government levels.

At the same time, Cerić's public opinion and support of various Islamic groups in Bosnia has changed according to his own personal interest. He has a tendency to change his rhetoric regarding the Salafi and Wahabbi movements in the Balkans and beyond depending on whom he is talking to.¹³³ While in Europe, where a more moderate rhetoric is desirable, he is more prone to advocate against violence by Islamic movements, whereas in Bosnia, his discourse is sharper.¹³⁴ Within the Muslim population in Bosnia, Cerić is seen as a great theologian and educator, but his occasional stunts on the political scene have damaged his reputation.¹³⁵

On one hand, within the Bosnian Muslim population, Cerić is perceived as an influential theologian and lecturer.¹³⁶ Conversely, his public image has suffered due to his personal aspirations and he has proven to be a "colourful actor with clear political ambitions", further solidified by his 2014 candidacy for the presidency.¹³⁷ This was not his only attempt to build a political career, as he reportedly considered running for the same office in 2018.¹³⁸ While Cerić enjoys the support of Bosnian Muslims as a significant religious leader, his endeavours into politics were not a surprise to the population since he was known to use his religious function for political purposes.¹³⁹ His candidacy was perceived as potentially dangerous for Bosnian society and was attributed to his "insatiable need to be somewhere up at the top, in a position from which one can satisfy one's own aspirations, one's own invulnerability".¹⁴⁰

Similarly, Cerić's connections with Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated organisations and individuals

are ascribed to his wish to achieve personal goals rather than advancement of political Islam. It is suggested that the establishment and maintenance of such relationships was fostered by Cerić during a previous attempt to impose himself as the Grand Mufti of European Muslims, thus presenting himself as their religious and spiritual leader, in the late 2000s.¹⁴¹

Current activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina – AKOS?

According to Lorenzo Vidino, a few organisations in Europe are believed to be the hand of the Muslim Brotherhood on the continent.¹⁴² One of these is the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE), headquartered in Brussels. Previous research in Serbia and North Macedonia found no organisations from those countries to be members of the FIOE. However, one umbrella organisation from Bosnia and Herzegovina—*Asocijacija za kulturu, obrazovanje i sport* (AKOS; eng. Association for culture, education and sport)—is listed as a "friendly and partner resource".¹⁴³ According to their website, AKOS is a non-partisan, non-governmental and non-profit organisation that is funded by donor contributions,¹⁴⁴ membership fees, and economic activities.¹⁴⁵ A review of the US-registered server for a website run by AKOS, www.akos.ba, revealed that the majority of the website's 3,400 daily visitors (84.5%) comes from Bosnia and Herzegovina while the rest comes from abroad, thus indirectly implying limited foreign "online interest" in the organisation. Besides its revenue, AKOS has an estimated worth of US\$ 41,849, based on estimated ad revenue of just under \$1,000 a year.¹⁴⁶ It serves as an umbrella organisation for five associations across Bosnia and Herzegovina: Svitanje in Sarajevo, Izvor Selsebil in Živinice, Put znanja in Zenica, Vatan in Bosanska Krupa, and AKOS Most in Sanski Most.¹⁴⁷ The organisation focuses on the education of youth, mainly re-direction of attention from negative

influences that "lead to moral ruin, loss of true human values, indulgence in drugs, alcohol, fornication and other forms of destructive and dangerous behaviour".¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, on their "About" page, AKOS also highlights who cannot be a member of the organisation, namely persons convicted of crimes against security or basic human rights; persons disciplined in or expelled by other associations; and persons who violate the unity of the association.¹⁴⁹ AKOS is also affiliated with the NGO "Association for Culture and Education" (AKEA), which was operating in Kosovo as an organization with suspected Muslim Brotherhood ties. AKEA was shut down in 2014 by the Kosovo Special Prosecutor's Office as one of 64 "suspicious organizations".¹⁵⁰ According to news reports from 2014, the organisation, with its headquarters in Pristina, was close to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and also enjoyed the support of Turkish President Erdogan via TİKA.¹⁵¹

In relation to the Muslim Brotherhood, AKOS's website offers a multitude of articles¹⁵² that mention the Muslim Brotherhood, and they can be divided into four categories: the history and development of the Muslim Brotherhood, developments in Egypt, interviews with or reports on the thought of Muslim Brotherhood affiliated individuals, and the Muslim Brotherhood and its impact in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To further illustrate the content, articles that fall under the first category outlining the historical developments of the Muslim Brotherhood include a series titled "Martyrs of the Islamic Movement Muslim" [BHS: Šehidi islamskog pokreta Muslimanska braća] that presents the biographies of the most famous "martyrs", including Hassan al-Banna.¹⁵³ The second category of articles focus on political developments in Egypt, such as the demonstrations¹⁵⁴ and Morsi's death.¹⁵⁵ The third group of articles is composed of translated lectures and opinion pieces by people like Tariq Ramadan¹⁵⁶ and al-Qaradawi. In 2015, AKOS published an interview with Ramadan titled "Tariq Ramadan: Defining identity as open and flexible is very important", where he is introduced as one of the most significant Islamic intellectuals of today. He

is subsequently presented as "*the son of dr. Se'id Ramadan, a student and close associate of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the largest and most influential modern Islamic movement, Al-Ihwanul-Muslim (Muslim Brotherhood)*".¹⁵⁷

Perhaps the most important articles for this research fall in the fourth category, as a few of them on the AKOS portal are devoted to connections between the Muslim Brotherhood and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2013, AKOS published "Muslim Brotherhood movement—origin, action, and reflections on Bosnia and Herzegovina", which are excerpts from the master's thesis and book by Mustafa Prljača about the Muslim Brotherhood movement and its influence on BiH and Bosniaks. The article presented the introductory section of the book in its entirety. This section reflects on the nature of the movement with the following sentences: "Its [the movement's] contribution to the affirmation of Islam and Islamic values, restoring the self-confidence and self-esteem of Muslims, is enormous and indisputable, no matter what attitude he generally had towards that movement and what prefixes he was honoured with: revivalist, fundamentalist, Salafist, traditionalist, conservative and even terrorist. Ignoring all these determinants, its founder Hassan al-Banna, as we will see, has repeated countless times that it is just an 'Islamic movement' and nothing more".¹⁵⁸ In the following parts, the article presents Prljača's narrative about the Muslim Brotherhood's influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, firstly by referring to "a group of our [bh.] students, who were studying in Cairo at the time of its creation, were obviously familiar with this movement, and the way it worked in that first phase was partly, upon their return, transferred to these areas as well",¹⁵⁹ which are the Young Muslims. Describing the educational impacts the Muslim Brotherhood has had on Muslims around the globe and their search to "find an adequate, effective and at the same time Islamic response to the many challenges they faced," the article concludes that the events in Bosnia were only a "distant echo of the epochal events that took place in Egypt, which, first

132 Ešref Kenan Rašidagić, "Religious Institutions as Agents of Continuing Ethnic Mobilisation in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina," in *The Visegrad Four and the Western Balkans: Framing Regional Identities*, ed. Adam Bence Balazs and Christina Griessler (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2020), 1–301, p. 159.

133 See: <https://www.dw.com/bs/dr-mustafa-ceric-od-pohvala-do-osuda/a-16384747>; <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/1380862.html>

134 See: <https://www.dw.com/bs/dr-mustafa-ceric-od-pohvala-do-osuda/a-16384747>.

135 BiH Interview 3, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo.

136 BiH Interview 3, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo.

137 Rašidagić, "Religious Institutions as Agents of Continuing Ethnic Mobilisation in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina", 2020, p. 159.

138 Rašidagić, "Religious Institutions as Agents of Continuing Ethnic Mobilisation in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina", 2020, p. 159.

139 Dženana Karabegović, "Cerić Objavio Kandidaturu Za Izbore: Malo Vjera, Malo Politika," www.slobodnaevropa.org, May 29, 2014, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/ceci>.

140 Karabegović, "Cerić Objavio Kandidaturu", 2014.

141 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo.

142 See Box 1 in CEE Activities of the Muslim Brotherhood: Mapping the Ikhwan's Presence in the Region, p. 14.

143 See: <http://euromuslims.org/en/association-members/>.

144 See: <https://akos.ba/predstavljamo-vam-akos/>.

145 <https://akos.ba/ipaddress.com>.

146 <https://akos.ba/siteindices.com>.

147 See: <https://akos.ba/predstavljamo-vam-akos/>.

148 See: <https://akos.ba/predstavljamo-vam-akos/>.

149 See: <https://akos.ba/predstavljamo-vam-akos/>.

150 See: <https://www.balkanplus.net/na-kosovu-zatvorena-akea-muslimanske-brace/>; <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/135/hronika/1704262/zatvorena-organizacija-bliska-muslimanskoj-braci.html>; <https://www.vesti.rs/Kosovo/Bliska-Muslimanskoj-braci-u-Egiptu-Zatvorena-Asocijacija-za-kulturu-na-Kosovu.html>.

151 See: <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/135/hronika/1704262/zatvorena-organizacija-bliska-muslimanskoj-braci.html>.

152 For an overview of articles mentioning the Muslim Brotherhood, see: <https://akos.ba/?s=muslimanska+braca>.

153 See: <https://akos.ba/sehidi-islamskog-pokreta-muslimanska-braca-hasan-el-bena-i-dio/>; <https://akos.ba/sehidi-islamskog-pokreta-muslimanska-braca-esma-el-baltadzi/>.

154 See: <https://akos.ba/demonstracije-sirom-egipta-povodom-obilježavanja-pete-godisnjice-revolucije/>.

155 See: <https://akos.ba/svjedoci-iz-sudnice-mursi-je-ostavljen-da-umre-20-minuta-mu-niko-nije-pruzio-pomoc/>.

156 Tariq Ramadan articles also included discussions on his ideas and teachings, as well as articles following the development of the sexual abuse allegations concerning him, with many articles being in defence of Ramadan in the light of these allegations. See: <https://akos.ba/tarik-ramadan-muslimani-moraju-bolje-upoznati-sebe/>; <https://akos.ba/tarik-ramadan-muslimani-balkana-su-zivi-dokaz-da-je-islam-nesto-sto-je-prirodno-evropi/>; <https://akos.ba/slucaj-tariq-ramadan-medijaska-presuda-prije-sudjenja/>.

157 Hamza Ridžal, "DOSJE STAVA: Muslimanska Braća," STAV, July 25, 2017, <https://stav.ba/dosje-stava-muslimanska-braca/>.

158 AKOS. "Pokret 'Muslimanska Braća' – Nastanak, Djelovanje i Refleksije Na BiH." AKOS, July 15, 2013. <https://akos.ba/pokret-muslimanska-braca-nastanak-djelovanje-i-refleksije-na-bih/>.

159 AKOS. "Pokret 'Muslimanska Braća' – Nastanak, Djelovanje i Refleksije Na BiH." AKOS, July 15, 2013. <https://akos.ba/pokret-muslimanska-braca-nastanak-djelovanje-i-refleksije-na-bih/>.

to the Egyptian and then to other Muslim nations, restored hope and faith in their own strength and in general in the possibility of an Islamic response to huge, above all, civilizational challenges they faced, and which strongly pressed their life reality".¹⁶⁰

In addition, the 2018 FEMSYO Assembly was held in Sarajevo and hosted by AKOS and in 2019 two members of this NGO were delegates to the FEMYSO Assembly, another MB-affiliated organisation outlined by Vidino.¹⁶¹ According to the information presented in AKOS' press release, the organization has been a member of FEMSYO for the past 15 years.¹⁶²

Despite multiple attempts, the authors were unable to obtain an official response regarding the research into AKOS. It is important to note that while the language regarding the Muslim Brotherhood in the articles on the AKOS website were positive toward the Brotherhood, they do not directly advocate for the appropriation of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology. Furthermore, AKOS's portal also publishes a wide variety of other articles, largely articles on Islam and faith-based lifestyle and wellbeing pieces.¹⁶³ In terms of programming, AKOS's portal highlights humanitarian aid activities,¹⁶⁴ as well as courses for young entrepreneurs,¹⁶⁵ giveaways in

cooperation with Bosnian businesses,¹⁶⁶ and various other activities. In conversations with security experts and members of the Islamic community, it was consistently highlighted that, despite FIOE membership and the publication of articles related to the Muslim Brotherhood, AKOS is simply a faith-inspired NGO led by Bosnian Muslim youth.¹⁶⁷ According to reports, AKOS represents Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina who advocate an integrationist European way, one paved with respect for human rights, democratic values, pluralism, and inter-religious dialogue.¹⁶⁸

Despite the AKOS publications present on its website, all expert interviewees indicated that they are not aware of the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood as an organised movement in the country. According to these accounts, unlike in the case of Salafi currents in Bosnia and Herzegovina, no traces of Muslim Brotherhood's operations, including people or financial ties, have been discovered.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, the Muslim Brotherhood has not been connected to radicalisation or extremism, nor has it been tied to any political movement or political party in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁷⁰



SUMMARIES FROM CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

At the beginning of this research project, the intention was to cover five carefully selected countries that would each represent a different landscape in the makeup of the Muslim population and to a varying degree the relationships between organised Islamic communities and their respective governments. All countries covered in this research proved to be different from one another, although there are also a number of similarities. Attempting to find organisations that would be inspired by or connected to the Muslim Brotherhood proved challenging, not only due to the secretive nature of the movement but also because of the activities of other actors in the Muslim communities in these countries, as well as the rising and fading waves of activity of the organisations analysed for this project. The results of the mapping can be categorised into four kinds of groups that at some point had some sort of links to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Early attempts

Student activism has a long history within the Muslim Brotherhood and the Brotherhood has a long track record of successfully influencing student activists. In the Central and Eastern European context, the first student organisation influenced by the movement from among the selected countries traces back to the 1940s in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As mentioned in this report, the Young Muslims, as the organisation was called in English, was set up by Bosnians who were exploring their Islamic identity (some in Cairo, Egypt) in parallel to the development of the Muslim Brotherhood. Other countries, including the Czech Republic (General Union of Muslim Students) and Poland (Muslim Students Society), needed a different catalyst for this process. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes in its satellite states meant more freedom in many aspects, including the freer expression of religion. Certain groups of students in the two Central European countries seized the moment and founded student organisations. The difference from the Bosnian case being that these students were not locals but foreigners. After the groups' establishment, they quickly registered them with FEMYSO. Somewhat later came the North Macedonian NGO the Islamic

Youth Forum, which was set up in 2000. A youth organisation registered with FEMYSO saw the peak of its activity on political Islam during the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and the years following.

The fate of these groups differs to a large extent, especially in terms of their survival over the years. While the Czech group was absorbed into a larger umbrella organisation, the Polish one is still active, though "muted", and the North Macedonian group stopped its publishing activity while withdrawing from the Islamist scene, and the members of the Bosnian one entered politics, although not without controversy. Each organisation had a different trajectory over the decades, but none can currently be described as a Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated organisation. Despite inspiration being present at the beginning, nowadays it is hard to speak of these groups as actively inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood. While the Czech and Polish organisations did not manage to maintain the energy or connections, the Bosnian group preserved connections to the Muslim Brotherhood. On the other hand, it must be said that there is no political activism anymore since the efforts seen during the time of Yugoslavia need to be understood in the light of dissidence against the former secular regime.

The pragmatic mainstream?

The second group comprises the large organisations that represent a sizeable part of Muslim communities in the region. Given their size and history, this group has a richer history of activity, some that has drawn them closer to the Muslim Brotherhood while others went the opposite direction. Such a wide variety of activity meant the analysis had to zoom in on each one individually and then place it within the bigger picture. While these organisations were reaching out to the federative bodies allegedly under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, there is also a visible effort to connect with individuals from countries that perceive the movement as a threat, even its branches abroad.

Some activities suggested the organisations had the intention to be connected to the Muslim Brotherhood. Such indicators were, for instance,

160 See: AKOS, "Pokret 'Muslimanska Braća' – Nastanak, Djelovanje i Refleksije Na BiH," AKOS, July 15, 2013, <https://akos.ba/pokret-muslimanska-braca-nastanak-djelovanje-i-refleksije-na-bih/>.

161 See: <https://akos.ba/predstavnic-akos-a-ucestvovali-na-23-skupstini-femysu-u-dablinu/>.

162 See: <https://akos.ba/u-sarajevu-odrzana-skupstina-foruma-europskih-muslimanskih-i-studentskih-organizacija/>.

163 See: <https://akos.ba/osam-stvari-koje-morate-nauciti-svoje-sinove/>; <https://akos.ba/cuvaj-se-kletve-onog-kome-si-nepravdu-ucinio-poucna-prica/>.

164 See: <https://akos.ba/udruzenje-izvor-selsebil-pomaze-medicinskom-osoblju/>.

165 See: <https://akos.ba/mladi-lideri-3-akademija-poduzetnistva/>.

166 See: <https://akos.ba/tako-i-akos-ba-vas-nagradjuju/>.

167 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo; BiH Interview 3, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo; BiH Interview 4, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo.

168 BiH Interview 3, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo.

169 BiH Interview 2, 13 October 2020, Sarajevo.

170 BiH Interview 4, 14 October 2020, Sarajevo.

that some of their leaders participated in forums organised by the FIOE or FEMYSO, that members of the organisation wrote letters to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, invited Faysal Mawlani and Ahmed al Rawi to these countries, or that the groups published some works of known Islamists, at the same time. However, at the same time, these organizations were also contacting other actors, who are not in favour of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. As evidence of the latter, some seemed to be looking for funding from individuals from the UAE or using the Ambassadorial Council of the Muslim Countries, an informal body of high-level diplomats accredited to Poland who acted as a link between Polish Muslims and donors from the MENA region. Driven by necessary pragmatism to maintain their size and status in these countries, the organisations stretched themselves too thin, and by trying to keep good relations with actors on opposite sides, they ended up making several missteps that attracted radicals, on one hand, and resulted in a loss of funding, on the other. That being said, till today the Muslim League in Poland, the Islamic Foundation in Prague, and the Islamic Foundation in Brno, remain the largest organisations representing their countries' Muslim minorities.

The Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been intertwined with politics to some extent by supporting the SDA political party in return for funding to rebuild mosques and emphasising religion in public events. That, however, does not mean that the goal was to Islamise society or revive Islam in the way the Muslim Brotherhood does. The ICBiH's connection to the movement was through their former Reis-ul-ulema, Cerić, who had the connections but appeared to have harboured his own personal political ambitions. Once Cerić left his position, the community had fewer interactions with the Muslim Brotherhood leaders, and moreover, it has demonstrated that it is also open to other actors. One such example is the influence of the AKP party in Turkey through Diyanet, which has managed to isolate the Güllenist movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as mentioned in the earlier chapter focused on that country. **Therefore, these organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, and Poland can be categorised as grey-area groups.**

A somewhat different story unfolds in Serbia and North Macedonia. The largest organisations there do not have a history of "dabbling in Islamist waters". The North Macedonian Islamic Religious Community eyed the Islamic Youth Forum with suspicion and has been trying to distance itself from radical mosques that are not under its control. It even tried to cooperate with the North Macedonian Ministry of Interior to rectify the issue with radicals among its ranks. The Islamic Community of Serbia has managed to keep

a good relationship with the Serbian government and there has not been any evidence of links to the Muslim Brotherhood. The Islamic Community in Serbia is in a slightly different position since it is also a member of the ICBiH, nevertheless, looking at it individually, both organisations are in a similar position.

Small pockets of Muslim Brotherhood supporters

The third group that this research identifies are the genuine supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood who either broke away from the larger organisations or were not formally organised at all. These are mainly political activists who became more visible during the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and the subsequent overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated government two years later. In the Czech Republic, these were individuals not affiliated with any organisation who went to Egypt to support the Muslim Brotherhood. After the ousting of former president Morsi, the group split between Sisi supporters and those who stuck with the ideas of Islamic revivalism. At around the same time there were protests in front of the Egyptian embassy in Warsaw organised by a group of individuals who stood symbolically with Mohamed Morsi and disagreed with the regime change in 2013. In Central Europe then, it transpired there was some support for the movement. However, these are individuals in a small network, with no real organisation behind them, let alone a group of influential and well-placed individuals working towards a single goal of the Islamisation of the society.

A slightly different case is the one umbrella organisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina called, in English, the Association for Culture, Education and Sport, or AKOS. Although lacking political activism but with plenty of publication activity that is still ongoing, it gives a picture of an entity that spreads a message of Islamists across a multitude of formats, such as publications, interviews, lectures, etc. Paired with its active membership in FEMYSO and FIOE, and a link to another, now dismantled organisation, the Association for Culture and Education in Kosovo, the picture begins to fill in. How many of its members are deliberately playing a role in these activities is hard to say at the moment, but the overall conclusion must be that such wide involvement with the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and its influenced pan-European organisations cannot be simply be coincidental or unintentional. **All the aforementioned could be categorised as Muslim Brotherhood-inspired although not all are organisations in the formal sense.**

Astute actors

The last group includes those organisations that closely cooperate with another force that has been growing in influence in the studied countries, specifically in the Balkans, which could be characterized as a neo-Ottoman ideology, also loosely connected to the idea of political Islam. The closeness of the Muslim Brotherhood and Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been covered in the literature already¹⁷¹ and has implications in this research too. First, there needs to be a distinction made not to insinuate that the Muslim Brotherhood, AKP, and neo-Ottoman ideology are the same concepts. Although many Brothers fled to Turkey after the *coup d'état* in Cairo in 2013, and the country's leadership has granted them refuge, the two have not always seen eye to eye and in fact have differing approaches to consolidating power, use different rhetoric, including on religion, women's rights, and others. That being said, Turkey has become a safe haven for Islamists who, for example, in April 2016 organised a festival to show their gratitude to the country's leadership which Yusuf al-Qaradawi also attended. More importantly, through its Directorate of Religious Affairs (also known as Diyanet), the country is extending its reach in the Western Balkans countries in the religious sphere, as has been noted by several interviewees in this report, and in some cases changing the political landscape in the process by highlighting this part of the given people's identity.

Perhaps the best example of an entity influenced by this actor is the Besa political party in North Macedonia. Indicated by multiple interviewees from different fields (non-profit and security), Besa has seemingly supported and promoted Erdogan's image and policies in the country. AKP's emphasis on the Islamic identity of the Albanian and Turkish minorities, a novelty in North Macedonian politics, still stop shy of rhetoric in favor of political Islam in the sense of abolishing a secular democratic system and giving a privileged position to Islam in law-making. The inclination towards revivalists shows more clearly in Besa's connection to a publishing house that translated books by al-Qaradawi and al-Banna into Albanian in North Macedonia. It is the combination of the mentioned indicators that creates the overlap with the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Next steps

This report's findings not only display the complex nature of the reality in the countries at the center of this project, but also pushes the research into new territories. This research has accomplished organising the studied organisations and showing particular patterns of behaviour while determining their connection to the Muslim Brotherhood movement, if any. Mapping out the interactions between Salafis, neo-Ottomanists, Takfiris, Islamists, and other interpretations of Islam, all foreign to the domestic population, was not originally part of this research's objective. However, when talking to various stakeholders in the security domain, the conversations would naturally bring up these actors. This area certainly presents room for more in-depth research in how these ideologies compete on national and international level, including the geopolitical element as the context necessary for such analysis, looking into the transfers of certain individuals for example too radical for one group, moving onto the next.

A good starting point would be a closer look at the collaborative efforts between North Macedonian-based humanitarian associations and Turkish-backed youth programmes providing scholarships and relief programmes that afford Turkey to build long-term ties to the region and ensure the growing cadre of admirers of President Erdogan's grand ambition to become the leader of all Muslims. The Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) along with the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), the government's aid agency for overseas works, are just two examples of this deepening collaborative relationship.¹⁷² Although neither organisation has necessarily any proven open, direct ties to formal Muslim Brotherhood outfits, the question remains over the outcome of the nearly 20,000 Muslim Brotherhood members who fled from Egypt to Turkey following Morsi's removal. After all, Yasin Aktay, a former deputy chairman of the AKP, in 2018 went as far as saying that the Muslim Brotherhood represented "Turkey's soft power".¹⁷³

The impact of the interplay between President Erdogan's government and the Muslim Brotherhood members living as refugees in Turkey on the CEE region, along with COVID-19-related activities such as international aid of some NGOs is unclear at this early stage and remains to be analysed. However, it is likely to have an impact on the overall dynamic

171 Abdelrahman Ayyash, "The Turkish Future of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," August 17, 2020, <https://tcf.org/content/report/turkish-future-egypts-muslim-brotherhood/?agreed=1>.

172 Stockholm Center for Freedom. (2018, February 07). COMMENTARY - Erdoğan's creeping radical Islamist projects in Macedonia. Retrieved November 06, 2020, from <https://stockholmcf.org/commentary-erdogans-creeping-radical-islamist-projects-in-macedonia/>.

173 Lorenzo Vidino, "Erdogan's Long Arm in Europe," May 7, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/07/erdogans-long-arm-in-europe-germany-netherlands-milli-gorus-muslim-brotherhood-turkey-akp/>.

of the individual actors. Given these circumstances, it should not be surprising if in the future we begin to see somewhat of a more collaborative foreign engagement in areas of the world that would benefit the Muslim Brotherhood by extension.



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