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Enabling Agency: What Made Them Go?

Foreign Fighters from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo

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of Philosophy in Political Science

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Tanja Dramac Jiries
September, 2018

Abbreviations:

BIK – Islamic Community in Kosovo
BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina
BIRN – Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
CVE – Countering Violent Extremism
DPA – Dayton Peace Agreement
CRC – Citizenship Review Commission
DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization/Disengage, Reintegrate
EU – European Union
ECHR – European Court of Human Rights
EUSR – European Union Special Representative
EULEX – European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
FF – Foreign Fighters
FTF – Foreign Terrorists Fighters
HDZ – Croatian Democratic Union
ISIS/ISIL/IS/DAESH – Islamic State
ICBiH – Islamic Community in Bosnia
IED – improvised explosive devices
IHL – International Humanitarian Law
IOM – International Organization for Migration
JFF – Jihadist Foreign Fighters
KS – Kosovo
KM – Convertible Mark, Bosnian currency
KCSS – Kosovo Center for Security Studies
KLA – Kosovo Liberation Army
LISBA – Islamic Movement Unite
MENA – Middle East and North Africa
OSA – Intelligence Agency Bosnia
PVE – Preventing Violent Extremism
PCS – Private Security Companies
SDA – Party of Democratic Action
SMT – Social Movement Theory
SNSD – The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats
SPRK – The Special Prosecution of the Republic of Kosovo
VE – Violent Extremism
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNMIK – United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNSC – United Nations Security Council

A Note on Pronunciation and Transliteration

Personal names and local words marking for example, local geographic locations in this dissertation do not seem as they are written in the different Balkan languages, when those languages use the Latin script. This means that I have intentionally left out diacritics to allow for easier reading but have kept them in Bibliography. I have also used local anglicized versions (for example Bosniak and not Bošnjak, Republika Srpska, etc.).

For the references from Qur'an and Arabic terms I have often given their original form and not the localized-turkicized form.

For Brett Campbell

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Abstract

This PhD dissertation analyses the process of the recruitment of foreign fighters from the Western Balkans, specifically Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, to Syria and Iraq from 2012 to 2015. In studying this phenomena, the core research questions that this dissertation address are: What were the processes and circumstances leading up to the departure of foreign fighters from Bosnia and Kosovo? What were the key mechanisms and who were the key actors that enabled, mobilized, facilitated, and finally organized their departure?

Foreign fighters are not just a contemporary phenomenon, but their recent reemergence and proliferation in the context of the Syrian war have expanded and intensified scholars' and practitioners' attention to the issue. Nevertheless, the preceding and new focuses have not resulted in an overwhelming number of studies that utilize primary accounts or display strong theoretical underpinnings. The vast majority of existing studies employs secondary sources, and therefore necessitated further testing in order to contribute to or validate the existing body of research. To compensate, some of the literature has varied their methodologies and embraced quantitative methods utilizing open-source datasets. However, these generally fail to take into account crucial nuances and details.

To address these gaps, this dissertation approaches the study of a specific contingent of foreign fighters from a qualitative perspective, thus establishing a primary account database. The research utilizes in-depth, semi-structured interviews with former foreign fighters and their families, as well as a number of relevant stakeholders. It supplements the interviews with software analysis of a significant amount of internal intelligence documents and court transcripts acquired through extensive field work. By focusing on primary accounts, the dissertation offers a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the radicalization and recruitment pattern for a particular foreign fighter group. The research design's central assumption is that scholars must examine the motivation and enabling circumstances surrounding the recruits, as well as the network that sustained their recruitment. In this sense, the dissertation draws on the theories of social movement approaches, more specifically, contentious politics literature. It utilizes the specific concepts of *triggering mechanisms*, which refer to the enabling circumstances that make the radicalization and departure possible, and *pleasure in agency*, to elaborate on individual motivation.

The findings demonstrate that there is no ideal profile of a recruit and that each account is specific and context-dependent. In some cases, a few common denominators, such as the role of family and local community, exist and are crucial; but the role of the family varied in Bosnia and Kosovo. Furthermore, loyalty to the group was sustained either through the new concept of "inexpensive prospect" or by means of tight-knit relationships. Research also found that personal experiences with corruption and parallel networks that had developed as a result of systematic failures aided the recruitment. Finally, this work found that an incomplete process of post-war transition can fuel the process of political and religious radicalization and create a wider enabling web for recruitment. To this end, the dissertation argues for further research that employs much more individual setting and evidence based inquiry.

Table of Contents:

Copyright Notice:.....	iii
Abbreviations:.....	iv
A Note on Pronunciation and Transliteration	v
Dedication	vi
Acknowledgments.....	vii
Abstract	x
Table of Contents:.....	xi
1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	14
1.1. Research Question.....	20
1.2. Dissertation Structure.....	22
2. CHAPTER TWO: SELECTED EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP	24
2.1 Introduction	24
2.2. A Brief History of the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon.....	24
2.2.1. Defining the Study - The Beginning of Proliferation	25
2.2.2. Deepening the Study.....	29
2.2.3. Further Proliferation - The Civil Society and Media Contribution	31
2.3. Brief Legal Literature Overview	34
2.4. Review of Relevant UNSC Resolutions.....	36
2.5. Case Studies	40
2.6. Radicalization Literature	43
2.7. Online and Offline Radicalization.....	48
2.8. The Literature on the Balkan Foreign Fighters	52
2.9. Filling in the Gap in the Literature	55
3. CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	58
3.1. Introduction	58
3.2. Theorizing Contention and Recruitment	60
3.2.1. Structuring Approach	60
3.2.2. Resource Mobilization.....	62
3.2.3. Distinctive Feature of the Contention.....	63
3.3. Not Everything is a Social Movement – The Quest for Processes and Mechanisms.....	65

3.4. ‘Terrorism is a Strategy, Not a Creed’	70
3.5. Transitional Countries and Contention	74
3.6. Networks, Mechanisms, and Motivations	76
3.6.1. Enablers	79
3.7. Concluding Remarks	87
4. CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	88
4.1. Case Selection	88
4.2. Research Design	91
4.2.1. Site Intensive Research	95
4.2.2. Data Collection	96
4.3. Methodological Scope and Ethical Observations	99
4.4. In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews	104
4.5. Content Analysis	109
4.6. Codifying Grid	110
5. CHAPTER FIVE: CASE STUDIES, EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	112
5.1. Introduction	112
5.1.1. Overview of Figures	112
5.1.2. National Responses	113
5.2. Motivations	115
5.2.1. Introduction	115
5.2.2. Solidarity	120
5.2.3. Instrumentality	124
5.2.4. Ideology	128
5.2.4.1. Salafism	131
5.2.4.2. The Contest over the Interpretation of Islam	139
5.2.4.3. Extreme Politics	145
5.2.5. Concluding Remarks	149
5.3. Enabling Networks and Organization	149
5.3.1. Introduction	149
5.3.2. Family	150
5.3.2.1. Bosnia and Herzegovina	150
5.3.2.2. Kosovo	153
5.3.3. The Bait of ‘Inexpensive Prospects’	155

5.3.4. Parallel Networks	159
5.3.4.1. Bosnia and Herzegovina	159
5.3.4.2. Kosovo	161
5.3.4.3. Online Networks	166
5.3.5. Concluding Remarks	170
5.4. Enabled and Stimulated Agency – Recruitment and Departures	171
5.5. Politics in Transition	173
5.5.1. Introduction	173
5.5.2. Personal Experience of Corruption and System Failure.....	174
5.5.3. Concluding Remarks	181
5.6. Return and Recidivism	183
5.7. Disengagement and Marginalization.....	192
6. CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	200
BIBLIOGRAPHY	208
Legal Sources:.....	236
List of Tables:	240
Appendices.....	241
Interview List	241
Interview List - Chatham House Rules	244
BiH Court verdicts against Foreign Fighters	245
Kosovo Court verdicts against Foreign Fighters and other terror-related verdicts	246

1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 2018, four years after I commenced research in Bosnia and Kosovo, and three since officially starting my PhD, foreign fighter recruitment has fallen almost to the bottom of the list of serious security challenges in the Balkans.¹ This type of disclaimer, I believe, should be the opening line of every serious work. The increased attention to the issue only securitized it further. Politicians widely used it as a bickering tool; they did not hesitate to label everyone a terrorist and everything terrorism. At the same time, due to the fatigue and resentment regarding opportunism that any research on violent extremism sparked, many local experts needed much persuasion and inside recommendations to agree to talk to me. Once it is understood within the proper parameters, the issue of foreign fighters can be further assessed. However, it is not easy to strike a balance between securitizing the issue and pushing it under the carpet. Science has yet to say much about this particular phenomenon. Indeed, it is the need for more research and context that drove this dissertation forward.

The foreign fighter phenomenon is often incorrectly portrayed as a recent phenomenon. We can see transnational mobilization and insurgents from at least the 1930s and, more recently, a few decades ago. Distinguishable from mercenaries by their motivation, loyalty, citizenship, networks and mobilization patterns, foreign fighters continue to puzzle academia. As often is the case with terrorism or other forms of political violence, foreign fighters are largely an underexplored phenomena. As with the majority of terrorism studies, the lack of firsthand accounts and primary sources are a fundamental gap. For many obvious security considerations, this area of study remains poorly documented, despite the best intention of the courageous scholars at the forefront of its research.² It is this lack of primary sources that drove this study, which provides insight into individual stories rather than deducing general conclusions based on secondary evidence.

¹ For the purposes of this dissertation, the term “Balkans” will be used to denote the region, despite the negative connotations that this term has gained throughout the years. The term “Southeast Europe” will be used relatively less frequently. The term “Balkans” will be used interchangeably with the term “Western Balkans,” although the author acknowledges that the term “Western Balkans” was created in Brussels to notate countries that are EU aspirants and not Romania and Bulgaria, which are already EU member states. In this dissertation, the two terms will encompass Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

² There are a number of experts from the Atlantic Initiative in Bosnia and Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS) in Pristina who are at the front of research on foreign fighters and doing the most serious and authentic work on the issue.

The timing for this study is also appropriate. The last decisions and attempts to leave by foreign fighters were made in late 2016 in Bosnia and early 2017 in Kosovo. Since then, we know of no individual from these two countries who has attempted to travel to territory governed by a largely weakened ISIS. This cessation can be partially ascribed to the lost cause of the defeated architects of the ISIS, prohibitive laws criminalizing the decisions, institutional reactions by these countries to stop the departures, and lack of courage by individuals, no matter how tempted. It is important then to lay out precisely what constitutes a high security risk in these two countries and to put the problem of foreign fighters and their potential threat into context.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Kosovo are recipients of significant international assistance. Yet, they underperform in all areas of governance, including security, which is probably the worst and least desirable outcome of efforts to repair them in the war's aftermath. It is notable that these two countries are still defined as 'post-conflict states,' even after more than two decades since the wars' end, which speaks enough about their actual progress. With an unresolved present and disturbing past, some of its leaders are struggling, willingly and unwillingly, to lead Bosnia towards healing. Nevertheless, the country is plagued with rampant corruption and nepotism, the highest unemployment rate in Europe, and general socio-economic backsliding. In terms of corruption, a common assessment among scholars is that the saturation of corruption and organized crime in Europe's post-communist states is the result of deregulation, privatization, and eased border restrictions. While these conclusions are indisputable, it is still mind-boggling to understand how, with the overwhelming presence of western military forces, donors, administrators, and policymakers, these soft and now hard security threats occur so permissively in BiH and Kosovo. It is difficult to discuss at this point, to what extent are these security threats the result of endemic structural factors in the Balkans, i.e. the "victimization" of populations historically ruled by outsiders, the effects of the region's geopolitical and historical shifts, the decades-old dominance of the so-called "strong-arm men," and localized patronage networks that feed off of nepotism and clientalism, thus sustaining party capture.

Even worse, ghosts from the past wars are surely and steadily again winning the hearts and minds of young Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks in Bosnia. Ethno-nationalist and clerico-fascist groups, while also a problem in better functioning democracies, are particularly problematic in countries where democracy has not fully flourished and where institutions lack adequate responses to them. Many ethno-nationalist groups, supported by hostile foreign influences, operate as humanitarian groups, youth ‘NGOs,’ and charities; they infiltrate society and position themselves as alternatives to the country’s European path. They exploit societal vulnerabilities by providing socio-economic care or working with young people – areas from which the state has withdrawn. These groups often feed off of each other’s narratives and fuel further divide and stigmatization in already fragile societies.³ Where there are unresolved wartime grievances, they held to proliferate reciprocal radicalization.⁴

Each of these extremist groups represents, in one form or another, radical political options. They utilize fear to establish themselves as key actors that will protect their constituencies. The fact that extreme (militant) Islamic religious groups still do not have a viable political counterpart is an important aspect when assessing the real threats that permeate the region. I will discuss later in detail whether this can be changed in the future. However, even when contextualizing the problem of violent extremists inspired by ideology, it is important to remember that “terrorists need to get lucky only one time, while governments need to be lucky all the time.”⁵ And if the terrorists do manage to succeed, what will such event provoke in countries divided by perpetual political and societal rifts?

One particular challenge is groups that have tight connections with political parties, institutions, and leaders who are openly providing these illiberal voices with public platforms and legitimacy. For this reason and at this moment, these extreme voices, which represent already existing or possible political outcomes, are the highest security threat in Bosnia. In

³ Predmeti "Srbska čast" i "Askeri" još uvijek na provjeri u SIPA-i, *Klix*, April 2, 2018, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/predmeti-srbska-cast-i-askeri-jos-uvijek-na-provjeri-u-sipa-i/180402017> (accessed June 2018).

⁴ The term “cumulative radicalization” was applied by Prof. Vlado Azinovic in his presentations to denominate the process of mutually sustained radicalization processes.

⁵ This phrase refers to when the IRA tried but failed to kill Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The IRA immediately released a public statement in which it declared: “We didn’t get lucky this time, but remember, it’s enough for us to get lucky one time, you have to get lucky all the time”, cited by Vlado Azinovic, interview, *Dani*, January 16, 2015, <https://www.bhdani.ba/portal/clanak/918/intervju-dana/francuska-nije-ni-pocetak-ni-kraj>, (accessed August 22, 2018).

addition, illiberal forces that are operating paramilitary groups, including those disguised as fitness and adrenaline enthusiasts or soccer hooligans and fans, are also dangerous, given how these groups were directly involved in some of the most hideous war crimes only 25 years ago.⁶

Moreover, while usually overlooked, domestic violence is rife in both countries; some authors claim that domestic violence breeds all kinds of other violence, including those that are religiously and politically inspired. “We live in a country with rampant domestic violence. Every other woman in BiH has experienced some form of domestic violence from the age of 15, with the perpetrators usually being men and close family members. A nation that does not combat domestic violence in a structured and comprehensive way (and therefore breeds and enables it) will eventually have to face a number of other related security issues, amongst them violent extremism.”⁷ Experts further argue that security agencies and institutions must recognize domestic violence as a serious threat to the overall security of the country and an indicator of other security concerns, such as organized crime and violent extremism.⁸ This is still not the case in the Balkans, as a majority of experts to whom I have spoken recognize that organized crime, corruption and other soft security challenges are significant threats, but usually leave out domestic abuse.

To further illustrate the security problems in Bosnia, I will refer to a very recent event. In spring 2018, one particular incident related to the migrant crisis in Bosnia demonstrated the country’s endangered constitutional order and almost caused an institutional collapse and worse. It revolved around a standoff that cantonal (local) and state police had over the blocking of a migrant convoy.⁹ It is by now understood that one of the prerequisites of state authority is a full monopoly over its use of force, something that was clearly missing on that day. Combined with regional leaders’ increasing secessionist rhetoric and aspirations, Bosnia simply cannot afford the withdrawal or collapse of state-level institutions.

⁶ Gregory P. Olson, *Paramilitaries in the dissolution of the socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: effects on the peace process*, Monograph, U.S. Agency for International Development, School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, AY 2014-001.

⁷ Interview with Vanja Matic, April 2018.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Dado Ruvic, “Rival Bosnian police forces in standoff over migrant transfer,” *Reuters*, May 18, 2018, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-migrants-bosnia/police-in-bosnia-turn-back-buses-carrying-270-migrants-idUKKCN1IJ1DI>, (accessed June 2018).

In Kosovo, an unresolved dispute with Serbia, staged political incidents, a general lack of full commitment to EU accession, permeating corruption, and organized crime and criminal networks are weakening already fragile institutions. The youngest state in the making on the Old Continent is troubled by transnational criminal connections with ties leading all the way to the national political leadership, combined with the alleged wartime links of its current leadership that openly opposes the operationalization of a Special Court that would look into these issues. Even though the U.S. unequivocally supports the Court, there have been no indictments to date. Yet, the body is expected to indict senior Kosovo Liberation Army veterans for crimes committed against Serbian, Roma and Albanian civilians; their alleged crimes include killings, abductions, illegal detentions, sexual violence, and the illicit traffic of human organs, as per Council of Europe reports reconfirmed by a EU special investigative team.¹⁰ Kosovo's current President, Prime Minister, Assembly Speaker, and Deputy Prime Minister are all implicated in those reports. Since the war in Kosovo ended, the international community, and the U.S. in particular, has been involved in the country's justice system, but the results have been modest: less than 20 final verdicts in war-crime related cases.¹¹ In addition, Kosovo's isolation – it is the only Balkan country without a visa liberalization program – is another reason for youth resentment towards stalled EU processes and promises that once carried the name 'newborn' after it unilaterally declared independence from Serbia ten years ago.

Furthermore, Europe's newest country still has no security control and full oversight over its territory north of the Ibar River, which causes a number of difficulties for all parties involved. In addition, the recent and still unresolved murder of a prominent Kosovo Serb politician speaking out against organized crime and for reconciliation strokes more fear in the

¹⁰ Dick Marty, "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo," Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Council of Europe, January 7, 2011, <http://semantic-pace.net/tools/pdf.aspx?doc=aHR0cDovL2Fzc2VtYmx5LmNvZS5pbncveG1sL1hSZWYvWDJlLURXLWV4dHluYXNwP2ZpbGVpZD0xMjYwOCZsYW5nPUVO&xsl=aHR0cDovL3NlbnFudGljcGJjZS5uZXQvWHNsdc9QZGYvWFJlZi1XRC1BVC1YTUwvUERGLnhzbA=&xslparams=ZmlsZWlkPTEyNjA4> and Statement of the Chief Prosecutor of the EU Special Investigative Task Force, July 29, 2014, <http://www.recom.link/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Download-full-statement-here.pdf> (accessed August 2018).

¹¹ Filip Rudic, "Kosovo Specialist Prosecutor Defends Court in Parting Address," *Balkan Insight*, March 23, 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-specialist-prosecutor-gives-final-speech-before-resigning-03-23-2018>, (accessed May 2018).

community.¹² These occasional orchestrated incidents and the lack of rule of law are only some of the major problems facing the youngest nation in Europe. Officially, Kosovo's police force has successfully prevented at least three terrorist attacks in the past few years and, although most certainly not a "haven for terrorists," the country has its fair share of challenges in keeping citizens safe.

Both of these countries also have the additional challenge of externally-regulated democratization processes. The main problems of externally-regulated democracy promotion are that government institutions tend to lack legitimacy and accountability, and therefore are unable to mitigate or control criminal elements, or are often working together with said networks. In cases where the state is non-ethnically homogenous, threats posed by secessionist-minded minorities (funded by organized crime or other willing parties) may be exacerbated. Yet among all of the negative aspects associated with external state-building, the rise, persistence, and tolerance of soft and hard security threats in an ever changing geo-political context, present additional challenges.

This leaves us with the issue of foreign fighters and the question: exactly how did ISIS gain appeal in these countries? ISIS was quite clearly, a powerful but fairly short-lived idea of a *sharia*-based, pretend state. It is not a surprise that, of the more than 35,000 people from more than 95 countries who joined ISIS, some came from each of the countries of the Western Balkans, with Kosovo and Bosnia leading the region's list. In 2018, as the end nears for the last ISIS 'caliphate' strongholds in Syria, the group is probably adapting its operations and tactics. ISIS maintains branches and networks that have remained resilient or even have hardened during the fight against its epicenter. ISIS has dispatched battle-hardened terrorists from the war zone to wreak havoc at home or in third countries, and it has sought to mobilize homegrown terrorists who are inspired by ISIS but have never set foot in Syria or Iraq. ISIS also remains intent on attacking civil aviation, has started using drones, and has employed rudimentary chemical

¹²Glenn Ellis, "Kosovo: The mysterious murder of Oliver Ivanovic," *Al Jazeera*, June 1, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/europe/2018/05/kosovo-mysterious-murder-oliver-ivanovic-180529144925924.html>. (Accessed August 2018) and Interviews with Ian Bancroft and Ana Vlahovic, June 2018.

weapons.¹³ “Who are foreign fighters?” and “Why and how did they go?” – are questions that still puzzle academia and politicians. While the departure of foreign fighters has completely ceased for both countries in this study, problematic and extreme religious groups that advocate violence or stop short and just cheer for violence still pose a security risk because they undermine not only established religious communities but also state structures, authority, and legal power. In addition, they are negatively impacting on the social fabric of these societies. As religious pluralism and religious tolerance are a precondition for any democratic society, the public has the right to weigh in with and depend on relevant institutions if such groups are undermining the laws of these countries and, if so, inquire what exactly the governments are doing in response.

All of us seeking to craft the best practices of political science in the Balkans are making these scholarly efforts at a time when the politicization of any issue, let alone security, is potentially tumultuous. An awareness of that danger merits scholarly caution. For that reason, when I began my research about foreign fighters, I realized fairly soon that it would have been better to allow for some historical distance to tackle the issue, given the frenzy in the media and rapid securitization of the issue. But, after spending some time in the field, it became clear that this is quite the opposite of what is needed. Fact-based, sober research into what conditions allowed for the phenomenon to rise and how its underground networks operate in countries where there is such a heavy international presence and large number of security institutions, warrants further scholarly inquiry.

1.1. Research Question

Some of the people to whom I have spoken suggest that the real question when tackling the issue of foreign fighters should not be why these people left, but why more people *have not* left for Syria and Iraq. The simple answer is that more people *have* attempted to leave. In Bosnia, for example, nearly two dozen trips have been prevented; the number for Kosovo is approximately 55.¹⁴ This are the official numbers of those stopped at the border, so the real

¹³ Paraphrased from the Keynote Speech of Raffi Gregorian, Acting Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, Opening Session, OSCE Counter Terrorism Meeting, Rome, May 10, 2018.

¹⁴ Bosnia and Kosovo Police.

numbers are probably higher. Experts who have interviewed the largest number of foreign fighters in Kosovo claim that more than 1,000 people actually wanted to leave but did not have the courage, especially since the criminalization of the activity in 2014-2015.¹⁵ As for Bosnia, a number of family members whom I interviewed also had the idea of leaving but were either persuaded by opposing family members or were simply discouraged by messages received from the family members who had left and become disillusioned by what they found. This alone should end the debate on why the reverse question is not academically relevant. It is another question why some are led to believe that the reversed question would yield any important results. In addition, I fiercely back the distinguishing of foreign fighters from mercenaries. In a highly securitized and politicized setting, where every security threat in the Balkans is monitored closely, depending from which ethnic-nationalist angle is viewed, there is a tendency to equalize and relativize foreign fighters with mercenaries.

It is therefore useful to remember the preeminent definition of the phenomena. David Malet, a scholar whose definition is most quoted, provided a clear distinction between the two; the latter is, unlike the foreign fighter, paid for his services and believes in the creed of money, while the former justifies his or her cause by ideology. To quote, “hired guns such as private security companies (PSC) should not be counted as foreign fighters because they operate under state sanction rather than rebels.”¹⁶ In addition, more often than not, mercenaries who join paramilitary groups, as well as PSCs, are licensed by states.¹⁷

In examining foreign fighter recruitment, the core research questions this dissertation addresses are: **“What were the processes and circumstances leading up to the departure of foreign fighters from Bosnia and Kosovo?”** and **“What were the key mechanisms and actors that enabled, mobilized, facilitated, and finally organized their departure?”** This dissertation will shed additional light on the processes of recruitment for the causes of political violence.

¹⁵ Interview with Skender Petreshi, June 2018.

¹⁶ David Malet, *A History of Foreign Fighters*, Oxford University Press; 1 edition (April 30, 2013).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9, paraphrased.

There has been much written on the subject of foreign fighters. However, fascination with the phenomena has not resulted in an overwhelming number of studies based on primary accounts or underpinned by clear theoretical concepts. Rather, the literature on foreign fighters has focused on the relationship between non-state actors and their patrons. The phenomenon has been looked at through behavioral and psychological lenses and radicalization and terrorism studies, as well as the legal implications of involvement in civil wars. The vast majority of existing studies are based on secondary sources, so their validity and credibility require additional testing. To compensate for this gap and different methodologies, some literature also has employed quantitative methods utilizing open source datasets but failed to account for nuances and crucial details. The present dissertation approaches the study of a specific contingent of foreign fighters from a qualitative perspective, thus establishing a primary account database. The dissertation utilizes in-depth, semi-structured interviews with former foreign fighters and their families, as well as a number of relevant stakeholders. In addition, this dissertation supplements the interviews with software analysis of a significant amount of internal intelligence documents and court transcripts acquired during extensive field work.

1.2. Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is organized into six chapters: the first offers a review of the research done in the field of the foreign fighter phenomenon. Given the proliferation of literature, the chapter is divided depending on the type of literature to allow for a clear distinction amongst scholarly and practitioner narratives. In doing so, the chapter identifies two gaps. The first is related to the already mentioned lack of literature based on primary accounts. Second, it establishes that, while much has been written in the context of foreign fighters, mainly on the relationship between non-state actors and patrons, through behavioral and psychological lenses, and by radicalization and terrorism studies, as well as on the legal implications of their involvement in the civil wars, what is often missing is a theoretical underpinning and elaboration on the sustaining mechanisms that aided the recruitment process.

The second chapter reviews theories in the Social Movement domain in order to elaborate why the foreign fighter phenomenon should be studied within this framework, while utilizing

Contentious Politics as the main framework. This allows us to outline mechanisms and brokerage processes that one should look at when studying recruitment, but also identifies major motivations and context-related factors that assist the process. When studying micro-context in detail within the larger macro-phenomena, and when spending so much time in the field utilizing qualitative methodology, it is important to systematize and describe the entire process. Therefore, this entire chapter is devoted to methodology. The third chapter elaborates on the research design, data collection, scope, and ethical observations. It also provides a quantitative overview and discusses the process of interviewing a sensitive sample.

Chapter five presents the main empirical analyses and discuss the findings. First subchapter focuses on motivations, the second subchapter on networks, and final subchapter on politics in transition; each elaborates on the micro, mid and macro level of analysis. They outline the main argument that all of these are intertwined in creating the perfect enabling mechanism to stimulate the agency of the recruits, hence the title of the dissertation. It also teases out the semi-new concept of the “inexpensive prospects” that sustained operating of the recruitment network. The dissertation concludes by referring back to the main question – what made them go? While summarizing the finding that there is, in fact, no possible generalization for the recruit’s motivation, it also suggests that the networks and larger context were in fact fairly constant for many. The conclusion also argues for a more detailed and careful focus on the enabling mechanisms and environment by which this specific form of “transnational activism” was made possible.

2. CHAPTER TWO: SELECTED EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I laid out the research question and established the outline of the theoretical and analytical framework and now this chapter will examine explanations that have been advanced so far. My intention in this chapter is to provide a broad overview and comprehensive assessment of the proliferation of literature on the foreign fighter phenomenon. In the following paragraphs, I will review the wider literature on foreign fighters, legal take on particular cases, case studies, literature on Balkan foreign fighters, literature on radicalization, and contributions by civil society and the media. Finally, I will identify gaps in the literature that do not account for the patterns observable amongst Balkan foreign fighters. I will conclude the chapter by making clear the acute lack of relevant literature that looks at specific sets of foreign fighters, including their context, historical and present circumstances, and organizational aspects. In addition, I will conclude by identifying gap in the literature that rests upon specific theoretical setting. Most noteworthy is the lack of research principally based on primary data.

2.2. A Brief History of the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon

After 9/11, many authors began analyze in depth the role of foreign fighters who had returned from war and continued to advocate for their own country's involvement in the foreign conflict, or who had engaged in the recruitment of young men and women for foreign conflicts. However, it was the activities of foreign fighters in the Iraq occupation that really drew attention to them as the type of actor. In 2005, Reuven Paz drew on a sample from 154 fighters identified as 'martyrs' on extremist web portals to shed more light into their specific engagement and conducted a quantitative study on non-Iraqi who fought on the territories of occupied Iraq.¹⁸ In the mainstream literature, theorists emphasized the role of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent *fatwa*¹⁹ published by Palestinian Sheikh Abdullah Azzam entitled "The Defense of the Muslim Lands: The First Obligation after Imam."²⁰ Specifically, the *fatwa* called

¹⁸ Reuven Paz, Arab volunteers killed in Iraq – Analysis, Global Research in International Affairs, <http://www.imra.org.il/story.php?id=24396>, (accessed October 2015).

¹⁹ Authoritative legal opinion.

²⁰ Abdulla Azzam, "Defense of the Muslim Lands," Archive, (accessed January 20, 2018) http://archive.org/stream/Defense_of_the_Muslim_Lands/Defense_of_the_Muslim_Lands_djvu.txt.

upon every Muslim around the world to come to the aid of the Afghanis against the Soviets.²¹ Azzam followed the general plea with “Join the Caravan,” an unprecedented and astonishingly clear strategy on how to organize the money, men, and weapons that would soon pour into Afghanistan.²² This was the first time the world had been introduced to Azzam’s partner, Usama Bin-Laden²³, with whom he had teamed up and established the first “foreign fighters only” training camp.²⁴ This was by far the most sophisticated utilization and organization of militant foreign volunteers. The establishment of a foreign fighter army, however, was no small task, and it took years to prepare and perfect, particularly given that untrained men were facing the onslaught of a superpower invasion.

Three decades later, the superpower has changed, but the basic framework for foreign fighter recruitment remains largely intact. However, while this particular narrative is more or less historically accurate, it ignores the fact that foreign fighter recruitment did not actually begin in the late 1970s. Historical review reveals that non-Islamist foreign fighters have long existed, although they tended towards battle volunteerism and focused on single conflict issues. For example, recruits to the “International Brigades” of the Spanish Civil War had no incentive to operate at home.²⁵ Many of them were Italian or German exiles from fascism. Like the extreme Islamists, they were not able to operate at home meaningfully, so they went to a state that was weak enough that it could not repel them. The same is true for European leftists fighting in Colombia.²⁶

2.2.1. Defining the Study - The Beginning of Proliferation

Just as terrorism research is challenged by a lack of clarity and no commonly agreed upon definition of the terrorist, to a certain extent the same issues plague the study of the foreign fighter phenomenon. To confirm this, one can simply look at the most quoted and commonly

²¹ In the Islamic faith, a *fatwa* is a nonbinding but authoritative legal opinion.

²² Abdullah Azzam, *Join the Caravan* (1987), <http://www.authentictauheed.com/2009/12/Join-Caravan-Abdullah-Azzam.html>, (accessed January 19 2018).

²³ Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda; The True Story of Radical Islam* (London: Penguin, 2007 [revised edition]), 61.

²⁴ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 35.

²⁵ For an overview of Jewish volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, for example, see Raanan Rein and Inbal Ofer, *Becoming Brigadistas: Jewish Volunteers from Palestine in the Spanish Civil War*, *European History Quarterly*, 2016, Vol. 46 (1), 92-112.

²⁶ El Tiempo, "Con alias 'Camilo', son 25 los extranjeros en las Farc," *El Tiempo* [With Camilo are 25 Foreigners in FARC], February 01, 2011, <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-8813101>, (accessed May 2015)

accepted definitions of ‘foreign fighter’ today. According to David Malet, in one of the earliest academic studies on foreign fighters, the term had been in use for some time but its appearance grew exponentially since the Iraq conflict in the early 2000s. He offers a fairly straightforward definition: “(F)oreign fighters are defined as non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflicts.”²⁷ Another early accepted definition was “non-indigenous, non-territorialized combatants who, motivated by religion, kinship, and/or ideology rather than pecuniary reward, enter a conflict zone to participate in hostilities.”²⁸ Later on, other definitions took into account material incentive as well: “Transnational insurgents in armed intrastate conflicts, by which I refer to non-state actors that for either ideational or material reasons opt to participate in an intrastate conflict outside their own home country, siding with the challenger to the state.”²⁹ Building on Malet, Thomas Hegghammer excluded material incentive in his definition’s last point: “An agent who (1) has joined, and operates within the confines of, an insurgency, (2) lacks citizenship of the conflict state or kinship links to its warring factions, (3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and is (4) unpaid.”³⁰ In the theoretical chapter that deals with conceptual issues, I will further elaborate why I reject the term “foreign terrorist fighter.”³¹

Addressing the acute need for a typology and theoretical framework in the nexus between non-state actors and security studies, the scholar Sarah V. Marsden developed a social movement theory typology of militant organizations involved in terrorist activities in some manner.³² By using an innovative statistical approach to derive a multidimensional categorization of militant groups, Marsden’s work resulted in the typology being defined by three constructs: political capacity, war-making capacity, and network capacity.³³ For this theory, such a typology is promising, as it attempts to bring in two of the main characteristics of Social Movement Theory

²⁷ David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts*. (PhD Diss., Georgetown University, 2009), 9.

²⁸ Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya: A Critical Assessment," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 5 (2008): 412, doi: 10.1080/10576100801993347.

²⁹ Kristin M. Bakke, "Copying and Learning from Outsiders? Assessing Diffusion from Transnational Insurgents in the Chechen Wars," *Proceedings from APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper*, 2010, 3.

³⁰ Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35, no. 3 (2010): 57, doi: 10.1162/isec_a_00023.

³¹ See Chapter 3, Section 3.4. 'Terrorism is a strategy, not a creed', for further elaboration on this point.

³² Sarah V. Marsden, "A Social Movement Theory Typology of Militant Organizations: Contextualizing Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 4 (2014): doi:10.1080/09546553.2014.954039.

³³ *Ibid.*

(SMT): political opportunity structure, and resource mobilization. The typology also incorporates both the wider socio-political context and organizational characteristics.³⁴ However incomplete this concept remains, it was one of the first attempts to establish the typology of terrorism organizations using SMT, and it sheds some light on the type of foreign fighter contingent typology based on the geographical origin and internal dynamic of the organization of their departure.

Marsden's parameters are observed by the different types of capacities that the organization possesses: for instance, war-making accounts for its logistics and combat training. Network capacities, for example, account for the level of interconnection between the inside recruits and the outside-group recruits. Finally, political capacity relates to the type of claims they are making and the particular political context within which they operate. Although Marsden does employ a unique cross-cutting analysis that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative elements, her model fails to account for super terrorism. Marsden acknowledges this by admitting that there is room for improvement in her model, and this is best illustrated with the unique case of Al-Qaida. Regardless of the shortcoming of Marsden's typology, it is a unique and interesting analysis and places SMT back into terrorism studies. Marsden couldn't account for ISIS, since the study came out prior to ISIS' emergence, but a later author does not account for it either. Ekaterina Stepanova classified terrorism and its interplay with the proximity of conflict, however, at the time, ISIS was not a global issue.³⁵

As mentioned above, Malet and Hegghammer are two authorities whose explorations of the foreign fighter phenomenon have also contributed to the proliferation of literature on this subject. When Malet highlighted the differing citizen from the common denominator for foreign fighter recruits, his analysis sparked the first trend in the literature – "transnational activism".

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Stepanova's term for the third type of typology that looked at terrorism and proximity of war. According to Stepanova there are three types of terrorism: (a) the "classic" terrorism of peacetime, which, regardless of the group's goals, stands apart from wider conflict; (b) "conflict-related terrorism," where terrorism is used along with other violent tactics as part of a broader asymmetrical or regional conflict, for example in Kashmir or Palestine; and (c) "super terrorism" – global terrorism with existential, unlimited goals and motivations, which is epitomized by al-Qaeda. See Ekaterina Stepanova, "Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects," Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 9-11, SIPRI Research Report No. 23. Quoted in Sarah V. Marsden, "A Social Movement Theory Typology of Militant Organizations: Contextualizing Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 2016.

Moreover, Malet diverged the mainstream definition of the foreign fighter, namely that non-state actors who either for ideational or material reasons choose to participate in an intrastate conflict outside their own home country, siding with the challenger of the state.³⁶ Malet found that transnational insurgents were active in at least 26 percent of civil wars over the past 200 years from 1816 to 2005 that is in all 353 conflicts, there had been 93 instances where foreign fighters had participated.³⁷ Since the 1950s, transnational insurgents have been mostly active in Africa, the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East, and Asia. As his analysis of the data demonstrates, the ‘transnational activist’ concept may conflict with mainstream literature that focuses on Islamic transnational foreign fighters, and points to the shortcomings of this approach. In addition, Malet details how insurgencies recruit individuals from abroad who seemingly have no direct connection to a distant war. He hypothesizes that recruitment strategies remain consistent across time and are often framed to act as threats to a particular transnational community.³⁸ Furthermore, Malet offers findings based on the historical perspectives of foreign fighters and establishes policy recommendations for states that engage in counterinsurgency operations.³⁹ To this day, his analysis remains as one of the only comprehensive assessments of the foreign fighter phenomenon. Still, Malet's analysis does have some shortcomings. First, he excludes the question of the reasons behind the susceptibility to radicalization, or the tactics of radicalization that follow the decision to fight. Although in fairness to Malet, we don't really have any way to predict who will become involved in any militant activity and the dissertation that follows will most certainly not aim to shed the light into it. However, although Malet can be termed as the “Foreign Fighter Godfather” having first researched the phenomena in such depth he does not explore in detail how networks and the process of recruitment operate; that is, how these foreign fighters move from one stage to another and how they operationalize their departure.

Few scholars have made an argument as to why transnational identity increasingly prevails in civil wars and, more fundamentally, why foreign recruits join up in the first place. By

³⁶ David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁷ David Malet, The Foreign Fighter Project, 2007, Foreign Fighter Typology (V. 3, 2016), http://www.davidmalet.com/uploads/Foreign_Fighter_Typology_2016.pdf, (accessed May 10, 2018).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ David Malet, "Why Foreign Fighters? Historical Perspectives and Solutions," http://davidmalet.com/uploads/Why_Foreign_Fighters_Malet.pdf, (accessed March 24, 2015).

contrast, Alex Braithwaite and Tiffany S. Chu examine in detail what happens when foreign fighters exit the wars they've been engaged in. They argued that when those conflicts are ongoing or have terminated in rebel victory, there will be increase in the stock of fighters on the open market, but when conflicts terminate in rebel defeat, the stock of foreign fighters is reduced.⁴⁰ Among many other aspects, the first wave of authors on the subject explored why already radicalized fighters decide to attack at home and why others flee. Daniel Byman looked at what happens when foreign fighters return, although he focused on those who were hardened veterans, skilled in the use of all sorts of weapons and having other tactical skills.⁴¹ He did not examine those who failed to receive similar training that may have motivated them, but rather came back disillusioned and disappointed. He concludes that the role of de-radicalization processes are important, but that timely intelligence and regional cooperation between security services is crucial when it comes to the timely hindering a group's ability to organize and travel. Timothy Holman examines state responses in dealing with foreign fighter mobilizations.⁴² He argues that the challenge for states are two-fold: inter-state intelligence collaboration and intra-state investigation of foreign fighter networks. For studies relating to Bosnia and Kosovo, however, the latter aspect is elevated to a much higher level of complexity: Bosnia has 16 law enforcement agencies cutting across national, entity, and cantonal levels, and Kosovo has five even without the exercise of full authority in the north. I will elaborate on this in more detail in the Analysis chapter.

2.2.2. Deepening the Study

Thomas Hegghammer belongs to another cohort of researchers fascinated with exploring conceptual issues, mobilization, and their impact on the conflict itself.⁴³ However, he also looked

⁴⁰ Alex Braithwaite, Tiffany S. Chu, *Civil Conflicts Abroad, Foreign Fighters, and Terrorism at Home*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2007, 1-25

⁴¹ Daniel Byman, "The Homecomings: What Happens When Arab Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria Return?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 8 (2015): 581-602, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2015.1031556.

⁴² Timothy Holman, "Why States Fail to Counter Foreign Fighter Mobilizations: The Role of Intelligence Services," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 6 (December 2016): 140-155.

⁴³ Along with Hegghammer, there are a number of authors who tackled similar aspects of this subject. See, for example, Anne Stenersen, "Al Qaeda's Foot Soldiers: A Study of the Biographies of Foreign Fighters Killed in Afghanistan and Pakistan Between 2002 and 2006," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 3 (2011): 171-198, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2011.545934.; and Christopher Hewitt and Jessica Kelley-Moore, "Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A Cross-National Analysis of Jihadism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 2 (2009): 211-220, doi:10.1080/09546550802544839.

at the socio-economic aspects of recruits and, on a couple of occasions, returned to his original findings, which confirmed that economically disadvantaged young people who feel profoundly isolated are at utmost risk.⁴⁴ However, Alan Kruger, Jitka Maleckova and Marc Sageman ruled out any links of poverty to terrorism related activities.⁴⁵ Several studies also argued that there is little evidence that low education is another major factor in radicalization, confirming that many recruits have a less dire background, can even be well off, and have at least a high school or even higher level of education. Hegghammer revisited this finding and concluded that the majority of European recruits are underperforming in a socio-economic sense. They are characterized by: “an average of low education, high unemployment, high conviction rate or some other negative indicator.”⁴⁶ Hegghammer used open-source data to distinguish between what he calls “domestic and foreign fighters⁴⁷ and provide a pessimistic assessment regarding the future of Jihadism in Europe.⁴⁸ The motivation and reasoning behind the large-scale recruitment of foreign fighters has not gone entirely unnoticed.⁴⁹ However, the framework for such studies, including Hegghammer's work has largely centered on “Islamist” militancy. It has also focused on radicalization, even when “radicalization” has no established definition but is usually understood as the process by which an individual acquires the motivation to use violence.⁵⁰

When it comes to the literature that provides an in-depth observation of the process following recruitment, or after the conflict in which they took part ends or they move along,

⁴⁴He first touched on socio-economic factors in *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, and then in Thomas Hegghammer, and Stéphane Lacroix, *Saudi Arabia in Transition: Insights on Social, Political, Economic, and Religious Change by Bernard Haykel*, New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015.

⁴⁵ Alan Kruger and Jitka Maleckova, “What makes a terrorist?” and Marc Sageman, “Inside Terrorist Networks,” quoted in Thomas Hegghammer, “Revisiting the poverty-terrorism link in European jihadism,” November 8, 2016, 3, http://hegghammer.com/files/Hegghammer_-_poverty.pdf, (accessed May 2017).

⁴⁶ It is important to note that Hegghammer rejects the correlation: “Saying that jihadis are underperforming is not the same as saying that they become jihadis because they were underperforming”, Thomas Hegghammer, “Revisiting the poverty-terrorism link in European jihadism,” November 8, 2016, 10, http://hegghammer.com/files/Hegghammer_-_poverty.pdf, (accessed May 2017).

⁴⁷ Thomas Hegghammer, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists’ Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting,” *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 01 (2013): 10, doi: 10.1017/s0003055412000615.

⁴⁸ Thomas Hegghammer, “The Future of Jihadism in Europe: A Pessimistic View. Perspectives on Terrorism,” 10, no. 6, 156-170. He predicts four macro trends: 1) expected growth in the number of economically underperforming Muslim youth, 2) expected growth in the number of available jihadi entrepreneurs, 3) persistent conflict in the Muslim world, and 4) continued operational freedom for clandestine actors on the Internet.

⁴⁹ Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (2010): 797-814, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2010.501423. ; David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts*. (PhD Diss., Georgetown University, 2009).

⁵⁰ Thomas Hegghammer, “Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists’ Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting,” *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 01 (2013): 10, doi: 10.1017/s0003055412000615.

Edwin Bakker and Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn have explored eight possible pathways that Western foreign fighters could take after their initial conflict involvement ends.⁵¹ Based on case studies of the wars in Afghanistan in 1980s, Bosnia in 1990s, and Somalia in 2000s, Bakker and de Roy van Zuijdewijn conclude that one-third of those fighters have been either recruited again or posed a threat to the country to which they had returned.⁵² Other fighters remained in the country of the original conflict, or continued their fight elsewhere. The authors also concluded that no matter how simplified the recruitment of foreign fighters seems, all three case studies differ in quantity, tools, and outcomes of the recruitment process. For example, the majority of recruited fighters in Afghanistan did not settle there once the Soviets had left. Yet, of the 5,000 foreign fighters coming to Bosnia,⁵³ one-third remained as naturalized Bosnian citizens.⁵⁴ The authors agree that the main recruitment tools and hubs were firebrand clerics, centers for asylum seekers, and multimedia propaganda.⁵⁵ Although this study was exhaustively researched, the conclusion suggests that it remains unclear which pathways are more likely than others.

2.2.3. Further Proliferation - The Civil Society and Media Contribution

There is a reason to separate out multiple peer-reviewed - that is academic studies, from other non-peer reviewed works in this specific inquiry. First off, policy papers generated for the purpose of shedding light into the phenomena are often contracted and seek out quick Band-Aid solutions to a very complex phenomenon. The foreign fighter phenomenon has been researched extensively at different institutions, predominately think tanks, which are interested in finding and offering the best available solutions to the problem from a policy standpoint. Although this question is too complex and contextual to provide one simple answer, many institutions have taken up the task of dealing with the consequences of radicalization of foreign recruits by offering tangible advice regarding potential threats. For example, the National Counterterrorism

⁵¹ Jeanine De Roy Van Zuijdewijn and Edwin Bakker, "Returning Western Foreign Fighters: The Case of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Somalia," *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*, 2014, accessed May 24, 2015, doi:10.19165/2014.2.02.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁵³ Karmen Erjavec, "The "Bosnian war on terrorism", " *Journal of Language and Politics* 8, no. 1 (2009): 5-27, doi:10.1075/jlp.8.1.02erj.

⁵⁴ Jennifer Mustapha, "The Mujahideen in Bosnia: The foreign fighter as cosmopolitan citizen and/or terrorist," *Citizenship Studies*, 2013, 1-14.

⁵⁵ Jeanine De Roy Van Zuijdewijn and Edwin Bakker, "Returning Western Foreign Fighters: The Case of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Somalia," *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*, 2014, accessed May 24, 2015, doi:10.19165/2014.2.02.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 10.

Center, RAND Corporation (USA), and Global Counterterrorism Forum (the Netherlands) have proposed a set of strategies for counterterrorist operations, which often include warnings of foreign fighters returning to their country of origin and undertaking terrorist attacks domestically.⁵⁶ The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT, The Hague) is one of numerous think tanks that have produced an overwhelming number of policy briefs in regard to foreign fighter issues.⁵⁷ A number of initiatives and grant-making policies to support civil society countering violent extremism efforts, as a consequence of foreign fighter flow were put in place without taking into account the limitations of the concept and the varying contexts in which it is employed. In addition, donors who often have annual appropriation needed to be spent, were openly requesting that the theme of violent extremism become a part of project submissions. Indeed, without the catch-phrase ‘CVE’, a grant was not guaranteed.⁵⁸ This all, contributed to the overwhelming proliferation of the study of foreign fighter phenomenon.

While all of these institutions focus on providing defensive strategies against foreign fighters, the ICCT provides a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon that does not focus solely on defensive strategies. For example, ICCT policy briefs published in June 2017 focus on the travel of foreign fighters among many other aspects.⁵⁹ Still, the travel of foreign fighters had been significantly reduced by late 2016, calling into question whether such an assessment was warranted in the first place. In 2014, the Global Counterterrorism Forum produced “The Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon”, which was among the first initiatives to address good practices in integrating ex-foreign fighters back into society and minimizing any harmful effects

⁵⁶ Nicholas J. Rasmussen, "Countering Violent Islamist Extremist: The Urgent Threat of Foreign Fighters and Homegrown Terror," National Counterterrorism Center, 2015, http://www.nctc.gov/docs/Countering_Violent_Islamist_Extremism.pdf, (accessed May 2016); and Brian Michael Jenkins, "There Will Be Battles in the Heart of Your Abode, The Threat Posed by Foreign Fighters Returning From Syria and Iraq", Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, March 12, 2015.

⁵⁷ To date, the ICCT has published more than 30 policy briefs and organized many conferences on the subject of the foreign fighters. For one of the most recent, see <https://icct.nl/page/3/?s=foreign+fighter>, (accessed June 2016).

⁵⁸ Paraphrased from the March 2018 interview with Velma Saric, the founder of the award-winning Post-Conflict Research Center quoted in Tanja Dramac Jiries, *The CVE Paradox: Inapplicability and Necessity in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (forthcoming) in Alice Martini, Kieran Ford and Richard Jackson (eds.), *Encountering Extremism: A critical examination of theoretical issues and local challenges*, Manchester University Press, 2018.

⁵⁹ Alastair Reed, Johanna Pohl, and Marjolein Jegerings, "The Four Dimensions of the Foreign Fighter Threat: Making Sense of an Evolving Phenomenon," *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism* 8, no. 1 (2017): doi:10.19165/2017.2.01.

of their past in a country's present.⁶⁰ However, these and other similar studies only focus on the consequences approach to the foreign fighter integration problem and do not explore the preventative measures that could diminish the prevalence of the phenomenon in the first place; nor do they elaborate on the process of mobilization. The Soufan Group a U.S.-based think tank, has regularly published updates on the numbers of foreign fighters, demographics of the groups, places of origins, number of returns, number of casualties, and so forth.⁶¹ Its figures have been routinely used by academics, policymakers, diplomats, and journalists. Almost uniquely, the Soufan Group's numbers correspond with those put forth by Bosnia's and Kosovo's law enforcement agencies.⁶²

As we observe through a cursory review of the policy-oriented research, those which have focused on empirical evidence have, by and large, multiplied the literature in field with very few primary sources. Policy briefs usually address immediate challenges and primary sources are a necessary precondition for drawing conclusions. However, this does not mean that there has not been much use in these briefs, especially given that immediate attention is appropriate in regard to current issues, especially those in the domain of national security. However, there should be a reasonable exercise of caution and avoidance of recycling of these materials. A major shortcoming of this literature is the lack of new datasets from on the ground.

Interestingly, media figures and outlets have been particularly fascinated by the issue of foreign fighters. For example, if we look at the most-read English news websites, the *Washington Post*, and *New York Times* they have produced some 20,000 articles in the last five

⁶⁰ Global Counterterrorism Forum, "The Hague – Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon," March 22, 2015, [https://www.thegctf.org/documents/10162/140201/14Sept19_The Hague-Marrakech FTF Memorandum.pdf](https://www.thegctf.org/documents/10162/140201/14Sept19_The+Hague-Marrakech+FTF+Memorandum.pdf), (accessed May 2017). Some other not-for-profit organization have also taken a keen interest in the subject without having first carved out a niche for such studies. For example, the National Bureau of Economic Research, an U.S. nonprofit research organization "committed to undertaking and disseminating unbiased economic research among public policymakers, business professionals, and the academic community," has published a working paper on "what explains the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS."; See Efraim Benmelech and Esteban Klor, "What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?", 2016, doi: 10.3386/w22190.

⁶¹ Richard Barrett, "Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees," October 2017, , <http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017.pdf>, (accessed June 16, 2018).

⁶² Interview with and documentation from representatives of the State Investigation and Protection Agency in Bosnia and Kosovo Police.

years in which foreign fighters were featured in some way.⁶³ In comparison, these outlets covered the refugee crisis, which was the consequence of the very same war foreign fighters were fueling and was taking place around the same time as the foreign fighter phenomenon, about 2,500 times. As well, if we search for coverage of the humanitarian crisis sparked by the ongoing Syrian war, the results are even lower. Although the purpose of this review is not to engage in content analysis regarding the news reporting on a given subject, it is important to point out that the media has been quite interested in and active on the foreign fighter phenomenon.⁶⁴ Quantity does not, however, necessarily result in quality. It remains doubtful that the media contributed effectively to illuminating the phenomenon, given the acute lack of primary sources.

As scholars of critical terrorism studies have also observed (see my theoretical framework), much of the burgeoning media focuses on the process of labeling.⁶⁵ It uses well-orchestrated and rehearsed motifs that play on fear to promote a clickbait strategy or pursue other professional or private agendas. Drawing on Michele Foucault's well-known concept of discursive practices and discursive approaches, Alexander Knysh demonstrates that the particular label "Wahhabism" has been deployed as an analytical concept at various discursive levels not only in journalism but also in academia to allow for a certain "dramatization of the conflict." He argues, for example, that in the case of Russia, "Wahhabism has effectively assumed the role 'Islamic Fundamentalism' plays in Western discourses on Islam and Muslims."⁶⁶

2.3. Brief Legal Literature Overview

⁶³ Whereas the source <https://otechworld.com/most-popular-news-websites> includes Google and Yahoo news, for the purpose of this study I focused only on the top 5 news websites. The *Washington Post* had more than 6,600 articles that dealt with foreign fighters and, by comparison, around 1,500 articles that dealt with migrants resulting from the Syrian war. The *New York Times* had more than 14,600 articles dealing with foreign fighters, and more than 1,100 about migrants from Syria.

⁶⁴ This search was conducted on the subscription-only online *Washington Post* and *New York Times* site search engines. These search engines only allow the parameters to be the "past 24 hours, 7 days, 60 days, 12 months and since 2005". In searching, I selected the option which includes articles since 2005, although the bulk of articles produced took place in the past 5 years, hence I note this methodological distinction.

⁶⁵ See Chapter 3, Section 3.4. 'Terrorism is a strategy, not a creed', for further elaboration on this point.

⁶⁶ Alexander Knysh, "A Clear and Present Danger: "Wahhabism" As A Rhetorical Foil," *Die Welt des Islams* 44, no. 1 (2004): 24, doi: 10.1163/157006004773712569.

As many authors now realize that they need to utilize a bottom-up approach to study the phenomenon, there has been an increase in the number of legal analyses and its implications for country-specific foreign fighter groups. For example, one of the most comprehensive legal reviews of Indonesia's recently passed 'ban' on terrorist organizations that was meant to curtail the appeal of joining ISIS was conducted by Adam Fenton and David Price.⁶⁷ They assessed the legal and practical enforcement of the ban by Indonesian law enforcement structures. One of the more influential works in the domain of international law comes from the volume edited by Andrea de Guttry, Francesca Capone and Christophe Paulussen, which analyzes different issues related to foreign fighters through an international law jurisdiction framework.⁶⁸ This volume tackled the phenomenon in terms of the rapidly growing and expanding legal architecture of international norms and regulations. In addition to the legal framework, the two dozen contributions in this volume present many different approaches, from the fields of international relations to political science, communications, and media. This volume was important and timely because it highlighted the rapid development of new avenues of anti-terrorist laws and regulations that often challenged universal human rights principles. More importantly, the authors observed the potential risk of more authoritarian anti-terrorism laws putting pressure on any form of political opposition in general, under the guise of anti-terror preventative measures.

Other legal analysts provide detailed reviews of particular cases or resolutions. One such review by Sandra Krahenmann highlights the challenges of defining the term "foreign" through a detailed reading of the UN Security Council Resolution 2178.⁶⁹ She poses a question to which there has been few responses: are you still a foreign fighter if you hold dual citizenship, including one that is of the country in whose armed conflict you are attempting to join? For this reason, the accounts of Balkan recruits had often been contested, since it was discovered that some of them held dual citizenships yet were counted against both countries' national datasets, resulting in higher numbers. Although the volume's editors acknowledge that "there is a danger

⁶⁷ Adam James Fenton and David Price, "Breaking ISIS: Indonesia's Legal Position on the 'Foreign Terrorist Fighters' Threat," *Australian Journal of Asian Law* 16, no. 1 (2015): 1-18, doi:10.13185/st2016.04103.

⁶⁸ Andrea De Guttry, Francesca Capone, and Christophe Paulussen, *Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond*, The Hague: T.M.C. Asser, 2016.

⁶⁹ Sandra Krähenmann, "The Obligations under International Law of the Foreign Fighter's State of Nationality or Habitual Residence, State of Transit and State of Destination," February 28, 2016, in Andrea De Guttry, Francesca Capone, and Christophe Paulussen (eds.), *Foreign fighters under international law and beyond* (The Hague: T.M.C. Asser, 2016), 234-241.

looming, similar to what occurred in the post 9/11 period of governments trying to fight the problem with everything at their disposal...”⁷⁰ they conclude that “there is no gap in international law when it comes to regulating foreign fighters, meaning that the norms enshrined in treaty as well as customary law provide, in principle, an effective and sound framework to deal even with an undefined and multifaceted phenomenon.”⁷¹ In sum, the authors argue that even though a term that is as volatile as “foreign fighter” can be captured and understood in the context of international law, practitioners and academics alike should be careful in assessing its definition and applicability to specific cases. Another legal implication in a specific context was observed by Briar Guilford, who assessed the shortcomings of the new emergency powers granted to New Zealand’s Executive Branch via legislation that was rushed through Parliament and enacted soon thereafter.⁷² The broad bill allows the country’s intelligence services to conduct warrantless surveillance for 24 hours in cases where there is an actual, potential, or suspected terrorist act or facilitation of terrorist acts.⁷³ It was the first time that New Zealand had taken a more advanced stance in the context of emergency surveillance in comparison to Australia and the UK, despite the latter having a higher level of foreign fighters.

2.4. Review of Relevant UNSC Resolutions

This part provides a brief overview of the UN counterterrorism framework, with particular attention given to the provisions concerning foreign fighters. This part does not aspire to provide in-depth legal analysis of international humanitarian law, but instead to serve only as an outline of its development. The UN counterterrorism framework consists of 19 international legal instruments addressing a wide range of terrorism related issues.⁷⁴ It is important to note a

⁷⁰ *ibid* p. 3.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 520.

⁷² Katharine Briar Guilford, "Countering Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Warrantless Surveillance Powers of the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service," Victoria University of Wellington Legal Research Paper, no. 26 (2016), <http://www.nzlii.org/nz/journals/VUWLawRw/2016/6.pdf> (accessed December 28, 2017).

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 121.

⁷⁴ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons*, including Diplomatic Agents, 14 December 1973, No. 15410, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3afc.html>, (accessed 25 September 2018); UN General Assembly, *Convention for the suppression of unlawful seizure of aircraft*, available at: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20860/volume-860-I-12325-English.pdf>, 14 December 1973, No.12325; International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), *Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation*, 23 September 1971, 974 UNTS 177, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b37a14.html>, (accessed 27 September 2018); *Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at airports serving international civil aviation*, supplementary to the *Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil aviation*, 24 February 1988,

number of institutions tasked with preventing and combating terrorism,⁷⁵ as well as the UN cooperation with a variety of specialized (intergovernmental) organizations, think tanks, and institutions.⁷⁶

available at: http://dgca.nic.in/int_conv/Chap_XIX.pdf, (accessed 27 September 2018); UN General Assembly, Convention on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Relating to International Civil Aviation of 2010 and the Protocol Supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft of 2010, No.14117, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20974/volume-974-I-14118-english.pdf>, (accessed 27 September 2018); 2010 Protocol Supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft, 10 September 2010, available at: http://www.grocejusz.edu.pl/Materials/pd_sem_20171123_C.pdf, (accessed 27 September 2018); 2014 Protocol to Amend the Convention on Offences and Certain Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, 4 April 2014, available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/News%20and%20Events/Consolidated_Text_1963_Tokyo_Convention-2014_Montreal_Protocol_ENG.pdf, (accessed 27 September 2018); UN General Assembly, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents¹, 14 December 1973, A/RES/3166, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f19d4.html>, (accessed 27 September 2018); 1979 International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, 17 December 1979, available at: https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XVIII-5&chapter=18&clang=en, (accessed 27 September 2018); UN General Assembly, International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, 15 April 2005, A/RES/59/290, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/528f3be94.html>, (accessed 27 September 2018); International Maritime Organization (IMO), Protocol of 2005 to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49f58c8a2.html>, (accessed 27 September 2018); International Maritime Organization (IMO), 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, 14 October 2005, available at: http://oceansbeyondpiracy.org/sites/default/files/SUA_Convention_and_Protocol.pdf?page=7&zoom=100,0,114, (accessed 27 September 2018); International Maritime Organization (IMO), Protocol of 2005 to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49f58c8a2.html>, (accessed 27 September 2018); International Maritime Organization (IMO), 1988 Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf, available at: <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/3dda0fff4.pdf>, (accessed 27 September 2018); International Maritime Organization (IMO), Protocol of 2005 to the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf, 14 October 2005, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49f58cee2.html>, (accessed 27 September 2018); UN General Assembly, 1991 Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection, available at: <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/document/convention-on-the-marking-of-plastic-explosives-for-the-purpose-of-detection/>, (accessed 27 September 2018); UN General Assembly, International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 9 January 1998, A/RES/52/164, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f34e0.html>, (accessed 27 September 2018); UN General Assembly, International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, 9 December 1999, No. 38349, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3dda0b867.html>, (accessed 27 September 2018); UN General Assembly, International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, 13 April 2005, A/59/766, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/425e58694.html>, (accessed 27 September 2018).

⁷⁵ Such as UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), as well as several UN Security Council committees: the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), the ISIL/ Daesh (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), the numerous UNSC Sanctions Committees and especially the Committee pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), etc.

⁷⁶ Such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism-The Hague, (ICCT) and the

The Security Council's agreements issued in the last decade of the 20th century mirror the understanding of terrorism "as an internal problem affecting a limited number of States."⁷⁷ The post September 11 era is, on the other hand, marked by a higher involvement of the Security Council, resulting in the adoption of the Resolution 1373 (2001)⁷⁸, notable for its requiring the States to adopt domestic legal instruments banning terrorist related activities,⁷⁹ thus opening itself to an array of criticism concerning the limits of the Council's legal powers.⁸⁰

The specific issue of foreign fighters was first addressed by the UNSC in 2014 in its Resolution 2170, dealing with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and of the Al-Nusra Front (ANF) control in Syria and Iraq.⁸¹ As stated in the Resolution, threats to international peace and security are "caused by terrorist acts, including those perpetrated by foreign terrorists fighters."⁸² The Resolution concentrates on both, persons involved in the recruitment of foreign fighters, and on the foreign fighters themselves. It demands the immediate discontinuation of all foreign fighters.⁸³ Regarding the specific obligations of the member states, the Resolution stipulates national measures to suppress the flow of foreign terrorist fighters [...], to prevent the movement of terrorists and terrorist groups, [...] to exchange information expeditiously, improve cooperation among competent authorities[...] to prevent the movement of terrorists and terrorist groups to and from their territories, the supply of weapons for terrorist and financing that would

⁷⁷ Andrea de Guttry, "The Role Played by the UN in Countering the Phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters" In Andrea de Guttry, Francesca Capone, Christophe Paulussen (eds.), *Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond*, Springer, 2016, pp. 259–283.

⁷⁸ UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) [on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts], 28 September 2001, S/RES/1373 (2001), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3c4e94552a.html>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

⁷⁹ For example, implementing effective border controls, freezing funds, etc.

⁸⁰ For more on criticism see Eric Rosand, "The UN-Led Multilateral Institutional Response to Jihadist Terrorism: Is a Global Counterterrorism Body Needed?" *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2006, pp. 399–427, doi:10.1093/jcsl/kr1026.

⁸¹ UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2170 (2014) [on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts by Al-Qaida]*, 15 August 2014, S/RES/2170 (2014), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53f729b84.html>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

⁸² The UN Resolution 2170, point 7: „Condemns the recruitment by ISIL, ANF and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida of foreign terrorist fighters, whose presence is exacerbating conflict and contributing to violent radicalization, demands that all foreign terrorist fighters associated with ISIL and other terrorist groups withdraw immediately, and expresses its readiness to consider listing those recruiting for or participating in the activities of ISIL, ANF and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida under the Al-Qaida sanctions regime, including through financing or facilitating, for ISIL or ANF, of travel of foreign terrorist fighters“

⁸³ The UN Resolution 2170, point 4: „Demands that ISIL, ANF, and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida cease all violence and terrorist acts, and disarm and disband with immediate effect“.

support terrorists, among others.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the Resolution creates a sanctions mechanism which places ISIL and ANF, as well as a number of individuals, in the Al-Qaida sanctions list. However, as observed by De Guttry, “no significant steps nor any specific procedures have been established by the UNSC to monitor the effective implementation by the member States of the obligations incumbent on them on the basis of the Resolution itself.”⁸⁵

The second UNSC Resolution dealing with foreign fighters, the Resolution 2178 of 2014, is dedicated precisely to this issue.⁸⁶ It is first and foremost notable for its innovative, yet disputed,⁸⁷ contribution of the definition of foreign fighters which describes them as “individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.”⁸⁸

The scope of the Resolution is universal, as the States are requested to counter foreign fighters wherever they act,⁸⁹ which means that its application is not restricted to a specific territory, or to a specific armed conflict. This, in itself, may be taken as proof of the importance the Security Council attributes to the issue of foreign fighters. As for the structure of the Resolution, it consists of five sections: (1) individual obligations on foreign fighters, (2) States’ obligations in preventing and punishing terrorism activities committed by foreign fighters, (3) international cooperation, (4) countering violent extremism in order to prevent terrorism and (5) UN engagement on the foreign fighter threat.

⁸⁴ The UN Resolution 2170, point 8: „Calls upon all Member States to take national measures to suppress the flow of foreign terrorist fighters to, and bring to justice, in accordance with applicable international law, foreign terrorist fighters of, ISIL, ANF and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida, reiterates further the obligation of Member States to prevent the movement of terrorists or terrorist groups, in accordance with applicable international law, by, inter alia, effective border controls, and, in this context, to exchange information expeditiously, improve cooperation among competent authorities to prevent the movement of terrorists and terrorist groups to and from their territories, the supply of weapons for terrorists and financing that would support terrorists.“

⁸⁵ Andrea de Guttry, “The Role Played by the UN in Countering the Phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters” In Andrea de Guttry, Francesca Capone, Christophe Paulussen (eds.), *Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond*, Springer, 2016, pp. 259–283. p. 270.

⁸⁶ UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) [on threats to international peace and security caused by foreign terrorist fighters]*, 24 September 2014, S/RES/2178 (2014), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/542a8ed74.html>, (accessed 25 September 2018).

⁸⁷ See Bruce Hoffman, *Inside terrorism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2017 and Thomas J. Badey, “Defining International Terrorism: A Pragmatic Approach”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1998, pp. 90–107., doi:10.1080/09546559808427445.

⁸⁸ UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2178 (2014)*, paragraph 8.

⁸⁹ UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2178 (2014, point 1*.

The issue of terrorism is becoming more important over the last three decades, and correspondingly, the role of foreign fighters had gained importance as well, as visible from the fact that Resolution 2180 is solely addressing their involvement in terrorist acts. The UNSC binding instruments are providing a much needed legal framework of combating this issue, however, unfortunately, as with other IHL instruments, they are lacking in monitoring and implementation mechanisms, which renders them far less useful than is their full potential.

2.5. Case Studies

There are a number of local studies that contrast, compare, or correlate the impact that foreign fighters have on opposition movements because of their support and contribution to violence either towards civilians or among opposing fractions.⁹⁰ Ben Rich and Dara Conduit found that foreign fighters have damaged the Chechen and Syrian opposition movements, and even contributed to their decline.⁹¹ In the Chechen case, they concluded that “(T)he resultant political instability and visibility of jihadist influence delegitimized the Chechen cause and eroded sympathies, both internationally and within domestic Russian audiences. In addition, the presence of JFF (Jihadist Foreign Fighters) provided the Russian state with a powerful tool for propaganda and oppositional delegitimization.”⁹² Similarly, they observed that foreign fighters undermined the indigenous and organic opposition in Syria that launched the 2011 rebellion against President Bashar al-Assad. They also compared ISIS and Al-Nusra and determined that ISIS was a more international group that did not shy away from very controversial and extreme methods, whereas Al-Nusra was more local, indigenous to the region, much less ambitious, made more tactical choices, and had more local support and greater credibility within the region. Also anchoring their study in an empirical examination of Chechen and Syrian wars, Kristin M. Bakke

⁹⁰ For more, see Adria Lawrence, "Triggering Nationalist Violence: Competition and Conflict in Uprisings against Colonial Rule," *International Security* 35, no. 2 (2010): 88-122, doi:10.1162/isec_a_00019; Hanne Fjelde and Desirée Nilsson, "Rebels against Rebels," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 4 (August 24, 2012): 604-628, doi:10.1177/0022002712439496; Peter Rudloff and Michael G. Findley, "The downstream effects of combatant fragmentation on civil war recurrence," *British Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 4 (October 2012): 879-901; and Paul D. Kenny, "Structural Integrity and Cohesion in Insurgent Organizations: Evidence from Protracted Conflicts in Ireland and Burma," *International Studies Review* 12, no. 4 (December 2010): 533-555, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2486.2010.00959.x.

⁹¹ Ben Rich and Dara Conduit, "The Impact of Jihadist Foreign Fighters on Indigenous Secular-Nationalist Causes: Contrasting Chechnya and Syria," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 2 (2014): 113-131, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2014.979605.

⁹² *Ibid.* pp. 115.

and other authors observed in detail how foreign fighters fared once they had arrived at their desired destination and what was their impact on the domestic group they had joined.⁹³ Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty also wrote about the Chechen group that joined ISIS.⁹⁴ Lorenzo Vidino conducted research on the impact of foreign fighters on the Second Chechen War and concluded that “the character, actors, tactics, and very nature of the second Chechen war have all been profoundly influenced by the activities of the foreign mujahedeen who have successfully “sacralized” a separatist conflict into a militant Islamist uprising.”⁹⁵

Some authors have attempted to examine the characteristics, motivations and roles of foreign fighters in the Syrian and Iraqi wars. Edwin Bakker and Roel de Bont compared Dutch and Belgian foreign fighters using socio-economic demographics.⁹⁶ Specifically, they found that age, education level, geographical origin, and occupational status are very similar between the two groups; however, the motivation and marital status are quite diverse. They conclude that more research comparing trends in other countries and regions is needed. Another localized approach that analyzed a specific country as a case study was done by Jakob Sheikh.⁹⁷ He conducted interviews with current and returned foreign fighters from Denmark, and concluded that pull factors should be accounted for when examining motivations to join. He emphasized that the idea of an Islamic state was one of the major pull factors and a driving force in jihadist organizations’ recruitment. Moore is one of the few authors who has explored the role of kinship in facilitating the recruitment process.⁹⁸ “This account of ‘fictive kin’ speaks of relatedness in terms of different bases of a shared sense of solidarity – connectedness, bonds – which are

⁹³ See also Kristin M. Bakke, *Help wanted?: The Mixed record of foreign fighters in Domestic insurgencies* (Massachusetts: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2014), 150-187; Kristin M. Bakke, Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, and Lee J. M. Seymour, "A Plague of Initials: Fragmentation, Cohesion, and Infighting in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 02 (June 25, 2012): 265-283, doi:10.1017/s1537592712000667; Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, Kristin M. Bakke, and Lee J. M. Seymour, "Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow: Dual Contests and the Effects of Fragmentation in Self-Determination Disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, February 2012, 67-93.

⁹⁴ Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya: A Critical Assessment," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 5 (2008): doi: 10.1080/10576100801993347.

⁹⁵ Lorenzo Vidino, "The Arab Foreign Fighters and the Sacralization of the Chechen Conflict," *Al Nakhlah*, 2006, 1.

⁹⁶ Edwin Bakker and Roel De Bont, "Belgian and Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighters (2012–2015): Characteristics, Motivations, and Roles in the War in Syria and Iraq," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 5 (2016): 835-857, doi:10.1080/09592318.2016.1209806.

⁹⁷ Jakob Sheikh, "I Just Said It. The State": Examining the Motivations for Danish Foreign Fighting in Syria," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 6, 59-82.

⁹⁸ Cerwyn Moore, "Foreign Bodies: Transnational Activism, the Insurgency in the North Caucasus and “Beyond”," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 3 (2015): doi:10.1080/09546553.2015.1032035.

adaptive and change over time.”⁹⁹ The type of fictive kinship that Moore refers to is not fictional kinship, but one which has produced a new form of relatedness that has salience: “In this way a rejection of blood, biological, and classical bonds to family, ethnicity, or nation creates space for new forms of connectedness to emerge.”¹⁰⁰

There are few other scientific fields that have the acute need for more empirical data than the study of terrorism, in particular the study of foreign fighters. In some countries, such as Bosnia, any suspect detained under suspicion of being a foreign fighter has no contact with the outside world other than with one close family member and a lawyer.¹⁰¹ Unlike in most West European or Scandinavian countries, where veterans are almost always a part of reintegration processes immediately upon their return and are encouraged to take a more active role in society, it appears that it is often a security risk to try to engage with communities that adhere to *Salafi teaching*.¹⁰² Some authors were fortunate to be able to interview former fighters, as Marco Nilsson¹⁰³ and Fawaz Gerges¹⁰⁴ did. Nilsson looked at the ideas of ‘local’ – focused on overthrowing governments from within – and ‘global’ – not limited by the territorial boundaries of jihadism – through the lens of Swedish groups that left for Iraq and Syria.¹⁰⁵ Gerges’ account of former fighters from Egypt, Jordan and Yemen, is one of the few examples of authors who has used primary Arabic sources, including interviews with militants, to provide fascinating research regarding one of the most complex phenomena in the contemporary Middle East.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 398. Here, Moore draws on Janet Carsten, *Cultures of Relatedness: New approaches to the study of kinship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), for the broader concept of relatedness. For more on kinship, see Lars-Erik Cederman, "Trans border Ethnic Kin and Civil War," *International Organization* 67, no. 2 (April 2012): 389-410.; and Gina Lei Miller and Emily Hencken Ritter, "Emigrants and the onset of civil war," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 1 (January 2014): 51-64.

¹⁰⁰ Janet Carsten, *After Kinship*, Cambridge, CUP, 2004, pp. 144, 154, cited in Cerwyn Moore, "Foreign Bodies: Transnational Activism, the Insurgency in the North Caucasus and "Beyond"," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 3 (2015): doi:10.1080/09546553.2015.1032035.

¹⁰¹ Interview with the State Prosecutor’s Office staffer, under Chatham House rules. He claimed that it is an unofficial policy of the Bosnian authorities to keep external communications to a minimum for security reasons.

¹⁰² In the Chapter Four and Chapter Five, I will focus more on the difficulty in obtaining data and conducting ethnographic study in my own home country, even for a researcher who speaks the local language and understands the internal context of a highly complex country like Bosnia. Also, Salafi teaching is understood as an austere form of Islam that insists on a literal interpretation of the Qur’an.

¹⁰³ Marco Nilsson, "Foreign Fighters and the Radicalization of Local Jihad: Interview Evidence from Swedish Jihadists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 5 (2015): 343-358, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2015.1005459.

¹⁰⁴ Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁵ For more accounts on global jihad, see George Joffé, "Global Jihad and Foreign Fighters," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 5 (2016): 800-816, doi:10.1080/09592318.2016.1208284.

2.6. Radicalization Literature¹⁰⁶

It is an act of arrogance to think that the subordinate are poor, rejects, victims of destiny, and therefore incapable of reacting or planning, needing something originating elsewhere to enable them to speak.¹⁰⁷

Peter Neumann and Scott Kleimann warned, drawing on a sample of 260 publications that make claims for empirical research and were published between 1980 and 2010, that when it comes to radicalization literature, qualitative approaches dominate, and that a significant number of publications relies on secondary sources—not primary research—to support their conclusions.¹⁰⁸ The authors conclude this situation may have resulted from an overreliance on (poorly controlled) government money, the nature of the subject itself, and the absence of a unified academic “field” through which tougher academic standards could be enforced.¹⁰⁹ Peter Neumann however, himself, opted to further vaguely describe radicalization as “what goes on before the bomb goes off.”¹¹⁰

As with any terminology debate, the term ‘radicalization’ has been a source of tension from the start. Among the first to express concern, the scholar Mark Sedgwick warned that, simply put, the term ‘radicalization’ itself is a source of confusion. Therefore, the best solution for researchers is to abandon the idea that ‘radical’ or ‘radicalization’ are absolute concepts, recognize the essentially relative nature of the term ‘radical,’ and be careful always to specify both the continuum being referred to and the location of what is seen as “moderate” on that

¹⁰⁶ The radicalization literature chapter represents a revisited sub-chapter in the paper published by the author – Tanja Dramac Jiries, "Rise of Radicalization in the Global Village. Online Radicalization vs. In-person Radicalization - Is There a Difference?" *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 6 (2016): 206-230.

¹⁰⁷ Henry Barbara, "The play of mirrors, Representation of the self and the other in fragmented globalization," accessed December 24, 2015, <http://www.sifp.it/pdf/Art-Henry1-DEF3.pdf>, (accessed May 2018).

¹⁰⁸ Peter Neumann & Scott Kleinmann (2013) How Rigorous Is Radicalization Research? *Democracy and Security*, 9:4, 360-382, DOI: 10.1080/17419166.2013.802984

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*

¹¹⁰ Katherine Brown, This is how Islamist radicalization actually happens, *The Independent*, 24 May 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/manchester-attack-isis-al-qaeda-radicalisation-risk-factors-a7753451.html>, (accessed June 2018)

continuum.¹¹¹ Sedgwick further claims that, even though the term is a part of the mainstream literature, it is misused by differing security, minority integration, and foreign policy agendas. In addition, it should be observed that the term radicalization is contentious, as it carries a normative assessment and is a loaded term to begin with. In addition, the terms radicalization and fundamentalism overlap in many studies and are very frequently used interchangeably, which further contributes to the confusion over the usage. Another debate is whether “religion is simply a tool for mobilization or... a primary motive.”¹¹² Many leading critical terrorism studies scholars, including Hermione Toros, Jeroen Gunning and Richard Jackson, maintain that this question and the differing answers laying out a clear distinction are critical, and claim that the religious label is in fact a political tool attached to certain groups to immediately discredit their claims.¹¹³ Recently, the argument has been put forward by a Bosnian scholar Edina Becirevic as well, that it is absolutely necessary to differ radicalization linked to violent extremism and terrorism, and radicalization aimed at initiating societal changes via non-violent means.¹¹⁴

Scholars like Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, Daphna Canetti, and Ehud Eiran have observed that, contrary to the dominant belief that extreme religious identity alone is enough to trigger violence, it is actually the role of organizational membership that links religious identity with radical action. The authors have attempted to fill in the gap in the related literature of a causal relationship between radicalization and actual violence by claiming that organizational support is absolutely necessary to trigger violence. Similarly, Hoffman writes that “religious identity is a motivating factor for radical action, but it is the sense of belonging which serves as the trigger for radical action”¹¹⁵ This claim is in apparent contrast to studies advocating the theory of lone-wolf terrorists and how they operate on their own and are not endorsed by any network or

¹¹¹ Mark Sedgwick, "The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 4 (2010): 490, doi:10.1080/09546553.2010.491009.

¹¹² G. H. Fagan and Ronaldo Munck, *Globalization and Security: An Encyclopedia*, Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security Internat 2009, p.378.

¹¹³ Regarding critical terrorism arguments, see Richard Jackson 2007, quoted in G. H. Fagan and Ronaldo Munck, *Globalization and Security: An Encyclopedia*, Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security Internat., 2009, 378 and Richard Jackson, Marie Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning, *Critical Terrorism Studies a New Research Agenda* (London: Routledge, 2009), 274.

¹¹⁴ Edina Becirevic, *Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims*, Sarajevo: Atlantic Initiative, 2016.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, Daphna Canetti, and Ehud Eiran, "Radicalizing Religion? Religious Identity and Settlers Behavior," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39, no. 6 (2016): 4, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2015.1127111.

organization. It further adds to the discussion about the complexity and multiplicity of factors to take into account when studying radicalization:

As with the definition of *terrorism*, the term *radicalization* encompasses a wide range of concepts - from being used as a tool for marginalization by discrediting and sidelining certain groups of people, to embodying a dangerous path towards violent actions. The important difference talked about very often is whether all types of radicalization result in violent actions or not, and if not, why? According to Bartlett and Miller, it is the first step of all studies on radicalization to distinguish “radicalization that leads to violence (‘violent radicalization’) and radicalization that does not lead to violence (‘non-violent radicalization’).”¹¹⁶

The authors conclude that only after the distinguishing these two types of radicalization, we can engage all economic, social as well as emotional (psychological reasons) reasons for radicalization.¹¹⁷ However some very pessimistic views had been raised that treated perpetual radicalization as a vicious circle from which there is no escape. As Kamel Daoud said: “Jihadists will be killed, only to be reborn again in future generations and raised on the same books.”¹¹⁸

Within the larger exploration of the foreign fighter phenomenon, there has been a proliferation of research that focuses on the radicalization of these fighters – that is, on the process itself that led to violent extremism. Jason Burke, one of the leading authors that focuses on radicalization, highlighted the role of foreign military interventions in the Middle East as the precondition for and the sustaining factor of the terrorism in general - "every use of force is another victory for Bin Laden... thus, creating a whole new cadre of terrorists."¹¹⁹ The growth of “radicalized individuals” after 9/11 has been the subject of study for many authors,

¹¹⁶ Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, "The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference between Violent and Non-Violent Radicalization," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 1 (2012): 3, doi:10.1080/09546553.2011.594923. According to the authors, radicalization that leads to violence (“violent radicalization”) is a process by which individuals come to undertake or directly aid or abet terrorist activity. Radicalization that does not lead to violence (“non-violent radicalization”) refers to the process by which individuals come to hold radical views in relation to the status quo but do not undertake, aid, or abet terrorist activity.

¹¹⁷ Tanja Dramac Jiries, "Rise of Radicalization in the Global Village. Online Radicalization vs. In-person Radicalization - Is There a Difference?" *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 6 (2016): 206-230. ISSN: 2363-9849

¹¹⁸ Kamel Daoud, "Saudi Arabia, an ISIS That Has Made It," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/21/opinion/saudi-arabia-an-isis-that-has-made-it.html>, (accessed December 30),,

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*, London: Penguin Books, 2007, p.23.

predominantly those in the West objecting to interventionism.¹²⁰ The leading liberal scholar Noam Chomsky quotes a Saudi intelligence agency and an Israeli think tank, which similarly conclude that the “vast majority” of foreign fighters in Iraq “are not former terrorists,” but “became radicalized by the war itself, stimulated by the invasion (...).”¹²¹ In a similar vein, there are seemingly two important effects that foreign military intervention has – a backlash through terrorism and how the form of intervention affects what the output (of terrorism) looks like, according to Tom Pettinger.¹²² The main point of Pettinger’s study is that an individual’s propensity to engage in extremism is based on his or her level of de-pluralization – the developing perception that there exists only one solution – extreme violence – which determines the extent of radicalization.¹²³

Edwin Bakker and Kris Christmann maintain that the role of family, kinships, exposure to networks are crucial for investigation of organizational approaches to radicalization.¹²⁴ Many authors, including Bakker, claim that the role of family and family ties are crucial for investigating organizational approaches to radicalization. Other scholars have also explored the role of social networks and resource driven mobilization in the radicalization process, one that connects structural processes with individual motivations. Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen has greatly contributed to the debate about radicalization from a social movement theory point of view to a socio-psychological approach. She maintains that it is the imperative of all future research to generate solid empirical evidence.¹²⁵ Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley argue that strong group identification is connected with peaceful activism as well as radical action. Furthermore, group identity is indeed the common denominator to all collective actions and the reason why

¹²⁰ See for example, Kim Cragin and Sara Daly, "The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World," RAND Corporation, 2004.; Angel M. Rabasa, "The Muslim World after 9/11," RAND Corporation, 2004.; Edwin Bakker, "Jihadists in Europe—Their Characteristics and the Circumstances in which They Joined the Jihad: An Exploratory Study," Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2006.

¹²¹ Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 20.

¹²² Tom Pettinger, "What Is the Impact of Foreign Military Intervention on Radicalization?" *Journal for Deradicalization*, No. 5, 2015, p. 110.

¹²³ Daniel Koehler, "Violent Radicalization Revisited: A Practice-Oriented Model – Analysis," *Eurasia Review*, January 09, 2016, accessed March 07, 2016, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/09012016-violent-radicalization-revisited-a-practice-oriented-model-analysis>.

¹²⁴ Edwin Bakker, *Jihadi terrorists in Europe: their characteristics and the circumstances in which they joined the jihad; an exploratory study* (The Hague: Clingendael Inst., 2007); Kris Christmann, "Preventing Religious Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: A Systematic Review of the Research Evidence," Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2012.

¹²⁵ Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (2010): 812, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2010.501423.

group empathy is a successful path to excluding the others and further embracing the group members.¹²⁶ “This is the emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders”.¹²⁷

The sense of discomfort with “the other” has been singled out to explain why young men and women choose to join violent groups in their pursuits of certain goals. Even though most certainly misapprehended, there is also a belief that volunteering for the cause is a fight for fairness against oppression. It is a conjured revenge against those imagined and real who have hurt the individual and who have brought on a sense of humiliation after the War on Terror after 9/11. This tendency can become so extreme that the enemy is no longer seen as human. Dehumanizing the enemy or calling it “infidel” is one way of dividing people based on what is believed is just or not.¹²⁸

Other authors, such as Bertjan Doosje, Annemarie Loseman and Kees Van Den Bos argue that personal uncertainty, perceived injustice, and perceived intergroup threats are the main reasons radicalization appears among youth in the Western World. In attempting to explain the alienation of the predominantly second and third generation of immigrants in Western Europe, they believe that the withdrawal of multiculturalism as a value system is at the core of explaining support for a radical belief system.¹²⁹ Similarly, a study about segregated communities in the U.S. and the high level of gang participation highlights the profound correlation between the process of isolating and offering alternatives as the driving factor of the success rate of mobilization.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (2008): (accessed December 30, 2015), doi:10.1080/09546550802073367. In their study about radicalization, the authors have defined several pathways of becoming a radicalized soldier. They have divided it into three sub-groups (Individual, Group and Mass): 1. Personal victimization, 2. Political grievance, 3. Joining a radical group—the slippery slope, 4. Joining a radical group—the power of love, 5. Extremity shift in like-minded groups, 6. Extreme cohesion under isolation and threat, 7. Competition for the same base of support, 8. Competition with state power—condensation, 9. Competition—visioning Mass, 10. Jiu-jitsu politics, 11. Hate, and 12. Martyrdom.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 420.

¹²⁸ Tanja Dramac Jiries, "Rise of Radicalization in the Global Village. Online Radicalization vs. In-person Radicalization - Is There a Difference?" *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 6 (2016): 212. ISSN: 2363-9849.

¹²⁹ Bertjan Doosje, Annemarie Loseman, and Kees Van Den Bos, "Determinants of Radicalization of Islamic Youth in the Netherlands: Personal Uncertainty, Perceived Injustice, and Perceived Group Threat," *Journal of Social Issues* 69, no. 3 (2013): 3, doi:10.1111/josi.12030.

¹³⁰ See the 1998 report from the U.S. Department of Justice, at <https://secure.ce-credit.com/articles/101181/167249.pdf>, or a new one at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/231116.pdf>, (accessed March 7, 2015). This and similar reports show that there are many similarities in issues raised over the connections between young people and violence.

2.7. Online and Offline Radicalization

Online radicalizations and de-territorializing have become conventional wisdom but that the evidence (I will present later) does not support this, or that it might be true in some Western countries but not everywhere, as it will be demonstrated. Prior to Internet and the World Wide Web, information was spread through very prescribed and predetermined channels. There was the potential that, in some cases had been tapped, to censor and control ideas via restrictions, the banning of the books, and the marginalization of alternative voices. Although this remains true for a good part of the world, the Internet has been able to break through to the loneliest and most isolated corners. This interconnectivity has created multitude of opportunities to exchange, debate, and become exposed to ideas and thoughts. The Internet has made national borders more permeable, and weakened the prescribed identity that was determined merely by the geographical coordinates into which one was born.

Due to this new situation, many ideologies now can easily spread and take root in a number of culturally unrelated areas, linking diverse individuals from all over the world with common views and agendas in a matter of seconds. A number of studies have argued that the Internet played a prominent role in the radicalization process of violent extremists and terrorists. This is not only because it provided access to certain materials, but the allowed them to filter content to that extent that, at a certain point, only self-selected propaganda was on the literature menu. Some authors like Daniel Koehler have argued that offline social activities are less influential when compared to the possibilities of online radicalization.¹³¹ Globalization as the driving consequence and precondition for interconnectivity continues to shape other possible byproducts of the global age. Some authors like Benjamin Barter, for example, have gone so far as to claim that an extremist, or any other isolated individual with antipathy against globalization (whatever its larger implications), who is on his or her path to shying away from modernity, identifies the self by contrasting it with an alien “other” and makes politics an exercise in

¹³¹ Daniel Koehler, "The Radical Online: Individual Radicalization Processes and the Role of the Internet," *Journal for Deradicalization* (2014): 131. For more on globalization and its cultural effects, see Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 7.

exclusion and resentment.¹³² For the same reason, Barber holds that Jihad is at war with McWorld.¹³³

What particularly stands out about this is that although they are opposed to globalization and its sister trend modernization, radicalization recruiters did not fail to utilize the very first herald of technological modernization - social media. Not only did they not reject it or fail to utilize it, they sought to maximize its functionality by turning it into a powerful tool of communication in order to get their message across easily and systematically driving more people to their cause. Social media was ironically a Western invention that served as a blessing in disguise for the recruiters to spread their ideology quickly and efficiently; what would have taken countless media outlets (who would be willing to broadcast) to get their message across, now requires one smart phone and internet connection. The impact of mass reach through information brings to mind the Chinese proverb that says “kill one, make ten thousand watch”: this is exactly what the jihadi beheadings do now, although ten thousand has risen to ten million.¹³⁴

Although there had been some attempts by the major social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to limit hate speech, fake news and propaganda, the effects of the seemingly arbitrarily decision-making processes by corporate giants and the real effects of this censorship remain to be seen. One questionable example is the recent Facebook decision to remove posts from pages in the original news feed in six selected markets (countries), which limits the hope of original organic reach and utterly changes the content for end users.¹³⁵ Other social media, such as YouTube, have almost replaced the pulpit to the extent in which young people are subscribed to channels that Google cannot or will not shut down, regardless on their effects. Knowing the favorable outcomes of online exposure, recruiters have avidly utilized social media. Under the cover of freedom of speech, they are ultimately using the online space for promoting hate and violence.

¹³² Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.

¹³³ For him, one synonym for omnipresent American hegemony is the fast-food chain McDonalds.

¹³⁴ Tanja Dramac Jiries, "Rise of Radicalization in the Global Village. Online Radicalization vs. In-person Radicalization - Is There a Difference?" *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 6 (2016): 217. ISSN: 2363-9849.

¹³⁵ Kerry Flynn, "Facebook tests removing publishers from News Feed-unless they pay," October 23, 2017, <https://mashable.com/2017/10/23/facebook-explore-publisher-post-organic-reach-drop/#DkJ7NO1oWPqD>, (accessed May 2018).

Individuals' search and striving for identity are even more exacerbated in ever globalizing world. Brian Michael Jenkins observes that individuals are the most vulnerable at a stage of life when they are seeking an identity and looking for approval and validation, which does not necessarily exclude older demographics: "they are searching for causes that can be religiously and culturally justified, that provide them a way to identify who they are, and that provide a clear call for action."¹³⁶ Other authors, such as Susan Currie Sivek, have examined the very mechanics in which the online or offline tools are aiding the radicalization process.¹³⁷ Sivek paid closer attention to the role of digital journals and the spread of ideas through writings that oppose Western liberal ideas. There were a number of localized journals and online pages that served as platform for spreading propaganda and targeting local populations. Designed to radicalize marginalized Muslims in the West and motivate them to initiate independent acts of terror, *Inspire*'s message aimed at inspiring action. The online propaganda journal *Dabiq* was published in multiple languages.¹³⁸ Such was the case with the Balkans as well, where there had been a number of pages that targeted Bosnian and Albanian recruits.¹³⁹

What stands in contrast to *Inspire* and other local portals and digital journals is the extremely well-organized and sophisticated way in which *Dabiq* disseminated its message of radicalization in several language editions and receiving much attention and readership online. It appears as if the digital journal's articles were aimed at either assisting in the further indoctrination of already violence-prone individuals with an intension to join militants or those who had acted out of curiosity and perceived a future martyr's role. Although it is very difficult to correlate exposure to the journal and violent action, the literature explaining to what effect was the role of these and similar tools in recruitment and radicalization is limited. A curious phenomenon concerns cases in which a person was void of any connection to the region and

¹³⁶ Brian Michael Jenkins, "Building an Army of Believers: Jihadist Radicalization and Recruitment," Testimony before the Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment, United States House of Representatives, cited by RAND Corporation, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2007/RAND_CT278-1.pdf, (accessed December 24, 2015).

¹³⁷ Susan Currie Sivek, "Packaging Inspiration: Al Qaeda's Digital Magazine *Inspire* in the Self-Radicalization Process", *International Journal of Communication* 7 (May 23, 2012): 584-606.

¹³⁸ Terrence McCoy, "The apocalyptic magazine the Islamic State uses to recruit and radicalize foreigners", *The Washington Post*, September 16, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/09/16/the-apocalyptic-magazine-the-islamic-state-uses-to-recruit-and-radicalize-foreigners>, (accessed February 22, 2016).

¹³⁹ Dzenana Halimovic, "Balkan na nisanu propagande IDIL-a," *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, November 18, 2016, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/idil-propaganda-balkan-bih/28126709.html>, (accessed March 21, 2018).

lacked interpersonal association to or kinship with terrorist networks yet decided to act on his or her beliefs based only on exposure to propaganda online.

To explain these individuals' involvement with prospective terrorists, Helfstein offers a useful model of the self-radicalization process with four stages: Awareness, Interest, Acceptance, and Implementation. In Helfstein's model, awareness is a long-term process that occurs over time as an individual's knowledge of radical ideology and tactics deepens. Interest in this model consists of more than just curiosity; it also includes "the willingness to alter one's belief system or social norms to reflect those associated with an ideological doctrine."¹⁴⁰ Helfstein maintains that a potential "lone wolf", that is, an individual that radicalizes despite not having tangible connections to a specific group, becomes lured by extremists under this model, he or she can more easily integrate extreme ideology into his or her own thinking. Acceptance is the final assimilation of radical ideas and norms into a recruit's thought processes after which ever mean makes sense and justifies ends. Helfstein states that current evidence shows that self-radicalization is not a linear process but rather an incremental development within an individual that may contain feedback loops.¹⁴¹

Helfstein argues that a number of individuals have gone through one stage or the first two of the process but the loop to the leap to the final Implementation stage is a much more difficult one and requires the influence of other circumstances as well. Developing initial awareness out of curiosity is relatively simple, but gaining deeper interest in acting upon ideological self-encapsulation is effectively much more challenging. Contrary to what some authors believe about the power of Internet, others believe that it is only in-person contact that ultimately leads to radicalization. "Many scholars of this persuasion will highlight that the vast majority of people can solely sustain their radical ideas by visiting extremist websites, but would never be propelled to act on them, whereas if they engage in a local community [...] Anywhere where radicals congregate in person – it is more likely that their radicalization process will eventually lead to a

¹⁴⁰ Scott Helfstein, "Edges of Radicalization: Ideas, Individuals and Networks in Violent Extremism," The Combating Terrorism Center, 2012, 16, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CTC_EdgesofRadicalization.pdf, (accessed May 2018)

¹⁴¹ Tanja Dramac Jiries, "Rise of Radicalization in the Global Village. Online Radicalization vs. In-person Radicalization - Is There a Difference?" *Journal for Deradicalization*, no. 6 (2016): 219. ISSN: 2363-9849.

tangible participation in the fundamentalist struggle.”¹⁴² As it is obvious, unlike the online process, in-person radicalization encompasses everything but anonymity. It is far more intimate and personal and it is the belief of this and many authors that offline or real face-to face radicalization is the one that has more success.

2.8. The Literature on the Balkan Foreign Fighters

There has been solid body of literature on foreign fighters – be it journalistic articles or academic texts – that has explored the case of the Balkans more specifically in depth. Still, it is interesting how this trend stands in stark contrast to the amount of literature that sprung up during and following the Yugoslav breakup. In this period, a number of authors rushed to explain the mass atrocities, crimes against humanity and, finally, a genocide that occurred less than 50 years after Europe said ‘never again’.¹⁴³ An earlier account on approaches to political violence and terrorism in the former Yugoslavia treated state-sponsored or state-contracted political violence and the use of terror as a political tool.¹⁴⁴ Only a decade later did the non-state actor

¹⁴² ibid

¹⁴³ There are many authors that have dealt with the Balkans for all to be included. For general information, see Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*, Third Revised Edition Paperback, Penguin Books, 1996; Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War & the Great Powers, 1804-1999*, Penguin Books, 2001; Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, New York University Press, 1994; and Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, Yale University Press, 2002. For more on conflicts and nationalism, see Florian Bieber, “Popular Mobilization in the 1990s: Nationalism, democracy and the slow decline of the Milošević regime,” Dejan Djokic and James Ker-Lindsay (eds.), *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies*, London, Routledge, 2010, pp. 161-75. On the post-war legacies, see Florian Bieber “Power sharing after Yugoslavia. Functionality and Dysfunctionality of Power Sharing Institutions in Postwar Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo,” Sid Noel (ed.), *From Power Sharing to Democracy: Post-conflict Institutions in Ethnically Divided Societies*, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 2005, pp. 85-103; Nenad Dimitrijevic and Petra Kovacs (eds.), “The Legal Framework for Post-War Kosovo and the Myth of Multiethnicity,” *Managing Hatred and Distrust: The Prognosis for Post-Conflict Settlement in Multiethnic Communities in the former Yugoslavia*, LGI, Budapest 2004, pp. 115-36; Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Ivan Krastev (eds.), “Power Sharing as Ethnic Representation in Post-conflict Societies: The Cases of Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo,” *Nationalism after Communism. Lessons Learned*, CEU Press, Budapest, 2004, pp. 229-46; Dzemal Sokolovic and Florian Bieber (eds.), “The Challenge of Democracy in Divided Societies: Lessons for Bosnia—Challenges for Kosovo,” *Reconstructing Multiethnic Societies: The Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2001, pp. 109-22.; Zouk Mosbeh, “Pluralism and Complex Power-Sharing in Post-Conflict Societies: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Georges Mghames and Akl Kairouz (eds.), *Pluralism and Democracy*, Notre Dame University Press, Lebanon, 2001, pp. 79-94; Dimitris Keridis, Ellen Elias-Bursac and Nicholas Yatromanolakis (eds.), “Delayed Transition and the Multiple Legitimacy Crisis of Post-1992 Yugoslavia,” *New Approaches to Balkan Studies*, IFPA-Kokkalis Series on Southeast European Policy, Vol. 2, Brassey’s Inc., Dulles, Va., 2003, pp. 129-48.; Marc Weller and Barbara Metzger (eds.), “Power-sharing and International Intervention: Overcoming the Post-Conflict Legacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Settling Self-determination Disputes: Complex Power-sharing in Theory and Practice*, Martinus Nijhoff, Leiden/Boston, 2007, pp. 193-241; Vedran Dzihic and Daniel S. Hamilton (eds.), “The Western Balkans are Dead—Long Live the Balkans! Democratization and the Limits of the EU,” *Unfinished Business: The Western Balkans and the International Community*, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Washington, D.C., pp. 3-10.; Neven Andjelic, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: The End of a Legacy*, Frank Cass, London, 2003. In: *Southeast European Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2004).

¹⁴⁴ For more on this, see Florian Bieber, "Approaches to political violence and terrorism in former Yugoslavia 1," *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 5, no. 1 (2003): doi: 10.1080/1461319032000062642.

take prevalence in the literature and research focused on the Balkans. There are two leading local think tanks that looked at foreign fighter recruitment: the Kosovar Center for Security Studies (KCSS) and Bosnian Atlantic Initiative.¹⁴⁵ The latter successfully debunked the myth of “highest rate per capita” for Bosnian recruits, as it was often stated, by contextualizing the numbers and sheer statistics:

If one assumes the disputable fact that all ethnic Bosniaks in BiH (estimated at some 1,769,000) are Muslim, then there are close to 14 foreign fighters for every 100,000 Bosnian Muslims, or one in every 7,370 Muslims in BiH. Presented in this manner, ISIL’s recruitment of followers in Belgium could be viewed as almost 5 (4.7) times more successful than in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁴⁶

In addition to the many reports and overviews on the Balkan contingency by the authors of the Atlantic Initiative, it is important to mention that several authors have also researched the motivations and reasoning for joining ISIS among the people of the Balkans. For instance, Adrian Shtuni conducted one of the few studies which relied extensively on primary empirical evidence, in his case from the Kosovo Police Counterterrorism Directorate. He used the demographic data of foreign fighters to better understand the historical, cultural, geopolitic, and socioeconomic factors behind the phenomenon.¹⁴⁷ Another researcher, Garentina Graja of KCSS, deconstructed the Islamic State narrative in Kosovo.¹⁴⁸ For the purpose of her study, she conducted detailed research of social media sites and Albanian-language web content by using

¹⁴⁵ The Kosovar Center for Security Studies, a leading think tank in the region, has a special subsection dedicated to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), <http://www.qkss.org/en/Countering-Violent-Extremism> (accessed January 01, 2018); The Bosnian Atlantic Initiative runs a similar program, <http://www.atlantskainicijativa.org/bos/index.php/aktuelnosti.html>, (accessed January 01, 2018).

¹⁴⁶ Vlado Azinovic, "Between salvation and terror: radicalization and the foreign fighter phenomenon in the western Balkans," The Atlantic Initiative, 2017, 7. For first reports on the same subject see Vlado Azinovic and Muhamed Jusic, "The New Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters Bosnian Contingent," The Atlantic Initiative, 2016.; Vlado Azinovic and Muhamed Jusic, "Zov rata u siriji i bosanskohercegovački kontingent stranih boraca," Istraživački Projekt, 2015; and Edina Becirevic, *Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims*, Sarajevo, 2016; On foreign fighters from a Balkan state other than Bosnia and Kosovo, see Gjergji Vurmo, Besfort Lamallari, and Aleka Papa, "Religious Radicalism and Violent Extremism in Albania, Institute for Democracy and Mediation," Institute for Democracy and Mediation, 2015.

¹⁴⁷ Adrian Shtuni, "Dynamics of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo," United States Institute of Peace, December 19, 2016, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/12/dynamics-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-kosovo> (accessed June 2018).

¹⁴⁸ Garentina Kraja, "The Islamic State narrative in Kosovo deconstructed one story at a time," Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, September 21, 2017, <http://www.qkss.org/en/Reports/The-Islamic-State-narrative-in-Kosovo-deconstructed-one-story-at-a-time-991> (accessed June 2018). This report is just one of many which KCSS has published and that treats this and related subjects, such as CVE, foreign fighter, deradicalization, etc.

the “snowballing technique”. In addition, she utilized court records, which contain intercepted conversations of the former IS fighters, their family members, and alleged recruiters in Kosovo.

When it comes to assessing the foreign fighter phenomenon in the Balkans, the events in the post 2012 period are only the second example of the foreign fighter phenomenon explored in the context of this region. There had been several articles that dealt exclusively with the role of *mujahideen*¹⁴⁹ in the war in Bosnia in the 1990s.¹⁵⁰ Unfortunately there had also been examples of a blatant Islamophobic agenda, affecting academic and other circles, which had overestimated and overstated the role of foreign fighters in that Bosnian conflict and its implications for the future.¹⁵¹ There had also been attempts that challenged the historical post 9/11 narrative and attempted to elaborate that the model of terrorism and terrorist sanctuaries rooted in the new millennium and the Global War on Terror is inadequate for the study of terrorism in Bosnia and the Balkans.¹⁵² Michael A. Innes maintains that “terrorism in Bosnia is a complex phenomenon linked to multiple domestic and foreign interests, and subject to evolving political circumstances and priorities.”¹⁵³ Scholar Nadia Alexandrova Arbatova suggests that “the existence of grey zones in the post Yugoslav space with transparent borders and paramilitary formations linked with international organized crime, displaced persons and unreturned refugees create a fertile soil for radical Islamic organizations being elbowed out from the leading European countries.”¹⁵⁴ However, there have been some accounts and research on the presence of *mujahedeen* within the ranks of the Bosnia and Herzegovina military who came from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to assist the dramatically under-gunned Muslim Bosniaks. However, there has been very little research about the presence of foreign volunteers in the Croatian armed forces

¹⁴⁹ In this context, a mujahedeen fighter is a guerrilla fighter in a predominately Muslim country, especially those who are fighting against non-Muslim forces.

¹⁵⁰ Aristotle Tziampiris, "Assessing Islamic terrorism in the Western Balkans: the state of the debate," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 2 (2009): doi:10.1080/19448950902921143. On the impact of foreign influences in the communities in the Balkans today, see Kerem Öktem, "Between emigration, de-Islamization and the nation-state: Muslim communities in the Balkans today," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 11, no. 2 (2011): 155-171, doi:10.1080/14683857.2011.587249.

¹⁵¹ One such account is Christopher Deliso, "The Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West," Praeger Security International, 2007, doi: 10.1215/10474552-2008-041.

¹⁵² For example, see Michael A. Innes, "Terrorist Sanctuaries and Bosnia-Herzegovina: Challenging Conventional Assumptions," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 4 (2005): 295-305, doi: 10.1080/10576100590950147.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 296.

¹⁵⁴ Nadia Alexandrova Arbatova, "European Security and International Terrorism: The Balkan Connection," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 4, no. 3 (2004): 361, doi: 10.1080/1468385042000281602.

and the army of the Republika Srpska, which could be one possible avenue for a future comparative analysis of the body of literature on volunteers on all sides of the conflict.¹⁵⁵

2.9. Filling in the Gap in the Literature

As I have demonstrated in the analysis above, researchers have shared an eager fascination in exploring the phenomenon of the foreign fighter on a global level. More importantly, there have been comprehensive studies that have looked into the legal, social, and global implications of these non-state, new security entrepreneurs, who have pushed forward the discussion on security by imposing themselves as actors capable of stirring up the security paradigm. Even though sometimes necessary, too often the media's attention has focused on less useful matters, particularly at a time of global uncertainty, rise of Islamophobia, extreme politics, failure of diplomacy, and threat of another global conflict. However, to do justice to what is social, legal, political, and security phenomenon, one must acknowledge that nearly 90,000 people from more than 90 countries have over the course of three years traveled to Iraq and Syria.¹⁵⁶ Among them, less than 1,000 came from the Balkans, and two thirds of those came from Bosnia and Kosovo.

As we have observed, there are only a few scholars who seem to focus specifically on clarifying the theoretical and conceptual difficulties which surround the subject of foreign fighters while utilizing a case study approach to illustrate their findings. There are many reasons as to why this has not occurred, but this brief overview of the literature, so far, demonstrates that scholars tend to focus more specifically on a particular issue or subject related to the foreign

¹⁵⁵ With the exception of Nir Arielli, "In Search of Meaning: Foreign Volunteers in the Croatian Armed Forces, 1991–95," *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 01 (2011): 1-17, doi:10.1017/s0960777311000518., and with the exception of the broad literature that has explored the state sponsored Serbian paramilitary forces and, more recently, their presence in Ukraine. See, for example, Janine Di Giovanni, "Wolves descend on Crimea, Chetniks known for rape, murder and ethnic cleansing, have arrived to back the Russians," *Newsweek*, <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/03/21/wolves-descend-crimea-247971.html>, (accessed March 12, 2014); or Anne Applebaum, "Russia finds young men who love guns - and grooms them," *The Washington Post*, January 18, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/russia-finds-young-men-who-love-guns--and-grooms-them/2018/01/18/0090fbb2-fbd1-11e7-a46b-a3614530bd87_story.html?utm_term=.4dcf9f007c11, (accessed January 20, 2018). Interestingly, I have been able to find only one account of the role of Greek foreign fighters in the Bosnian war. See Hikmet Karcic, "'Fear Not, For You Have Brothers in Greece': A Research Note," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 3, no. 1 (2008): doi:10.3138/gsp.3.1.147.

¹⁵⁶ Cynthia Kroet, "UN: 30,000 foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq", <https://www.politico.eu/article/united-nations-30000-foreign-fighters-in-syria-and-iraq-isil-terrorism/>, (accessed August 5, 2018).

fighter phenomenon, be it legal, policy-oriented, and so forth. While these works do not focus on these theoretical difficulties, they do shed light on how this subject does require more conceptual clarity. For this reason, it is necessary to explore these theoretical and conceptual difficulties in more detail elsewhere, and this is what I will attempt to accomplish in Chapter 3 discussing Theoretical Framework.¹⁵⁷ One of the very few attempts that has been made using the methodology of Grounded Theory observed as a tool for inductive research that collects data, codifies it, categorizes it, and perhaps formulates new theories during the categorizations, rather than deductively deriving from testing hypothesis, in which the researcher chooses an existing theoretical framework, and only then collects data to show how the theory does or does not apply to the phenomenon under study. Jasper de Bie, Chistianne de Poot, and Joanne van der Leun have done just that by examining Dutch jihadists and their modus operandi during more than a decade.¹⁵⁸ They found that geopolitical changes, technological advancement, and social opportunities impact the phenomenon over the time, and that each preventative measure for reinforced reoccurrence of jihadi activities should be tailor-made, depending on the abovementioned contexts. It would be indeed interesting and informative to assess the recruits from the Balkans in a similar manner.

I have reviewed a substantive volume of literature that has treated in one way or another, the global problem of radicalization, foreign fighter recruitment, and the departure of foreign fighters. I have discovered that there is a profound lack of literature based on primary data, on interviews with the veterans and families of the affected target group. However, there are a number of scholars who are reviewing legislation and assessing its overall implications, as well as the “process of radicalization.” When it comes to the Balkan contingent, there are numerous policy briefs and recommendation that do a solid job of systematizing the demographics obtained from the security services. What is missing in the literature, particularly on the Balkan

¹⁵⁷ It is important to notice that Kristin Bakke, one of the few international relations scholars focused on this issue, was among the first to utilize Social Movement Theory to elaborate on transnational insurgents, and to operationalize it in the context of the local Chechen War. See Kristin M. Bakke, "Copying and Learning from Outsiders? Assessing Diffusion from Transnational Insurgents in the Chechen Wars," 2010. Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 31-62. For more on a similar subject see: Colin J. Beck, "The Contribution of Social Movement Theory to Understanding Terrorism," *Sociology Compass* 2, no. 5 (2008): 1,565-1,581, doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00148.x.

¹⁵⁸ Jasper L. De Bie, Christianne J. De Poot, and Joanne P. Van Der Leun, "Shifting Modus Operandi of Jihadist Foreign Fighters from the Netherlands Between 2000 and 2013: A Crime Script Analysis," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 3 (2015): 416-440, doi:10.1080/09546553.2015.1021038.

contingent, is an in-depth account based on primary sources when possible and an elaboration on the network that sustained the recruitment campaign of the foreign fighters, situated within a broader theoretical framework. We know very little about the enabling factors, key recruits, key circumstances, framework, and claims that surround the occurrence. This also holds true for what we would assume is a non-combatant category of the Balkan foreign fighter contingent – women and children. Although there were a couple of occasions when these two categories had also taken up arms, the majority comprised a non-violent social fabric of the so-called Islamic State. In short, another possible avenue of future research would elaborate on the significant contribution of female recruits, and even entire families, to ISIS that came from the Balkans, and look to see what caused this non-combatant contingent to emigrate over such distances to an unknown world in conflict. However, until we know more about particular aspects of the Balkan jigsaw puzzle, the worst case possibility is another Balkan crisis, given how highly contentious are everyday politics in Bosnia and Kosovo, even decades after the conflict.

The dissertation that follows will attempt to reassess the phenomenon as it pertains to the specificities of the Balkan group, and expand it using primary sources and novel theoretical approaches developed in the study of social movements, in particular *the contentious politics* paradigm formulated by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly.¹⁵⁹ A more detailed and specific approach will be provided in the Theoretical chapter.

¹⁵⁹ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge University Press, Sep 10, 2001.

3. CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

As the literature review about the state of play when it comes to foreign fighter recruitment in Chapter One indicates, the conceptualization of the foreign fighter phenomenon has lacked a thorough systematic inquiry and theoretical underpinning, which has resulted in an inability to explain the concept in a more nuanced manner. Chapter One also showed us that the most promising framework through which we can best understand the phenomenon is the social movement theory, even though this is a challenging approach. In the chapter on research design, I will discuss how these challenges were met and overcome. Although they can be supplemented by other scientific approaches, the internal dynamics and external implications can only be approached comprehensively through a political-sociological lens, which allows us to understand the root causes of violence, patterns of organization, and *modus operandi* of the underground networks.

This chapter begins by examining different social movement theories to observe features and concepts that are most useful when discussing foreign fighters only to establish what I consider to be the most promising framework, given the research question. Assuming that the volume and body of the literature is ever expanding, for the purpose of this dissertation, I will employ a theoretical framework that will allow me to answer the larger research question. First it will depart from social movement theory and rely on a contentious politics framework. It will then expand, based on an empirical study of a specific foreign fighter from the Western Balkans contingent, to determine the role of power dynamic and patronage relationships between the different actors in the mobilization process and the circumstances surrounding this phenomenon. In the final step, I will expand the theoretical discussion to include some newly explored concepts mostly related to the motivation and inter-network undercurrents of the group.

The dissertation that follows will attempt to reassess the phenomenon as it pertains to the specificities of the Balkan group, and develop it using primary sources and theoretical approaches employed in the study of social movements, and in particular, the contentious politics paradigm formulated by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly as well as Donatella

della Porta more recently. In addition, the dissertation will enrich the theoretical discussion by focusing on the role and the power of a stimulated agency in mobilization and utilizing the localized approach. The core of this dissertation is to focus on the factors - or *enablers*¹⁶⁰ - here termed to encompass people, networks, and circumstances, involved in the mobilization process, which stimulated *agency*.¹⁶¹ It will examine the networks the *enablers* use to recruit, the *enabling* circumstances of the polity, and the *enabling* conditions surrounding the recruits themselves.

The term *enablers* will be useful, as it serves to conceptualize agents in a robust manner by incorporating the circumstances that have been utilized to facilitate their departure. For this reason, we will revisit the main questions of the study: “What were the processes and circumstances leading up to the departure of foreign fighters from Bosnia and Kosovo?” and “What were the key mechanisms and actors that enabled, mobilized, facilitated, and finally organized their departure?” This dissertation will shed additional light on the processes of recruitment for the causes of political violence. Although most of these interrelated questions reflect macro-system causes, mid-organizational characteristics, or micro-individual motivations, this dissertation will be a contribution to the field insofar as it will, by utilizing the abovementioned theoretical concept in combination with Peterson’s and Wood’s localized empirical research, offer a case study to bridge all three. When possible, it will articulate and explore in depth at least one of these levels, while acknowledging that the most viable is the mid-level. In short, the main hypothesis of the study that it is a general systemic failure that drives these and similar agencies of individuals to leave these two and other countries in the region while process of brokerage plays the crucial role in the recruitment process.

¹⁶⁰ Enablers are understood as a sum of tripartite system given the level of analysis.

¹⁶¹ Within the larger theory of International Relations, *agency* is understood as the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices.

3.2. Theorizing Contention and Recruitment

3.2.1. Structuring Approach

David West recently classified the approaches to social movements and extra institutional politics. He distinguished the theories that are normative from the others: “(T)he theories [that] make claims about the legitimacy or justification, the moral rightness or wrongness, of extra-institutional forms of politics.”¹⁶² For the purpose of this research, I do not engage normative theories in detail when conducting the inquiry, because there is no analytical value when ascertaining normative value to foreign fighters’ claims. To engage in such normative discussions would require an entirely new dissertation, with substantial contributions from critical terrorism studies and other frameworks that proliferated in the post 9/11 era in the wake of alarmist-theorists following the devastating consequence of misguided US foreign policies. This is not to say that we should not pause for a moment and observe the fact that, even though ‘new social movements’ have garnered a certain sympathy in academia and public perception, the claims regarding the foreign fighter phenomenon were immediately considered to be illegitimate, and prescribed the negative normative value by default.¹⁶³ In addition, when discussing the foreign fighter phenomenon, the media has engaged in exaggerated reporting, which has led to a certain biased normative characterization of the problem and resulted in a delayed objective analysis of the issue. This trend alone has led to an interesting concept of the development of the study of countering violent extremism (CVE) without having its concepts defined, but alas, it has already been seen with the study of terrorism in the post 9/11 setting.

Some authors maintain that the normative approach should, unfortunately, be only reserved for when we are discussing terrorism.¹⁶⁴ Since the UNSC resolution and adoption of the term Foreign Terrorist Fighter, it has become increasingly difficult to engage in any normative

¹⁶² David West, *Theories of Social Movements*, p. 154.

¹⁶³ For further insight on this, see the National and International response overview sub-chapter in the Chapter Five.

¹⁶⁴ See Neil. J. Smelser, *The faces of terrorism: social and psychological dimensions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009; Robert Nalbandov, "Irrational Rationality of Terrorism." *Journal of Strategic Security* 6, No. 4 (2013), pp. 92-10. Nalbandov claims that the new terrorism (the post 9/11 wave) is nothing but a fear show, thus stripping it off any rationality whatsoever. A similar thesis is supported by Bryan D. Jones "Bounded rationality", *Annual Review of Political Science* 1999 2:1, pp. 297-321; and Herbert A. Simon, "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science," *American Political Science Review*, pp. 293-304.

analysis of the claims put forth by the recruits at the onset of their departure. I will, however, engage with rational choice theory, which postulates that the actor seeks to maximize its gain (welfare) by carefully making its choices and acting in congruence with them. According to some authors, rational choice theory must be extended to human behavior more generally to interpret individual interests as a mean to satisfy any kind of preference, including psychological, social, moral, and political. What stands in contrast to all approaches that underscore, in one way or another, material gains as a source of inequality, class struggle, and dominance, are the social constructivists: “In particular, constructivists argue that violent political behavior could be explained and even understood by focusing on the role of norms and ideas as determinants of such behavior.”¹⁶⁵

Within this approach, one can observe that bringing the attention back to the micro-level analysis, as it relates to the outside norms and macro set of rules, can be a useful framework for analysis, since the two are intertwined. However, it is important to observe that some structural approaches have been criticized for “failing to specify the mechanisms leading from structural tensions to actions”¹⁶⁶, since “a person is not only a being who disciplines himself; he is also a system of ideas, of feelings, of habits and tendencies and a consciousness that has a content.”¹⁶⁷ Since it is very important, the role of agency, seen as the capacity of an individual to act on a motivation, will be explored in detail. I will analyze foreign fighters’ choices and preferences made prior to their joining the cause. Collected evidence will be put up against the concept of “pleasure in agency”, a concept developed by Elisabeth Wood in her study of insurgency movements, in which she labeled insurgencies’ motivation as a “pleasure subordinate people may take in exercising agency, a human capacity from which they had long been excluded.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Earl Contex-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence: an introduction to the theories and cases of violent conflicts*, New York and London, Routledge, 2004, p. 17.

¹⁶⁶ For process-oriented approaches see more on Dynamics of Political violence “A process oriented perspective on radicalization and the escalation of political conflict” Lorenzi Bosi, Chares Demetriou and Stefan Malthaner, (eds.). Routledge, 2014.

¹⁶⁷ Emile Durkheim 2002. *Moral Education*. Mineola: Dover Press (Reprint of the Free Press edition of Moral Education: A Study of the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education. New York: Free Press, 1961, cited in Kenneth Smith, Emile Durkheim and the Collective Consciousness of Society: A Study in Criminology, Anthem Press, 2014, p. 23.

¹⁶⁸ Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 235.

3.2.2. Resource Mobilization

The second set of approaches is formal explanatory theories, “which apply empirical concepts in order to understand and explain social movements as a distinct mode of political action.”¹⁶⁹ Strain and Breakdown theories, as a subsection of Social Movements theory, are a typical branch of classical explanation.¹⁷⁰ The logic is that, when chronic strain or acute breakdown undermine societal integration, the social controls and moral imperatives that normally constrain collective behavior are weakened. Strain or breakdown thus allow or “cause” collective action that would otherwise be contained. This theory has fallen under Resource Mobilization theory, a major sociological theory in the study of social movements that emerged in the 1970s. It stresses the ability of a movement's members to acquire resources and mobilize others toward accomplishing the movement's goals. Resource mobilization theory, as developed and mostly elaborated by Zald and McCharty is a very influential elaboration framework.¹⁷¹ It foresees five types of resources necessary for social movement to occur: human, material, moral (in terms of support), organizational, and ideological resources. This framework is exceptionally valuable because it combines many types of factors and circumstances surrounding mobilization. There is no attempt to characterize the motives, only to elaborate the appeal and circumstance that lead to it all. Most importantly, the leaders - or key mobilizers - are a distinct and inalienable part of the mass mobilization.

With Tilly, della Porta and M. Diani the role of social and political context is brought back into the picture and complements the efforts of scholars who focus on the resources.¹⁷² In addition, and most recently, della Porta has examined the nexus between democratization and social movements, drawing from the vast experience of the post-1989 events in Central Europe,

¹⁶⁹ David West, *Theories of Social Movements*, p. 154.

¹⁷⁰ Steven M. Buechler, “The Strange Career of Strain and Breakdown Theories of Collective Actions,” *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. by David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

¹⁷¹ John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (May, 1977), pp. 1212-1241

¹⁷² Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements an Introduction, The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Blackwell, 2011.

as well as the more recent Arab Spring.¹⁷³ The aim of the research was to analyze” two eventful episodes of mobilization for democracy”¹⁷⁴, which stresses that the movements examined are in themselves favorable, as they strove to bring about democracy. Since these theories focus on social movements’ participation in the transition to democratic institutions, I will revisit them when discussing polities from which the recruits come from. However, we might also look at this thesis in reverse: if we consider the phenomenon in its most speculative form, then we could examine how the process of failed democratization in a post-conflict region (the Balkans) aided at creating a parallel underground network that facilitated some citizens’ claims. That is, we could, if we examine the phenomenon in its most hypothetical form, see Della Porta’s work as reading “democratization through the lenses of social movement studies, which is a very rare exercise in the literature in both fields.”¹⁷⁵ I will revisit this idea at a later point, when I assess the level of democratization in the Balkans during the times when massive recruitment for the wars in Iraq and Syria took place. The expectations of the set of these theories related to foreign fighters is that they can explain the context and macro-causes of their recruitment and their relationship to the countries of their origin, the institutions and its value system vis-à-vis the new community and the polity in the making they aspired to join.

3.2.3. Distinctive Feature of the Contention

West classifies the third type of theoretical approach as “substantive theories”, which seek to examine and explain the distinctive features of particular movements. “Specific movements are distinguished from one another by the fact they represent distinct constellations of interests; they challenge defined social structures, forms of exploitation and oppression; they advocate social change and propose alternative values and institutions in order to achieve the goals of their particular constituency.”¹⁷⁶ This set of theories mostly looks at New Social

¹⁷³ See also Donatella Della Porta, *Where did the Revolution go? Contentious Politics and the Quality of Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2016; Donatella della Porta, *Mobilizing for Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, Donatella della Porta, *Can Democracy Be Saved? Participation, Deliberation and Social Movements*, John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

¹⁷⁴ Donatella della Porta, *Where did the Revolution go? Contentious Politics and the Quality of Democracy*, 2016, Cambridge University Press, p. 5, emphasis added by the author.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 345.

¹⁷⁶ David West, *Theories of Social Movements*, p. 176.

Movements¹⁷⁷; however, West contends that it is “in effect, either radical or progressive” which brings back the normative value back into the picture.¹⁷⁸ It is progressive, because they are expected to further the advancement of the Western societies in terms of human rights, freedom, social justice, and other western values. “By the same token, religious revivals and nationalist, racist, sexist and homophobic movements are in effect, conceived as reactionary because they wish to halt or reverse that process of development.”¹⁷⁹ This theoretical concept helps us understand why the emergence of the foreign fighters’ waves had such a profound effect on political systems around the world regardless if they were considered reactionary or not. Social movements have had their share of scholarly attention in regard to the effects and consequences they have had on political systems around the world. They have been studied when a negative characterization was assigned to them and, lately, when more positive views on mass mobilization have been applied. This is especially the case with New Social Movement theories, whose premise of marginalization as a cause for mass mobilization has earned new social movements significant sympathy (unless they are reactionary or ‘backwards’ movements). As West observed, Rawls’s influential Theory of Justice failed to account for sexual and other minorities as well as particular claims made by women which the new social theory scholars capitalized on.¹⁸⁰ A variety of post-colonial, feminist and even critical terrorism studies have highlighted these shortcomings and provided for additional theoretical frameworks. ‘Rational choice’, ‘free riders’ and ‘collective action problems’ - all accepted political science theories - have already recognized and elaborated on the awe that mass mobilization has on society:

The adequacy of forward-looking problem-solving by any particular actor depends of course on the accuracy of her predictions of the range of relevant contenders to a set of strategic interactions, as well as of her anticipation of the identities, aims and discursive and tactical repertoires of these other contenders. These preconditions may sometimes be approximated – though obviously never quite fulfilled – in times of normal politics.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ For more on New Social Movements, see Bert Klendermans, *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Jai*, London 1988; Morris and Mueller, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, Yale University Press, 1992; McAdam, McCharty, and Zald, *Comparative Perspective on Social Movement*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

¹⁷⁸ David West, *Theories of Social Movements*, p. 179.

¹⁷⁹ R Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, London, Fontana, 1976, pp. 17-20, cited in David West, *Theories of Social Movements*, p. 179.

¹⁸⁰ See especially Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and Family*, Basic Books; First Printing Edition, November 5, 1989.

¹⁸¹ Ruud Koopmans, *Protest in Time and Space: The Evolution of Waves of Contention*, in David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, p. 30.

Opposing this explanation of strategic anticipation is the “learning by doing” explanation that includes *trial-and-error* and is more realistic because it “does not assume that contenders have a crystal-clear overview of the field of contention, nor that they are able to adequately predict the behavior of all other relevant actors - it merely requires that they learn from their mistakes.”¹⁸²

Selective pressure is a useful in this context, and can be seen through the experience of the Salafi movement, which is relatively new to the Western Balkans context. The Islamic Community publicly denounced it, banned its work, and tied it to terrorism. As a result, this and similar groups must work in complete isolation. Given the fragmentation of society along ethnic lines, it is not surprising that precisely these ‘dissident’ groups are labeled as security threats and used as political bargaining chips in complicated political situations.

3.3. Not Everything is a Social Movement – The Quest for Processes and Mechanisms

After reviewing these different sets of approaches, it’s important to acknowledge that this dissertation will utilize a hybrid approach between the second and the third sets of theories to asses this distinct example of mass mobilization. By default, it will not be normatively assessed, but it is new as it challenges established social orders, for reasons that are not obvious to the public. In sum, I will not aim to test the theories, but rather, to build on existing theories and expand the research further. Social Movement Theory (SMT) is a vast terrain, and as Charles Tilly, its most prominent scholar, stated, “[I]nstead of declaring that the activities [...] really are social movements, it forwards the work of explanation more effectively to recognize them as constituting another form of contentious politics. The recognition allows us to study their similarities to social movements but also to see what distinctive explanatory problems they pose.”¹⁸³ Thus, we still use the SMT framework as a starting point. However, I will move beyond SMT and supplement my framework with a subset of it, Contentious Politics Theory, to provide a proper analysis how these underground networks of “social rebellion” from the Balkans came to be and what - or better yet who - facilitated the group’s departures. As my introduction

¹⁸² Ibid. p.31.

¹⁸³ Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood, *Social Movements 1768-2008*, Paradigm Boulder, 2010, p. 10.

highlights, the process of recruitment of the Balkan contingent was not spontaneous nor incidental - the personnel involved were highly organized, and the process required logistics and networks to sustain it, since after all, nearly 900 people left the Balkans before the security structures in the countries even became alarmed.

In the early 1970s, Gurr (1970) proposed social deprivation as the starting point for discussing contentious politics, and many scholars have even conducted comparisons between mass mobilizations on two different continents.¹⁸⁴ However, contentious politics theory was predominantly championed by Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow. Before I move any further in my theoretical discussion, I shall note the terminology as put forth by Tilly and Tarrow:

Social movements combine (1) sustained campaigns of claim making; (2) an array of public performances including marches, rallies, demonstrations, creation of specialized associations, public meetings, public statements, petitions, letter writing and lobbying; (3) repeated public displays or worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment by such means as wearing colors, marching in disciplined ranks, sporting badges that advertise the cause, displaying signs, chanting slogans, and picketing public buildings. They draw on (4) organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities – our social movements bases.”

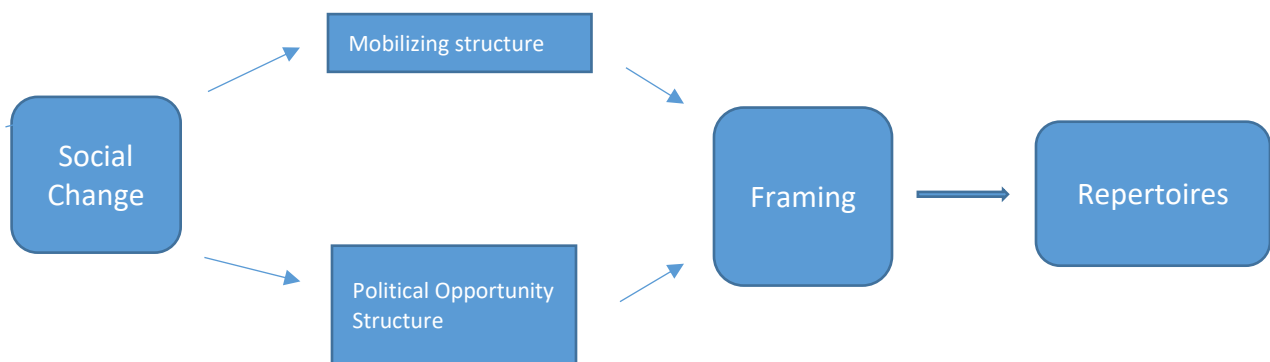


Figure 1. The Classical Social Movement Agenda¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ For more, see Olga Onuch, *Mapping Mass Mobilization: Understanding Revolutionary Moments in Argentina and Ukraine*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

¹⁸⁵ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 15.

By this definition it is clear that the social movement framework as a sustained campaign of claim making can be, but does not necessary have to be, a starting point for analysis of any and all mass mobilization. However, foreign fighters in the Balkans - and their subordinates or supporters - did not engage in an array of a public performances. In fact, they made no public claims. Even if we are to consider the existence of peculiar rural communities that adhere to a more conservative interpretation of Islam and specific manifestation as a form of a public activity and public presence, at the very least we would need to establish the connection between these and the departures, and even then, they would still not qualify as an array of public performances of any kinds, it would simply be a form of public appearance. The third characteristic regarding a public display of worthiness and unity is also somewhat problematic. As I have shown, it could not have been public, but the facilitators of the underground movement did in fact employ a high degree of ideological unity to solidify the cohesion of the group. The forth characteristic of organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities is an evident one. After briefly observing them, we can concur with Tilly that there is some usefulness in social movement theory, but it is not sufficient to explain all the varieties of mass mobilization. In fact, it would be an analytic flaw not to attempt to expand the debate on the hybrids that occur within the umbrella of social movements.

Contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics this brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action and politics.¹⁸⁶

In sum, Tilly and Tarrow see the contentious politics approach to be “deliberately for similarities in cause-effect relationships across a wide range of political struggle without aiming for general laws that govern all of politics.”¹⁸⁷ The way in which this is done is through the identification of crucial *mechanisms* and *processes* - especially the mechanisms of brokerage and the process of mobilization. Simply put, collective action means coordinating efforts on behalf of

¹⁸⁶ Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁷ McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, *Dynamics of contention*, 2001.

shared interests or programs. “We enter the realm of politics when we interact with agents of governments, either dealing with them directly or engaging in activities bearing on governmental rights, regulations, and interests.”¹⁸⁸ This definition is applicable to foreign fighters’ recruitment, as it engages in the activity and mobilization that goes precisely against governmental rights, regulations, laws, and interests. As a response, “[G]overnments... resist anyone else building up competitive centers of powers within their territories.”¹⁸⁹ It is quite telling that the countries of the Western Balkans, in particular Bosnia and Kosovo, have been very collaborative with the international organizations regarding the situation in the global response against the phenomenon. In fact, the two countries were the quickest to adopt legislation criminalizing mobilization for, recruitment and departure to, and participation in rebel groups in Iraq and Syria. Governments do have coercive elements and a coercive toolbox at their disposal with which they can attempt to clamp down on such activities, provided they are aware of them taking place underground.

Contentious performances are relatively familiar and standardized ways in which one set of political actors make collective claims on some other set of political actors. Contentious repertoires are arrays of contentious performances that are currently known and available within some set of political actors: demonstrations, petitions, press releases, public meetings and other performances.¹⁹⁰

To begin with, public contentious performances or contentious repertoires are not unusual in the Balkans. Contemporary contention has been explored in terms of citizens' claim to the common good and protests against the privatization of public spaces, as was the case in Croatia;¹⁹¹ a citizen protest for the resolution of problems regarding the allocation of a personal identification number that had much greater implications – the “Babylution” (*Bebolucija*) case

¹⁸⁸ Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, p. 5.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p5.

¹⁹⁰ Or as elaborated in David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi, (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, p. 12: “Social movements, so conceptualized, can be examined in terms of various contextual factors, dimensions, and processes from a variety of overlapping perspectives via a number of methods... Contextual factors reference the broader structural and cultural conditions that facilitate and constrain the emergence and operation of social movements. Metaphorically, contextual conditions constitute the soil in which movements grow or languish[...]Dimensions encompass characteristic aspects of social movements, such as organizational forms, organizational fields, leadership, tactical repertoires, collective action frames, emotion, collective identity, and consequences; whereas processes encompass the ways in which dimensions evolve and change temporally over the course of movement’s operation, such as participant mobilization, tactical innovation, diffusion, and framing.”

¹⁹¹ For more, see Kerstin Jacobsson, *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*, Farnham, Shgate, 2015.

also commonly known as the *JMBG protest* in Bosnia; and a social protest a year after that one in Tuzla, Bosnia.¹⁹² In Kosovo, most recent protests in Pristina over air-pollution but moreover the experience in building up a parallel state and institution in the 90s as a response to Serbia's legislation that effectively banned political and civil rights for Kosovar Albanians have demonstrated the ability of the communities in the region to assemble *en masse* and demand certain rights or to operate clandestinely until the conditions are right. Much of the post-socialist citizen actions can be seen as a consequence to strong-arm rule that countries continue to be subjected to. However, as many authors have observed¹⁹³, social movements are either rooted deeply in the history of underground resistance movements of the people of the region during World War II or those that strove for active citizenship and the democratization of the region in the post-1991 Yugoslavia breakup period.¹⁹⁴ After being ruled for a long period by monarchs, the entire region had fallen one way or another under communist or socialist rule in which democratic practices were strongly discouraged, if not punished, by the state. After World War II, there were mass demonstrations against minority oppression (1970s and 1980s), war (1990s), and electoral fraud (2000s).

As mentioned, in the case of foreign fighters from the Balkans, there is no emphasis on the public display of a contention. Therefore, I make the case that the mobilization of foreign fighters that occurred in the Balkans was a form of a political claim, only organized and executed underground until the final goal was reached, which was the departure. Another issue to examine is the awareness of the actors of their political claims, as opposed to very evident awareness of

¹⁹² For a comparative analysis of the two protests in 2013 and 2014, see Chiara Milan, *Reshaping Citizenship through Collective Action: Performative and Prefigurative Practices in the 2013–2014 Cycle of Contention in Bosnia & Herzegovina*, *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 69, No. 9, 2017.

¹⁹³ See specifically: Donatella della Porta, "Democratization from Below: Civil Society versus Social Movements?" *Civil Society and Democracy Promotion*, 2014, pp. 137–149., doi:10.1057/9781137291097_7.

¹⁹⁴ For more, see A Melucci, "Social Movements and the Democratization of Everyday life" in J Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*, London and New York, NY, Verso, 1988; Jakobson, and Saxonberg, (eds.), *Beyond NGO-ization: The Development of Social Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*, Farnham, Shgate, 2013; K. F. F. Quigley, *Lofty Goals, Modest Results: Assisting Civil Society in Eastern Europe*, in M Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, eds., *Funding Virtual Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, Washington D.C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Adam Fagan and Indraneel Sicar, "Activist Citizenship in Southeast Europe", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 69:9, 2017, pp. 1337-1345; and Chiara Milan, *Reshaping Citizenship through Collective Action: Performative and Prefigurative Practices in the 2013-2014 Cycle of Contention in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 69:9, 2017, pp. 1346-1361. Some authors have claimed quite the opposite when it comes to the region. For example, Tsveta Petrova and Sidney Tarrow, in "Transnational and Participatory Activism in the Emerging European Polity," *Comparative Political Studies*, 40, 1, 2007, claim that the Southeast Europe region has a weak civil society and very little civic participation. According to them, citizens in this region are politically timid due to the legacies of post-socialist authoritarianism. This dissertation, and many others, will prove this to be quite the opposite.

the mobilization agents (enablers) of their political claim. I will discuss this differentiation in detail, based on concrete evidence and testimonials by the returning fighters and their aids, in the empirical chapter.

3.4. 'Terrorism is a Strategy, Not a Creed'

“The way to understand the dominant patterns of terrorism, especially on a global scale, is not through fixing some established, durable, and static phenomenon, but through fixing a set of interconnected, dynamic - and non-linear - processes”¹⁹⁵

“Terror is a strategy, not a creed. The use of terror spreads across a wide variety of groups, ideologies, and targets”¹⁹⁶

The non-linear processes referred to in the quote above are the following: trans nationalization of terrorism, new local-regional contexts, ideological transformations of terrorism, the dynamic hybrid, network and post network organizational models, and upgrade in financial, logistical, information, and communication tactics.¹⁹⁷ I will observe Stepanova’s actor-oriented approach (agency), according to which terrorists are intentional actors that develop willful strategies to achieve political objectives, as I have decided to treat the sample as rational actors making choices depending on their circumstances. This approach immediately sets aside theories that claim that terrorists or actors that are using terror strategies are irrational actors whose main goal is to intimidate and take down democracy.¹⁹⁸ As della Porta observes about the scientific domain, “although much had been

¹⁹⁵ Ekaterina Stepanova, *The Evolution of the Al-Qaeda-type Terrorism: Network and Beyond*, in Lorenzo Bosi, Charles Demetriou, and Stefan Malthaner, eds., *Dynamics of Political Violence, A Process Oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group – 2016, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2016, p. 275.

¹⁹⁶ Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood, *Social Movements 1768-2008*, Paradigm, p. 56.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 275.

¹⁹⁸ See Neil. J. Smelser, *The Faces of Terrorism: Social and Psychological Dimensions*, Princeton University Press 2009; Robert Nalbandov, "Irrational Rationality of Terrorism." *Journal of Strategic Security* 6, No. 4 (2013), pp. 92-10. Nalbandov claims that the new terrorism (that is the post 9/11 wave) is nothing but a fear show, thus stripping it off any rationality whatsoever. A similar thesis is supported by Bryan D. Jones.

written on terrorism, it had been mainly treated as an isolated pathology, whereas political violence had rarely been mainly addressed within social movement studies.”¹⁹⁹ As per della Porta’s definition of clandestine political violence, I shall utilize:

The very choice to go underground of a relatively small group of activists is heuristically relevant, as it triggers a spiral of radicalization, transforming political organizations into military sects. Therefore, [...], I focus on clandestine violence – a form of violence that has often been considered under the label of terrorism.²⁰⁰

The importance of this definition and its applicability to the Western Balkans’ issue of foreign fighters is the fact that, no matter what the political and media exaggeration, a relatively sizable group of about a thousand people decided to go underground and act violently upon their beliefs. By refusing to use the term terrorism per se, della Porta has, in fact, contributed to more accurate and usable sociological and political concepts. However, returning to Stepanova, it is important to pay particular attention to local studies. Stepanova makes a significant distinction of localized terrorism that might have been inspired by some “global jihad”. “The more local one you go, the more context-specific, concrete and geographically limited are terrorist groups’ goals, the greater the variety of their organizational patterns and the harder it is to generalize beyond individual case studies or the limits of comparative analysis.”²⁰¹ In her explanation of a post-al Qaeda terrorist network, Stepanova claims that an agency focus study can yield results and that the level of transnationalism depends on group goals and plans rather than organizational structure, be it horizontal or hierarchical. Similarly, she describes al-Qaeda as a supranational ideology, whereas ISIS would be both a supranational and a transnational movement.²⁰²

Localized study also allows for a more evidence-based contribution to the study of political violence and mobilization. For a number of reasons, Western European and Balkan recruits should not be equated, regardless of the supranational, all-encompassing *raison-d’etre*, nor should the foreign fighters be discussed as a single unit of analysis. All the circumstances surrounding the life of these

¹⁹⁹ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Acknowledgements.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁰¹ Ekaterina Stepanova, The Evolution of the Al-Qaeda-type Terrorism: Network and Beyond, in Lorenzo Bosi, Charles Demetriou and Stefan Malthaner, (eds.), *Dynamics of Political Violence, A Process Oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict*, p. 277.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 278.

recruits, including socio-economical, historical, and societal influences, are fundamentally different. As an illustration, the majority of the recruits from Western Europe are second or third generation immigrants, whereas all of the recruits from the Balkans represent the majority indigenous population in their respective countries. The implications of these differences are immense and, for a more accurate assessment, I shall argue that comparing recruits from around the world would be analytically flawed. Rather, as Tilly showed, if we were to analyze just a piece of the puzzle, we would be able to determine what remains as the common denominator. That piece of the puzzle is the recruits from the Balkans, who I shall study separately from the rest, and my bottom-up study will contribute to better understanding the global foreign fighter phenomenon.

Social Movement Theory (SMT), or its surrogate, Contentious Politics, has often been used to describe terrorist activity.²⁰³ SMT is particularly helpful, as it focuses on the interaction between the state and the mobilized group, the non-state actors as observed by scholars from Critical Terrorism Studies. The criticism of mainstream terrorism studies is not novel, and for some time - especially in the 1970s and 1980s - a number of leftist scholars have criticized agenda-driven, mainstream terrorism studies that only serve to drive the Western interventionist agenda.²⁰⁴ Those researching under the umbrella of mainstream terrorism studies were trying to make clear how flawed it is to have an entire scientific approach based on very little empirical research and shaky theoretical foundations.

Just how much terrorism studies have been shaped and proliferated without even a basic consensus on the definition of the term 'terrorism'²⁰⁵ is evident in the work of the scholar Lisa Stampnitzky.²⁰⁶ As she states, "it traces the creation of 'terrorism' as a problem, and the

²⁰³ For example, see Jeroen Gunning, "Social Movement Theory and the Study of Terrorism," in Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning, eds., *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 170–171. For a more comprehensive account, see Colin J. Beck, *The Contribution of Social Movement Theory to Understanding Terrorism*, Stanford University, *Sociology Compass* 2/5 (2008), pp. 1565-1581, and J Gunning, *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*, 2009.

²⁰⁴ As mentioned in Richard Jackson, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/4/1/3/3/7/pages413378/p413378-1.php, (accessed June 2018).

²⁰⁵ As previously noted, there are actually more than 100 definitions of "terrorist," according to Alex Schmid and Albert J. Jongman et al., in *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature*, North-Holland, 1988. They counted 109 definitions of terrorism that covered a total of 22 different situations. The American intellectual and political scientist Walter Laqueur has also counted over 100 definitions. See Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 6.

²⁰⁶ Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented 'Terrorism'*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014

corresponding emergence of a new set of ‘terrorism experts’ who aim to shape this seemingly uncontrollable problem into an object of rational knowledge.”²⁰⁷ As Stampintzky observes, in only a very few instances has there ever been such an eager fascination and a need to have a comprehensive understanding and conclusive solutions in the political and academic realms as is now the case with terrorism. The inability of experts and academics to hone in on and narrow the field is due to the fact that there simply is no consensus over what constitutes legitimate knowledge in this field. This problematic situation is further confounded by the active proliferation of a number of actors whose interests, attention, and “expertise” has turned to terrorism.²⁰⁸

It was only after the devastating effects of the actual foreign policy implications, predominately the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, that Critical Terrorism Studies gained traction. Richard Jackson, a prominent scholar of Critical Terrorism Studies, has specified many of the shortcomings²⁰⁹ of traditional and post 9/11 studies of terrorism that have emerged based on little to no theoretical and empirical evidence.²¹⁰ Critical Terrorism Studies, in short, “can be understood as a critical orientation, a skeptical attitude, and a willingness to challenge received wisdom and knowledge about terrorism.”²¹¹ In his deconstructing of the ontological premise of terrorism being a social structure rather than a ‘brute fact’, Jackson acknowledges that “engaging social movement theory, specific area studies expertise, and ethnographical methods constitute three practical paths to making context more central to terrorism research.”²¹² In addition, the epistemological issue with terrorism studies is the way in which knowledge surrounding the issue is produced and for what purpose, which leads one to argue for a more critical approach to the topic. The nexus between the power relations and policy implications of what academia

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁰⁸ Tanja Dramac Jiries, review of Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented ‘Terrorism’*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014, p. 266, in *Relaciones Internacionales* Número 32, Junio 2016 - Septiembre 2016.

²⁰⁹ Richard Jackson, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/4/1/3/3/7/pages413378/p413378-1.php, (accessed May 2018).

²¹⁰ Obviously, the “9/11” reference was criticized as an overly dominant narrative. However, Critical Terrorism Scholars were criticized in return for furthering and cementing the narrative, although their intention was quite the opposite. Of this, I am acutely aware, as I also argued on behalf of their reflections regarding the term “terrorism”. For more on this, see Harmonie Toros (2017) “9/11 is alive and well” or how critical terrorism studies has sustained the 9/11 narrative, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 10:2, pp. 203-219.

²¹¹ Richard Jackson, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/4/1/3/3/7/pages413378/p413378-1.php, (accessed May 2018). p.3; for more, also see R Jackson, M Breen Smyth, J Gunning (2009). *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*.

²¹² See also Gunning, 2009; Sluka, 2009; Dalacoura, 2009; Breen Smyth, 2009.

produces is inevitable, hence the instability of the term ‘terrorism’ only adds to the complexity of the issue.

Another issue should be addressed. Although I have chosen at the beginning of this dissertation not to use the term *Foreign Terrorist Fighter*, and settled on the *Foreign Fighter* term for the reasons elaborated earlier, I have looked at social movement theory and how it relates to terrorism in general, and will still use the term *terrorism* when it necessities to describe political violence or call for violence for political or ideological goals. Even Critical Terrorism scholars operate under the rationale in which “under a set of strict conditions, it is possible to conduct rigorous and useful research on both the forms of political violence which are currently understood and experienced as ‘terrorism’, as well as the discourses which construct the ‘terrorism’ label and the meanings given to this kind of violence.”²¹³ In addition, as Jackson puts it, pragmatically speaking, the term is unfortunately so dominant that no serious scholar can afford to avoid it, even if one finds it analytically useless as a concept or term. “The term ‘terrorism’ dominates public discourse and as such must be engaged with, deconstructed, and challenged, rather than abandoned and left to less critical scholars.”²¹⁴ With this in mind, I will still avoid using the term when possible and or refer to it with the abovementioned concerns surrounding the term. With this brief observation, and after observing the methodology employed for the purpose of this study, I will utilize these theoretical concepts by applying them to the empirical study in the chapter that follows

3.5. Transitional Countries and Contention

As already mentioned, given that the case studies are democracies in the making, both Bosnia and Kosovo have not reached their full democratized status. With the exception of Albania, the Western Balkan countries that saw the highest rate of foreign fighters - Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina - have all experienced conflicts, are now “countries in transition,” and undergoing the democratization process with the heavy presence of the international community.²¹⁵

²¹³Richard Jackson, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/4/1/3/3/7/pages413378/p413378-1.php, (accessed June 2018), p. 9.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²¹⁵ The debate whether the international presence is advancing the democratization of the region or not started nearly 15 years ago. For example, see: Gerald Knaus and Nicholas Whyte, "Does the International Presence in the Balkans Require Radical

The underlying argument of this dissertation is that, because the transitioning process from war-torn countries to fully fledged democracies has stalled or backslid in these countries, the underground network of foreign fighter recruiters was able to flourish and has fed off the shortcomings of the transitioning process in these countries, leading to the successful facilitation of hundreds of departures.²¹⁶ Furthermore, non-existing value-based matrix to which the recruits would belong to, further aided the process of the ideological encapsulation. I will also make the claim that the foreign fighter phenomenon is only one form of the manifestation of the contentious claim, whereas many other forms can be observed in a similar manner. The mass mobilization that has been completely and entirely organized, assembled, operationalized, and executed below the surface and under the watchful eyes of the international and national intelligence security architecture in the Western Balkans is a success on its own. This statement holds even more grounds when we consider that the two countries which saw the most departures in my case study in the Balkans are semi-protectorates with heavy international presence and more than a dozen security services each. James Piazza has long argued that states plagued by chronic state failures are statistically more likely to host terrorist groups that commit transnational attacks, have their nationals commit transnational attacks, and are more likely to be targeted by transnational terrorists themselves.²¹⁷ Bosnia and Kosovo are externally driven democracies for more than two decades, and one must observe the country's performance when assessing the movement that originate clandestinely within the confines of their territories. The macro-level analysis will therefore take into account socio-economic indicators, the levels of corruption, nepotism and party capture that troubles these two in order to contextualize the recruits' surroundings.

Restructuring?" NATO, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/historic-changes-balkans/Balkans-require-radical-restructuring/EN/index.htm>, (accessed September 1, 2018).

²¹⁶ Some scholars have correlated directly the rise of Islamic violent radicalism and the backsliding of democracies in the Balkans, seeing the latter as the much bigger problem. See, for example: Jasmin Mujanovic, Freedom House, *The Terror of Southeastern Europe's Failing States*, <https://freedomhouse.org/blog/terror-southeastern-europe-s-failing-states>, (accessed June 2018).

²¹⁷ James A. Piazza, *Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?* *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3, Sep., 2008, pp. 469-488, Accessed October 22, 2017.

3.6. Networks, Mechanisms, and Motivations

“Triggering mechanism work to first push the individual out of neutrality into opposition, and in a second step, into organized opposition.”²¹⁸

This dissertation explores a specific localized story, similar to those presented by Petersen or Wood.²¹⁹ Practitioners of an analytic narrative seeking “to explore concrete historical cases”, they “wish to examine the choices of individuals who are embedded in specific settings” and “wish to trace the sequences of actions, decisions, and responses that generate events and outcomes.”²²⁰ In other words, I oppose a hermeneutical sample of study: the foreign fighter phenomenon, although global, depends upon many structural and contextual epistemologies that can only be elaborated piece by piece, like a puzzle. Given that the contingent of Western Balkans foreign fighters have not been observed in detail prior to this dissertation in academia, nor has there been an attempt for it to be examined through a coherent theory, this dissertation will focus on precisely these objectives: providing the particular phenomenon with a theoretical framework and contributing to the empirical evidence.

According to Petersen, “riots are un-sustained violence, rebellions are sustained violence, and revolutions are defined by the amount of social change produced and are not necessarily violent.”²²¹ To analyze the contention that drives rebellions or, in our case, contention, we need to look at certain events and episodes of streams of contention, and discuss the mechanisms that enable these processes.

“Mechanism are a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar way over a variety of situations. [...] Processes are regular combination and sequences of mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent)

²¹⁸ Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion, Lessons from Easter Europe*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006 p. 18.

²¹⁹ Elisabeth J. Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Other notable scholars have also written on the sequence of events or processes that produce social movements. For example, see Donatella della Porta, “Introduction: On Individual Motivations in Underground Political Organizations,” in Donatella della Porta, ed., *International Social Movement Research: Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992.

²²⁰ Robert Bates et al, “Analytic Narratives”, and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 9-12, quoted in Rodger Petersen, *Resistance and rebellion, lessons from Easter Europe*, p. 17.

²²¹ *Ibid*, p. 13.

transformations of those elements [...], the processes themselves are often empirically invisible as such; you don't see evolution happening".²²²

The definition of mechanism and processes offered here specify how much time in fact, is needed for certain processes to gain traction and for certain changes to take effect. With the Balkans as my case study, it is evident that the war and post-war processes have left a large footprint on the recruits. Rumbling conflicts along the peninsula have had a profound impact on political and economic performance, as well as impacting the social fabric. Petersen's "triggering mechanisms"²²³ is a useful elaboration on what moves people from one level to the next. The move from the second level to the third level of action is one of the most useful accounts that explains how the decision-making process of joining evolves or not. He elaborates in detail the process that pushes and pulls individuals into rebellion: "How variation in community size, homogeneity, and centralization may affect the existence and operation of norms; it examines the role and structural position of 'first actors' or entrepreneurs in initiating and sustaining collective action through norms and use of threats; it attempts to identify the conditions when one type of mechanism (rational, normative, irrational) is most likely to prevail over another type of mechanism".²²⁴

²²² Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, p. 29. Emphasis added by the author of this dissertation.

²²³ Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe (Studies in Rationality and Social Change)*, Cambridge University Press; 1st edition, 2006.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

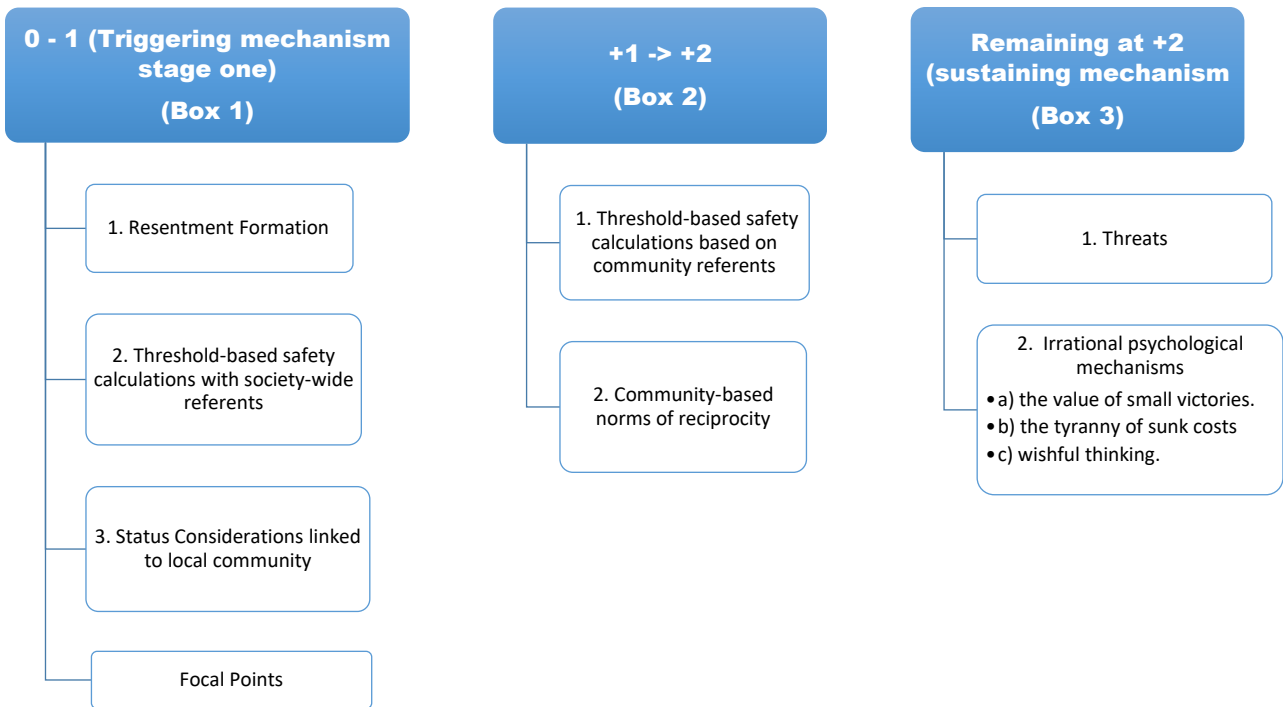


Figure 2. Triggering Mechanism by Petersen²²⁵

Roger D. Petersen claimed that, at the most fundamental level, rebellion against the adversary occupying force, in the case of Lithuania for example, moved across a set of multiple possible roles and that the process of joining is not stagnant as it generates considerable variation. He based his approach on game theory and rational choice theory, but expands it further, to include socio-psychological mechanisms as well. In comparison to rational choice theory, the mechanism system offers a bigger picture. Rational choice only represents one part of the triggering mechanism, according to Petersen and, after reviewing the empirical chapter, I will revisit this claim as well. For now, I will account for all types of enabling mechanisms. In the empirical chapter, I will support the mechanism's flow and formation with the accounts of recruits.

²²⁵ Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe (Studies in Rationality and Social Change)*, Cambridge University Press; 1st edition, 2006.

The interesting comparison about the community's involvement and the network's involvement in clandestine operations was made by Robert Aspray, who quoted Colonel Rendulic, a commander of a German Panzer army, who said the following about the situation during World War II and his challenges in Yugoslavia: "The life and tasks of the German troops would have been much easier if the opponent had only closed formation. The home partisans were a much more dangerous enemy because it was from them that all the hostile acts emanated against which the troops could protect themselves only with the greatest difficulty and which caused them the largest losses. They could seldom, if ever, be caught."²²⁶ As he claims, the spectrum (0, +1 +2) might be best applied to populations occupied by a foreign power, but it can be applied to host a rebellion situation as well.

3.6.1. Enablers

In addition to Peterson's elaborated scheme, the most operationalized approach for studying groups that 'fall between the cracks' studied by SMT and Contentious Politics scholars comes from della Porta's work.²²⁷ Her *Clandestine Political Violence* is a global survey account of the four types of such violence: left-wing in Italy and Germany, right-wing in Italy, ethno nationalist in Spain, and religious fundamentalist in Islamist clandestine organizations. This ground-breaking work has established a new framework for all future analysis on the subject. Building on previous work, the author develops a new concept and offers a new interpretative model. Della Porta also provides specific attention to the internal dynamics of the clandestine political organizations, but it also uniquely offers a communication pattern between conditions of the political system from which the clandestine political violence emerges, as well as the organizational capacity, group dynamics and characteristics, and individual motivations for joining the violent groups. The framework focuses on the development mechanisms of underground organizations. In particular, clandestine political organizations are transformed through mechanisms of organizational compartmentalization, action militarization, and ideological encapsulation ("increasingly elitist definition of self"²²⁸), and military

²²⁶ Robert Aspray, *War in Shadows*, Vol. 1, Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday, 1965, pp. 525-526, quoted in Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe (Studies in Rationality and Social Change)*, Cambridge University Press; 1st edition, 2006, p. 8.

²²⁷ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

enclosure.

Grievances and resentments are nurtured within specially enclosed settings that foster the maintenance of pledges and loyalties in the underground. Through militant enclosure, militants move more and more deeply into a close ghetto and encapsulated unit. While relations outside of the organizations become – logistically and psychologically – increasingly limited, the clandestine organization remains the only target of affective focusing as well as, at the same time, the only source of information. At the same time, cognitive closure towards the outside discourages the credits of defeats and mistakes, and the perception of alternative ways which makes the departure as the ultimate participation and commitment to the join cause.

When it comes to individual motivations and the reasons for departure, one useful typology is the following: aggrieved individuals, opportunists who seek personal gains, and idealists who are ideologically committed to the movement. Or, when translated into motivations: instrumental, ideological, and solidarity incentive.²²⁹ In the empirical chapter, I will classify foreign fighters based on their responses or court testimonials and in-depth interviews, but for now, it is useful to understand what incentive can play a role in the pre-departure period, and how it can exacerbate the process.²³⁰ Taking into account opportunities as the enabling context for the activation of the radical group, one should observe that, in some cases, foreign presence or occupation has been seen as an instigator of the clandestine violence²³¹ or, on the contrary, that the group has exploited the existence of democratic norms.²³² In addition, “[L]ooking at activists’ construction of the external reality is especially relevant because radical groups are usually tiny minorities reacting with extreme forms of violence to situation that are assessed differently by most of their fellow social movement activist.”²³³

²²⁹ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, 2013, p. 116.

²³⁰ A different type of resource related incentive is explored by Jeremy Weinstein. His study “Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence” Cambridge University Press; 1st edition (October 9, 2006) has found that “rebel groups that emerge in environments rich in natural resources or with the eternal support of an outside patron tend to commit high levels of indiscriminate violence, whereas those that arise in restricted resources tend to employ violence to a lesser degree”. Weinstein’s ethnographic research is a great contribution to the field of the understanding of political violence of the rebellion group, and it would be a starting point of any research on foreign fighter recruit behavior in Iraq and Syria.

²³¹ Crenshaw 2011 and Sobek and Braithwaite, cited in Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, 2013, p. 35.

²³² As observed by della Porta.

²³³ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, 2013, p. 35.

In order to understand violent Islamist manifestation, one needs to acknowledge the historical grievances that stem from the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, and the wars in Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular. The latter brought world attention to the suffering of people due only to their faith or ethnic identity in the heart of Europe at a time when many thought that another genocide in the European neighborhood was impossible.²³⁴ Particular emphasis has been given to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent *fatwa* published by Palestinian native Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, entitled “The Defense of the Muslim Lands: The First Obligation after Imam.” Specifically, the fatwa called upon every Muslim around the world to come to the aid of the Afghanis against the Soviets. Azzam followed his plea with the writing *Join the Caravan* an unprecedented and astonishingly clear strategy on how to organize the money, men, and weapons that would soon pour into Afghanistan.²³⁵ This was the first time the world was introduced to Azzam’s partner, Usama Bin-Laden²³⁶, with whom he teamed up and established the first ‘foreign fighters only’ training camp.²³⁷ Bin-Laden believed that international recruits were an untapped resource and should be trained and put to good use. The establishment of a foreign fighter army, however, was a no small task and took years to develop, especially given that the untrained men were facing the onslaught of a military superpower.

In the wars in Afghanistan, oppression by authoritarian regimes and repressive leaders, combined with the war on terrorism which was often interpreted as war on Islam, were the circumstances surrounding the clandestine political violence. However, della Porta observed that escalating policing - although relevant in her studies of the extreme left and right in Italy and Germany, and ethno groups in Spain does not hold ground in the religious extremism. In fact, religious extremism does not necessary require targeted specific repressive strategy by the regime in one country or other. Rather, it was fueled through a combination of the conflicts and dissatisfaction of a new generation of Muslims in Europe and the United States on how these wars were handled. This was the combination needed for a transnational movement to emerge.

²³⁴ International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, ICTY transcript of General Ratko Mladic’s guilty verdict for the crimes committed that rank among the most heinous known to humankind and include genocide and extermination as crimes against humanity: <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/mladic/trans/en/171122IT.htm>, (accessed December 5, 2017).

²³⁵ Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, *Join the Caravan* (1987), p. 11.

²³⁶ Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, Penguin Books, London, revised edition, 2007, p. 61.

²³⁷ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004, p. 35.

In addition, Bosnia's Muslim population was regarded as moderate until the 1990s. Practicing Muslims were a minority in the predominately secular communist Yugoslavia, where religion was discouraged - if not banned. However, when war broke out in the early 1990s in Bosnia and in 1999 in Kosovo, the Salafi movement - an ultra-conservative movement within Sunni Islam - was "imported" by Saudi-sponsored *mujahedeen*, who mobilized to fight alongside the drastically under-equipped and under-funded Muslim Bosniaks against both Serbs and Croats.²³⁸ When the war in Bosnia ended, the Gulf fighters who attempted to return to their countries of origin were, in fact, particularly targeted and discriminated against. This was also the case with fighters who came from Saudi Arabia or Yemen. Although previously encouraged and looked favorably upon from their governments, upon their return, they were subjected to torture and repression.

Similarly, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was targeted for years by the government for their beliefs and practices. However, in the localized context of the Western Balkans, one must account for specifically targeted raids that law enforcement agencies in the Balkans conducted against particular communities.²³⁹ Today, it is understood that the marginalization of the target or suspect communities²⁴⁰ was the unofficial policy, not only by the Western Balkans governments but also the dominant religious communities.²⁴¹ Looking more globally, as Olivier Roy has pointed out, the de-territorialization of Islam has caused a neo-fundamentalist version Islam to take root amongst Muslim youth, particularly with second and third generation migrants in the West.²⁴² Roy ascribes its spread to private *madrasas* with Salafi or Wahhabi curricula, and the above-mentioned de-territorialization. However, looking back at the Western Balkans, the young people who fled to Syria and Iraq were not second and third generation migrants but indigenous to the region, and thus must be accounted for as a separate sample of foreign fighters. However,

²³⁸ Tanja Dramac Jiries, <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/europe/bosnia-incubator-radicalization-1089>, (accessed June 2018).

²³⁹ Interview with SIPA officer, May 2016.

²⁴⁰ Francesco Ragazzi, Suspect community or suspect category? The impact of counter-terrorism as 'policed multiculturalism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2016, 42:5, pp. 724-741.

²⁴¹ Example of the Islamic community expelling *para-jamats*.

²⁴² Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

we must keep in mind that their version of Islam and its practice was different than those of their parents.

Another concept della Porta offers is *competitive escalation*, which she defines as competitive interaction not only with political adversaries but also with potential allies and within the movement itself.²⁴³ Much unlike the definitions of root causes (preconditions), which are contextual opportunities, such as poverty and inequality, and cultural and other socio-economic facilitator causes, such as grievances, or precipitating events²⁴⁴ that only escalate the violence, della Porta offers the roles of agency and process, claiming that the “passage from structural causes to effects is not automatic.”²⁴⁵ The causal mechanism for activated radicalization is galvanized not only by outside interactions and the group’s perception of them, but also within the movement itself. In order to bridge the causes and actions, della Porta offers competitive escalation as a concept for studying the dynamics within the clandestine group, and claims that political violence has to be understood as one of the outcomes of intense interactions developed during moments of heightened conflict.²⁴⁶ As she observes, movements are split over which tactics to employ, leaving the minority of the radicals to observe and deploy violent strategies. In her observation regarding Islamic radicals, della Porta states that, as is the case with other religions, Islam is also internally split. As well, a number of scholars argue that there are many more non-violent radical adherents than radical adherents to Islam in the Western Balkans.

As Olivier Roy observes, neo-fundamentalism is a conservative view of Islam that rejects the nationalist dimension in favor of the *Ummah*, the universal community of all Muslims, based on *sharia* (Islamic law). Observing global processes, Roy points out that individualism and self-search is exacerbated by the increasing Westernization and its sister Globalization. In the context of the Balkans, and especially in Bosnia and Kosovo, the divide between the Salafist movement and “modern Muslims in the Balkans” is evident in public opinion polls and the public discourse. In its most conservative elaboration, Salafism is a novel interpretation of Islamic teachings for

²⁴³ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, 2013, p. 71.

²⁴⁴ Marta Crenshaw, cited in della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, 2013, p. 72.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

the Balkans, and it was imported in the 1990s.²⁴⁷ Having been useful at some point and to some degree, Salafist scholars and fighters did not find themselves of any further use to official Sarajevo and Pristina, and had to either leave or go into hiding. After the majority of fighters recruited in the 1990s were stripped of their Bosnian citizenship²⁴⁸, their actions gained favor, despite a post 9/11 inspired police raid that curtailed their activities.

Years later, it was observed that the initial 3,000 strong Salafism movement grew to possibly 50,000.²⁴⁹ After moderates became disillusioned by limited results or were ousted from institutional politics, the radical fringe acquired visibly increasing prominence and presence. The Islamic Community of Bosnia reacted, especially against the Salafists establishing parallel mosques and places of worship and teachings, the so-called *para-jamats*. The Islamic Community invited two dozen of para-jamat representatives to negotiations in an attempt to bring them under the Community's wing; it succeeded in about half of the cases, but without final closure regarding them all and without a final conclusion of the issue.²⁵⁰

The third process offered by della Porta is *the activation of militant networks*.²⁵¹ Among the Salafis present in the Balkans, the vast majority are obviously non-violent.²⁵² Although this declaration seems rather unnecessary and redundant, it is important if we are to discuss the maximum numbers of the Salafi community or their aspirants who have departed for Syria and Iraq. Compared to the total estimated number of the community, those who have fled to join their violence and actively partake in their wars are marginal. However, very few authors pay attention to non-violent radicals within the circles of this ideology which, in turn, remains an

²⁴⁷ Edina Becirevic, Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims, http://www.atlantskainicijativa.org/bos/images/2015/dokumenti_i_publicacije/Salafism_vs._moderate_islam-web.pdf, (accessed June 2018).

²⁴⁸ Jennifer Mustapha, "The Mujahideen in Bosnia: The Foreign Fighter as Cosmopolitan Citizen and/or Terrorist," *Citizenship Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 6-7, 2013.

²⁴⁹ The numbers range from 20,000 to 50,000, as stated in http://www.atlantskainicijativa.org/bos/images/2015/dokumenti_i_publicacije/Salafism_vs._moderate_islam-web.pdf, (Accessed June 2017).

²⁵⁰ Rodolfo Toe, "Bosnia Struggles to Control 'Rebel' Mosques," <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnian-islamic-community-struggling-to-control-parallel-mosques-04-25-2016>, (Accessed December 5, 2017).

²⁵¹ Concept developed by della Porta.

²⁵² Vlado Azinovic, "The Foreign Fighter Phenomenon And Radicalization In The Western Balkans: Understanding The Context, 2012-2016 in between Salvation and Terror: Radicalization and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in the Western Balkans, edited by Vlado Azinovic, http://www.atlantskainicijativa.org/bos/images/BETWEEN_SALVATION_AND_TERROR/BetweenSalvationAndTerror.pdf, (Accessed June 2017).

underexplored social fabric that might pose in the long run a security risk at worst, and a societal risk at best. Equating all adherents to Salafism with violent extremists drastically misrepresents why they are acting the way they do – after all, it could be for political, ideological, or social reasons, and directly related to the circumstances surrounding them. The groups that often unite in collective prayer, attend school or other cultural events together, and where familiar faces, such as a cousin or a friend, are present, as well as where the scent of seclusion exists, are where the opportunity to activate the militant is found.

Networks assume a fundamental value in recruitment into clandestine organizations. Participation in groups of relatives, friends, and political comrades favored the recruitment of individuals into underground groups. Involvement in the milieus that served as relays-or connections for the radical component of broader movements was one condition that increased the likelihood that a particular individual would participate in a radical movement organization.²⁵³

Within the concept of networks, it is important to look at the cross-generational gap and explore the difference in generation within the enablers and the actual recruits, as it will pertain to the most vulnerable and susceptible group in the empirical chapter. As previously mentioned, Elizabeth Wood also observes that when talking about networks, it is not so much about pre-existing networks but those formed in action. Wood elaborated that the networks and motivations emerged along the way: “a pleasure in agency, a positive effect associated with self-determination, autonomy, self-esteem, efficacy, and pride that comes from the successful assertion of intention.”²⁵⁴ Commitment was process driven: it was not what they got that motivated those, rather the motivations emerged as they were getting there. Opportunity structures were therefore produced along the way.²⁵⁵

We will reflect again on motivations, during which we shall utilize Wood’s “pleasure in agency”, as well as Petersen’s “triggering mechanism” to elaborate further on the mobilization

²⁵³ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 143.

²⁵⁴ Elisabeth J. Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 235.

²⁵⁵ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 145.

for, facilitation of, and departure to Syria and Iraq.²⁵⁶ *The pleasure of agency* refers to those who, through rebelling, took pride and, indeed, pleasure in the successful assertion of their interest and identity. “To occupy and claim properties was to assert a new identity of social equality, to claim rights to land and self-determination and to refute condescending elites’ perception of one’s incapacities.”²⁵⁷ Indeed, the applicability of this will be set forth in the empirical chapter. Interestingly, this is similar to what happens with paramilitary groups and militias. It is the idea that the state has failed them and they not only mobilize to take the state back, but for the simple reason that their interests are not taken into account, which is linked to their identity that consists of both their public and private autonomy.²⁵⁸

The final three concepts - *organizational compartmentalization*, *action militarization* and *ideological encapsulation* - are intertwined, and are processes within the group. When it comes to the contingent of Western Balkan recruits, it is very telling that the ideological encapsulation was one of the preconditions of the group’s internal cohesion, as this is predominately distinct from the overwhelming majority of the Muslims in the region. As for Islamic fundamentalism, its narrative has especially developed within some Salafists conceptions.²⁵⁹ However, it is surprising that there has not been particular ideological loyalty once the recruits did, in fact, make it to Syria and Iraq. It has been reported that, once disillusioned and detached from their group, some members of the Western Balkan contingent joined different militias fighting on the ground, depending on the situation. It will be interesting to observe just how strong the ideological encapsulation was, especially in light of the fact that many expressed bitter remorse upon their return to their countries of origins.

This is why it is important to examine the manipulation of more conservative ideologies by the violent groups, and the means with which they connect the old lenses of conservatism

²⁵⁶ Here she distinguishes herself from Edward C. Banfield, “Rioting Mainly for Fun and Profit” in *The Unheavenly City Revisited*, Waveland Press, 1990, in which he argued that participation in rioting in the inner-cities in the 1960s was not caused by racial oppression, and could not have been prevented by addressing the mistreatment of African American. Her pleasure in agency differs from his by her placing emphasis on the pleasure subordinate people may take in exercising agency, a human capacity from which they had long been excluded. This is distinct from Banfield’s account of the pleasure and thrills of pillaging due to the temporary suspension of law enforcement.

²⁵⁷ Elisabeth J. Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 234.

²⁵⁸ For more on research on militia and state interaction, see Paul Staniland, “Militias, Ideology, and the State,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 59, No. 5, 2015.

²⁵⁹ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge University Press, p. 232.

and exclusivity with the new radical means, legitimizing violence. It will be important to examine how much the “transformation of self (elitist, pure) combined with transformation of justification of violence went hand in hand with reinterpretation of context, others, and killing.”²⁶⁰ In addition, I will need to observe the organizational compartmentalization, meaning its internal structure and hierarchies. One must observe that, in comparison, ISIS is far less hierarchical than, for example, Al-Qaeda, although this does mean that this was the case with their local outposts in the Balkans. However, this will be elucidated once I trace the recruitment mechanisms. Finally, action militarization refers to the extent and intensity to which the group’s actions became increasingly radical.

3.7. Concluding Remarks

Operating under the hybrid theoretical approach between the second and third set of theories of social movements, and in particular, the contentious politics paradigm and clandestine political violence, the dissertation that follows will reassess the phenomenon as it pertains to the specificities of the Balkan group and expand it using primary sources. In addition, my ambition with this dissertation is to enrich the theoretical discussion by focusing on the role of agency and specifically the brokerage mechanism in mobilization and utilizing the localized approach. The core of this research is to focus on the actors - or enablers - who are involved in the mobilization process which stimulates agency, the networks and the enablers used to recruit, the circumstances of the regional/community context, and the recruits themselves, who will be the ultimate focus. The dissertation argues that the foreign fighter phenomenon should be explored in its organic form, using a bottom-up approach, as it had different root causes, enabling factors, and long-lasting effects on the communities from which they came. This dissertation also argues that examining the mechanics of the radicalization and recruiting process can be useful as it provides a more accurate picture of the phenomenon, which is useful not only for academia but also for policy makers as well. As well, this holds true for fragile democracies in search of their full maturity.

²⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 232.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Case Selection

As we have seen in Chapter Two, there has been an eager fascination to explore the foreign fighter phenomenon. However, as I have shown, academia can benefit from the upgrading in the epistemological course when it comes to assessing the phenomenon in order to ensure that there is no over - or understatement of the issue and to provide a more complete assessment of the phenomenon. The study of political violence, or terrorism in general, is often criticized for the lack of empirical data, researchers' citations of one another, and very little, if any, and firsthand empirical research.²⁶¹ Clearly, researchers usually cited open source data, with theoretical background and available datasets. However, one particular review by Cynthia Lum, Leslie W. Kennedy, and Alison Sherley specified that in fact, and quite alarmingly so, only three to four percent of the published literature in the field was based on some type of empirical data analysis.²⁶² This means that 95 percent of the generated knowledge on all kinds of political violence is based exclusively on either secondary or tertiary sources. In the paragraphs that follow, I will elaborate on why the specific case study is necessary, how I selected it, and how I gathered the data and proceeded in analyzing it. I will also demonstrate why is it important to complement the assessment of the global variants and implications, by engaging in a local case study when possible and observing the specificities of a singled out contingent. There is a clear need to reassess how knowledge is developed in the study of political violence, especially when it comes to the study of the foreign fighter phenomenon. The chapter below will elaborate how I intend to accomplish this task.

According to the most recent Soufan report, the data suggests that there have been approximately 900 foreign fighter recruits from the Western Balkans.²⁶³ This number includes individuals who traveled and are believed to have remained, those who made a successful return,

²⁶¹ Magnus Ranstorp, "Introduction: Mapping Terrorism Research," in Magnus Ranstorp, *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction*, Routledge, London, 2007, pp. 2-24.

²⁶² Cynthia Lum, Leslie W. Kennedy, and Alison Sherley, "Are Counter-terrorism Strategies Effective? The Results of the Campbell Systematic Review on Counter-terrorism Evaluation Research," *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 2, No. 4, 2006, pp. 489-516, doi:10.1007/s11292-006-9020-y.

²⁶³ Richard Barrett, "Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees," October 2017, <http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017.pdf> (accessed June 2, 2017).

and those who are believed to have perished. In addition, the figure accounts for women, children and the elderly, all of whom are unlikely combatants, although there were cases in which they were considered to have become fighters. The same report also noted that the number of recruits from Western Europe was 5,778. As the total number recruits from Europe add up to approximately 6,678, the recruits from the Western Balkans comprise 13 percent of the entire European contingent. While incomplete, the only verified police database and open source has established the identities of 188 men, 61 women, and 81 children who travelled to Syria and Iraq from Bosnia and Herzegovina. When it comes to Kosovo, the reported figures of those who left for Syria and Iraq are around 300 men, 44 women, and 27 children.²⁶⁴ The total represents a combination of combatants and non-combatants, which must be underscored, because a number of reports have failed to distinguish between the two. For example, so far it has been established that only one Bosnian female was an active combatant, or “foreign fighter” (FF).²⁶⁵ As we have observed, while some women and children did take up arms there, we are still unable to differentiate how many exactly were the “fighters” but the numbers can be estimated to at least five and at most 20 from both Bosnia and Kosovo in total, while acknowledging that these numbers are painted with a broader brush and have been analyzed in a larger context.

In 2016, the final year of the mass recruitment, law enforcement agencies and intelligence services prevented more than two dozen departures from Bosnia and around 55 from Kosovo by intercepting phone calls and instant messages, coordinating efforts by border police, and even tracking disposable chat rooms.²⁶⁶ In discussing numbers and statistics, another observation must be made: it is specifically the issue of those Bosnians, Serbs and Kosovars who possessed dual citizenship with one or more of these three countries, or another, such as Austria, and who went to fight. The abovementioned numbers reflect those individuals who held only one citizenship, minus about 30 Kosovars and 25 Bosnians who had dual citizenship, mostly German and Austrian.²⁶⁷ However, weaker governance and poor cross border cooperation enabled a number of individuals to reside illegally for a longer period of time in either Bosnia or Kosovo. Thus it is important to note that in whatever ways individual country breakdowns are made, the

²⁶⁴ According to Bosnian and Kosovar police documents.

²⁶⁵ As per Bosnian SIPA records.

²⁶⁶ Confirmed in a 2016 interview with a SIPA agent who spoke under Chatham House rules.

²⁶⁷ Kosovar Police and SIPA interview.

Western Balkan contingent can be looked as a single research unit given its complexity and specificity.

This study proceeds as an overview of regional challenges, with the main focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Kosovo, due to the specificities of the two countries, availability of data, and time constraints. Both countries suffered the greatest in the conflicts of the 1990s, with the highest rates of casualties and infrastructure and social damage. In fact, the effects of the prolonged conflict continue to impact their socio-economic and security performance today. Both BiH and Kosovo are, in one way or another, governed by external forces – Bosnia in the form of a semi-protectorate and Kosovo as a full protectorate.²⁶⁸ On the one hand, they remain far from the consolidated democracies of Western Europe. Some experts claim that Kosovo is by far a better functioning and performing country than Bosnia.²⁶⁹ In Chapter Five, we will reflect more on indices of government transparency, legitimacy and effectiveness to measure this and reflect back on why is it important to look back at the context from which the recruits were coming from. On the other hand, a broader view would also consider the claim that Bosnia's rigid, power-sharing arrangement makes it much more difficult than Kosovo to perform as an effective governing body. However, despite the overwhelming presence of western military forces, administrators, and policymakers, both countries are plagued by "soft" security threats. By this, I refer to the corruption and organized crime which have permeated the region and exacerbated other processes, transition complexities, and models of democratization and security policies that have been failing for over two decades.

Finally, the major difference between the West European, American, Australian, and other recruits, and those coming from the Western Balkans, is that the majority of the non-Balkan recruits were first, second, or even third generation migrants coming from North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and the Gulf region together with other converts. In the case of the Western Balkans, the recruits represent the native, majority population, with almost no cultural or historical ties to the region to which they had traveled. Another major distinction is that, as

²⁶⁸ EWB Archives, "Bosnia and Kosovo: Europe's Forgotten Protectorate," European Western Balkans, February 24, 2017, <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/02/24/bosnia-and-kosovo-europes-forgotten-protectorate>, (accessed August 19, 2018).

²⁶⁹ Conversation with Prof. Vlado Azinovic, May 2018.

mentioned, the recruits from the Western Balkans, especially those from Bosnia and Kosovo, had experienced, in one way or another, the horrors of the wars of the 1990s. They had suffered the consequences of past trauma, whereas other recruits coming from Europe had enjoyed peace and relative stability in fully fledged democracies.

There are a number of studies that have looked in detail at the position and marginalization of the communities from which the majority of recruits from Europe were coming.²⁷⁰ However, if one is to simply recognize a home country's stability and level of democratization, rule of law and good governance, it might also be useful to acknowledge that, however symbolically, even marginalized communities enjoyed political rights that, for example, had been denied for decades to some populations in Bosnia as a result of war.²⁷¹ In addition, although the role of the El Mujahed veterans is sometimes overstated in the media, when it comes to recent recruitment, the region is also known for the Salafi doctrine that somewhat successfully took root in the Balkans and gained traction and followers, even after most of the veterans left the country; the doctrine continued to be one of the religious options for the population. Although Kosovo's guerilla forces fighting against the Milosevic regime specifically rejected offers of assistance from abroad because they wanted to safeguard ownership of the struggle, this was not the case in Bosnia, which "imported and exported foreign fighters."²⁷²

4.2. Research Design

The current political and intellectual climate in the West, in which there is growing disappointment with the effects and outcomes of the 'war on terror' and security practitioners are actively searching for new ideas and approaches to addressing the challenge of counter-

²⁷⁰ For looking at the poverty and marginalization of certain communities see Thomas Hegghammer, "Revisiting the Poverty-terrorism Link in European Jihadism," November 8, 2016, http://hegghammer.com/files/Hegghammer_-_poverty.pdf, (accessed June 2018).

²⁷¹ See the "Case of Sejdic and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina," European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), December 22, 2009, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=eCHR&id=001-96491&>, (accessed June 2018). Drafted during the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, the Preamble of the Bosnian Constitution differentiates between two types of citizens – "constituent peoples" who are Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Croats and Serbs, and "others" who are Jews, Roma, and other minorities, including those who define themselves Bosnian. This distinction was included in the Constitution to appease the "constituent peoples" then at war, restore peace, and end the conflict. The European Court of Human Rights found in 2009 that that the racial or ethnic-based exclusion of Jews and Roma from Bosnia's highest elected offices constituted unlawful discrimination.

²⁷² Interview with Garentina Kraja, June 2018.

terrorism, provides an important moment for critical scholars to offer their knowledge and expertise.²⁷³ This means that a case study executed with intensive research, in-depth interviews, and discourse analysis can offer a unique set of assessments and recommendations for not only future academic research but for policymakers as well.

In basic terms, this project proceeds as a case study of the particular type of ‘transnational activism’ that is a recruitment process of the fighters from post-conflict, semi-protectorates. Characteristic of most case study research, this project employs different methods, including historical process-tracing, as a means to explain the various circumstances of the phenomena. In addition, intensive and deep qualitative analysis, including semi-structured in-depth interviews, site-intensive and archival research, and critical content analysis were employed as well. Opposed to the research objectives that seeks to develop theory, this research seeks to produce explanation of a sequence of events that produce a particular historical outcome in which key steps in the sequence are in turn explained with reference to theories or causal mechanisms.²⁷⁴ The most common themes and concepts have been elaborated in detail within the Analysis Chapter.

To justify the case study approach, it is important first to understand the fundamental aims of this method of research, particularly as scholars disagree on some crucial points. Johansson frames the dispute as one between ‘case’ versus ‘method,’²⁷⁵ whereas Robert Stake²⁷⁶ argues that the level of interest in a particular case is most crucial. Authors like Michael Burawoy expanded on the case study as “extended case study.”²⁷⁷ Given that the foreign fighter phenomenon is not necessarily a recent occurrence but is most certainly an underexplored phenomenon in the social sciences, the project gives credence to the interest in the ‘case’ itself.

²⁷³ Richard Jackson, "Critical Terrorism Studies: An Explanation, a Defense, and a Way Forward," *All Academic Research*, February 20, 2010, p. 15, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/4/1/3/3/7/pages413378/p413378-1.php, (accessed August 19, 2017).

²⁷⁴ Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Preface," *Process Tracing*: doi:10.1017/cbo9781139858472.001.

²⁷⁵ Johansson, (2003). A key note speech at the International Conference “Methodologies in Housing Research” organized by the Royal Institute of Technology in cooperation with The International Association of People–Environment Studies, Stockholm, September 22–24, September 2003.

²⁷⁶ Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, Sage Publishers, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2010. Stake's work has been particularly influential in defining the case study approach to scientific enquiry. He has helpfully characterized three main types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective.

²⁷⁷ Michael Burawoy, "The Extended Case Method," *Sociological Theory* 16, No. 1, March 1998, doi:10.4135/9781473915480.n17.

By contrast, a methods-first case study approach may be better suited for a project that attempts to understand a new piece of a more well-established puzzle, for example the democratic development of post-conflict countries.

As well, scholars have long disagreed about the appropriate number of cases used for an effective study. Academics – particularly social scientists – have historically favored a ‘more is merrier’ approach to case study analysis, namely because it enhances the potential to generalize. “Time- and context-free generalizations are desirable and possible, and real causes of social scientific outcomes can be determined reliably and validly.”²⁷⁸ However, scholars have noted that “the use of one or two case studies can serve important heuristic purposes.”²⁷⁹

In addition, there are two reasons why this dissertation proceeds as a small-N case study. The first is that there are simply not enough available primary sources comparable to the selected N to consider other current cases. As discussed above, there are very few common denominators between the Balkan recruits and other recruits to be able to make a solid comparison. The very lack of primary sources is precisely the driving force behind the need to establish a body of evidence in the first place. Second, as there is an ever growing core of scientific and policymakers’ inquiry, the aim is that this case study can help establish the basis for new variables and hypotheses particularly in how it relates to modern warfare and the relationship between international relations in the realm of security and democratization and development efforts in multicultural, multiethnic, war-torn countries.²⁸⁰ Finally, the usual tension resolve compromise between large-N and small-N studies applies here, where large-N studies allow for generalization, small-N give better contextualization and an insight. Studying a specific foreign fighter contingent I opted for precisely that – a more detailed account.

The case study this dissertation also partially utilizes is a *structured focused comparison*, an approach developed by Alexander George.²⁸¹ This building upon method was particularly designed for small-N studies. The method is “structured” in that the researcher writes general

²⁷⁸ R. Burke Johnson and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, "Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come," *Educational Researcher* 33, no. 7, October 2004, pp. 14-26, doi:10.3102/0013189x033007014.

²⁷⁹ Detlef F. Sprinz and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias, "Models, Numbers, and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations," University of Michigan Press, 2004, p. 115, doi:10.3998/mpub.11742.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁸¹ Alexander L. George, Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 2005.

questions that reflect the research objective and in that he or she asks these questions in each case under study to guide and standardize data collection, thereby making possible the systematic comparison and accumulation of the findings of the cases. The method is “focused” in that it deals only with certain aspects of the historical cases examined. The requirements for structure and focus apply equally to individual cases since they may later be joined by additional cases”.²⁸² In sum, this approach means that we are asking the same questions concerning different objects of study - this lets us make comparisons between different observations without needing to conduct full case studies. This means that we will utilize a sample of Bosnian and Kosovar foreign fighters, not the entire contingent. This helps us deal with the lack of primary data on the entire foreign fighter contingent. As I have moved forward in analyzing data it became clear that although we disaggregated the recruits from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo when comparing them to the recruits from the Western Europe, one particular finding about the role of the family was what it stood out within the case as having a different role. More on this will be elaborated in the Analysis chapter.

Given the lack of primary sources, this dissertation pursued an individual-based approach in contrast to broader examinations, which are inappropriate because they aggregate across distinct lives. I undertook site intensive research during which I lived on several occasions for a couple of months in close proximity to village communities in both countries in which the recruitment process had occurred, and carried out in-depth semi-structured interviews with family members, village leaders, religious figures, local authorities, international officials, investigative journalists, teachers, and government officials at all levels, including judicial and law enforcement representatives, as well as returning foreign fighters. In addition, I reviewed legal judgements, court transcripts, archival documents, intercepted correspondence, testimonials and other available sources to shed further light on the phenomena. For an improved assessment of these documents, I used the software *NVivo* to code the qualitative data.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

4.2.1. Site Intensive Research

Over the course of three years, I have conducted a several months of ethnographic research in Bosnia and one month in Kosovo. In Bosnia, I have spent most of my time in the central, northeastern, eastern, and northwestern parts of the country, as well as the capital. More specifically, I spent time in Sarajevo, Velika Kladusa, Bihac, Maglaj, Tuzla, Tesanj, Kakanj, Kalesija, Vitez, Sapna, and Zvornik. In Kosovo, I spent the majority of my time in Prishtina, and visited Prizren, Katchanik, Hani i Elezit, and Ferizaj.

The selection of my regional research was informed by the number of recruits coming from these localities. I gathered a list of foreign fighters, especially those who had been prosecuted. The confidential list included their home addresses, so I could also reach out to their families. In addition, I used a snowballing technique – referral methodology – by which I would ask an interviewer, who he or she thinks I should talk next.²⁸³ This approach proved invaluable in helping to build trust and establish a network of key insiders. In this dissertation it's important to understand that one specific case of an individual who had intentions to leave and join ISIS but instead opted for attacking the local public institution was also added to the sample for the reason of his clear intention and stated agency of departure and him changing his mind in the last moment. The fact that he changed his mind almost overnight and from an intended foreign fighter turned into attack perpetrator does not change his radicalization process and access to networks that would eventually lead to his departure. For this reason, he is also included into the analyzed sample. Another example of a family member whose brother in law was a foreign fighter was included in sample, because of her intimate relationship with her sister who also left to Syria and her very close-nit observance of the process of the radicalization of both and the networks they used to facilitate the departure. In total, I have spoken to four foreign fighters and 13 family members but the full breakdown of interviews is provided below and the list is provided in Appendix 1 at the end of the dissertation.

²⁸³ Patrick Biernacki and Dan Waldorf, "Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling," *Sociological Methods & Research* 10, No. 2, 1981, pp. 141-163, doi: 10.1177/004912418101000205.

4.2.2. Data Collection

This research would have not been possible without willing law enforcement to share the non-confidential but sometimes sensitive materials as well with me. The intelligence community also has understood the academic-intelligence gap, and as if they read precisely Marc Sageman who advocated for “(T)he solution to this stagnation is to make non-sensitive data available to academia and to structure more effective discourse between the academic and intelligence communities in order to benefit from the complementary strengths in these two communities.”²⁸⁴ Without the first-respondent on the ground, academia would forever be stuck as it is mostly stuck today at the conceptual stage. It has been acknowledged that academia has methodology and can use theory to back some findings but lacks data for a major breakthrough. As for as data collection goes, the law enforcement agencies were my first go to back in 2014 and 2015, when I started researching.

Two additional elements assisted in the process. First, it was of the utmost importance that I spoke the local language in the case of Bosnia, and that I was familiar with the local customs and culture in the case of Kosovo. Although I faced the fact that some of my counterparts expected some monetary gain, the local media and civil society representatives who mostly acted as ‘fixers’, made sure that my interviewees expected no money from me, but understood that I could “bring kahva”.²⁸⁵ Having spent the majority of my lifetime in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the wider region, I was fully immersed in the multicultural Bosnian and Kosovar context. Knowing its ‘ins and outs’, I was able to honor and respect local customs, culture and tradition.

The second thing that played to my advantage was the role of fixers and insiders. For the first three years of my research, I arranged all of my interviews by myself. However, in the final

²⁸⁴ Marc Sageman, “The Stagnation in Terrorism Research”, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, (2014) 26:4, pp. 565-580, DOI: [10.1080/09546553.2014.895649](https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2014.895649).

²⁸⁵ For background on the coffee (kahfa, kafa, kava) culture in Bosnia and how it aids ethnographic research there please see Elissa Helms, “The Gender of Coffee: Women and Reconciliation Initiatives in Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Focaal* 2010, no. 57 (2010): 17-32, doi:10.3167/fcl.2010.570102. For the similar cultural tradition and importance of the ritual of drinking tea, see Marco Nilsson, “Interviewing Jihadists: On the Importance of Drinking Tea and Other Methodological Considerations,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41, no. 6 (2017): doi:10.1080/1057610x.2017.1325649. As he notes, “It is always better to drink too much than too little tea, as such a social ritual may be crucial for establishing trust and rapport, especially in situations in which the researcher is not in a position of power or in control.”

year of my research I also utilized fixers to improve the outreach and gather more enriching data. Most of the time, my fixers were people deeply engaged with the community, and almost all of them were local journalists and researchers with a deep understanding of the local context and excellent local connections. In one very particular case, a fixer was a local doctor who was treating a foreign fighter's parent for acute asthma. He was a reliable insider and gatekeeper for a specific community. Another key contact was a local imam and an award-winning investigative journalist; both stated that they were helping me because they saw it as an opportunity to "heal society."²⁸⁶

Compared with many fixers, who may have the ability to locate potential interviewees, local contacts are better able to persuade families to be interviewed.²⁸⁷ Sometimes gatekeepers insisted on being present at the interviews, and actively participated. This was the case with a young doctor, who was concerned for the wellbeing of one mother I interviewed, and another researcher, who was convinced that the foreign fighter we were interviewing, who had just been released from prison, was suicidal. Other times, some of the gatekeepers insisted that I make my own connection and build my own relationship with the family.

In other two specific cases, my gatekeeper was a radio host, and the fact that the family recognized her voice and felt her somewhat of a known item enabled me to gain access to the particular household. In rural areas, radios play a crucial role in informing communities about everyday occurrences in the country and abroad, so it didn't come as a surprise that she was welcome, and with her, the welcome was extended to me as well. In another example, the fixer was a local religious leader who was intimately connected with the community and as he served as a local teacher as well, he was deeply concerned over some radical hardliners who tried to gain access to the community.

Despite having spent 25 years living and working in the country, I was surprised how isolated and far from urban dwelling were some of the rural villages I visited, especially in the country's north and northeast. Given how intimately familiar I am, both privately and

²⁸⁶ Conversation with the imam took place under the Chatham House rules, March 2015.

²⁸⁷ Paraphrased from Marco Nilsson, "Interviewing Jihadists: On the Importance of Drinking Tea and Other Methodological Considerations," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41, no. 6 (2017): 4, doi:10.1080/1057610x.2017.1325649.

professionally, with the Balkans, I seek to place a non-positivist approach to the meaning of the analysis.²⁸⁸ This also makes sense because my research proceeds as an inductive type, bottom-up, individual qualitative approach. In the case of theory selection, this approach is best suited to answer the main research question. At that point, I employed deduction to test the hypothesis, and used empirics to further supplement and answer additional research questions.

In addition to the interviews detailed below, I gained unique access to intercepted communications, other forms of observation, and surveillance notes by law enforcement bodies, and social media monitoring and ongoing focus group research by international organizations.²⁸⁹ While a number of these documents were labeled as “Confidential” or “Secret”, they were graciously shared with me for the purposes of enriching the academic field and contributing to scientific debate that has been notoriously absent or blocked for some time.²⁹⁰ Given that, during the time this was being finalized, there were a number of pending and ongoing court cases, I treated the documents with sensitivity and due consideration. Working with them required credibility and authenticity, so I made the decision to analyze them with qualitative analysis software. This decision was made in order to protect not only the subjects of the research but its integrity as well.

Finally, both Bosnia and Kosovo employ atypical forms of highly administrative and bureaucratic apparatus which, in sum, is very “user-unfriendly”. Highly decentralized Bosnia has multiple layers of administration; hence the jurisdiction over a number of relevant proceedings varies across local, cantonal, entity and state levels. A new democracy in the making, Kosovo, on the other hand, displays the different issue of still being in the process of state-building. While officials often displayed a friendly attitude toward this foreign researcher, more often than not their final recommended address did not prove useful.

²⁸⁸ A non-positivist view maintains that there is no single ‘true’ position. As with any other theory, non-positivism is underpinned by a set of assumptions. First, while it is indisputable that human beings exist as organisms, their roles, behaviors and meanings are social constructions: they exist only because they are interpreted by an audience, as quoted in Megan Alessandrini, “Non-positivist Approaches to Research in the Third Sector,” https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.istr.org/resource/resmgr/wp2012/m_alessandrini.pdf, (accessed August 19, 2017).

²⁸⁹ e.g. IRI

²⁹⁰ Conversation with Mario Janecek, Ministry of Security, May 2015.

4.3. Methodological Scope and Ethical Observations

The time constraint is the major drawback of this study. Trust-building is a long and painstaking process. I cannot overstate how much the time limitation has impacted the study, given that the entire process could have been enriched by more time. However, it is a safe assumption that the time constraint is a universal struggle of all Ph.D. candidates and is not particularly unique to this or any other study. I have conducted the fieldwork over the course of three years within different periods, but researching about the subject as sensitive as foreign fighters could benefit from more time in order to get even more detailed account.

I was also very fortunate that, by maintaining contact with some of the families interviewed in 2015 and 2016, I had the opportunity to touch base with them again in 2018. In two instances I was able to observe changes in behavior or attitude. There was a clear sense of dealing with a heavy loss and the burden of trauma management, combined with resentment towards the institutions and the system as a whole. One particular parent became more religious and admittedly started practicing religion more devoutly since her son's death.

Another major challenge was the extremely slow process of trust and relationship building with the interviewees. The majority of the relatives and immediate family members were extremely reluctant to talk to students. Many have already been approached by law enforcement officials, as well as media representatives. They talked to them about the most intimate experiences of their sons and daughters who left for Syria and Iraq, only to receive in return regular disappointment and betrayal from those to whom they were trying to tell their story. One illustrative example is:

I was tending to my garden, when two men and one woman drove up to house and parked right there, next to my shed. I greeted them with "*As-salāmu 'alaykum*," but I knew why they had come. I recognized the man, who was from the village. He said the other two wanted to talk to me about my son. I told them if they want to further stain the name of my son, their colleagues have already done enough. They promised that they only wanted to talk. I made them coffee. After 30 minutes, I saw that the woman was hiding a

recording device in her pocket. Later on, somebody in the village told me, “They published another one”.²⁹¹

It was incredibly hard to convince others to take the time to talk to me “just to benefit the research.” The idea that I was not there to estrange or demonize them, or that I was not receiving any financial gain, fame, or anything I could monetize, was a strange one. Sadly, it speaks to the deteriorating approach to understanding and countering violent extremism by alienating the very subjects of the affected communities. The abstract idea, that each interview would benefit the wider scientific project, sparked suspicion and made interviews much longer than originally planned. This did not always prove to be the case. Having invested substantially in the trust building exercise over the course of four years, some of the interviewees were very supportive of my research and in fact revealed much more than I originally thought necessary or scientifically useful. Much of my experience of a researcher for my master’s thesis and other research activities greatly helped the process. I was, aside from very emotional moments, very comfortable in interviewing people. One of the ways I used to build trust was to share experiences, feelings, ideas, and my own background with them. If possible, I would also talk to other villagers or their acquaintances to understand their background.

This is one more methodological observation I must make.²⁹² In Bosnia, a total of five family members revealed to me that they had actively financed their family members while in Syria and Iraq, and some of them had contemplated joining them as well, but they were either prevented from doing so or lacked the courage to follow through. In addition, some admitted to having been visited frequently by the same people who facilitated their family member’s trip, as

²⁹¹ Interview with Halima Ibrić, mother of the Zvornik attacker Nerdin Ibrić, April 2016.

²⁹² When observing human subject protection guidelines, in my research, I referred back Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, available at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3e485e15-11bd-11e6-ba9a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>, (Accessed June 2017); and more specifically to the seven principles of the one that OECD developed except for the Consent one for already elaborated details. Seven principles are the following: Notice—data subjects should be given notice when their data is being collected; Purpose—data should only be used for the purpose stated and not for any other purposes; Consent—data should not be disclosed without the data subject’s consent; Security—collected data should be kept secure from any potential abuses; Disclosure—data subjects should be informed as to who is collecting their data; Access—data subjects should be allowed to access their data and make corrections to any inaccurate data; Accountability—data subjects should have a method available to them to hold data collectors accountable for not following the above principles.

well as the police. I will write more about this systematic failure to take care of these people in the Analyses chapter, but it is nevertheless important to mention earlier on. For ethical reasons, I decided to depersonalize their testimonials and did not report on their immediate residency, so as not implicate them in any way, but rather use bigger cities in whose proximity they live or the region as a whole. As a result, none of the foreign fighters or associated family members will be named; I have assigned random multiple abbreviations to obscure their identities. The only names I have named were the ones appearing in the media and whose explicit permission I have been given.

Before I proceed any further, one additional ethical observation is in order. Almost immediately in my research, I was led to believe that one possible reason why some relevant interviewees were not returning my phone calls, replying to my emails, or proving unable to find time to meet with me, might be partially attributed to my first name. My first name suggests that I likely belong to an ethnic Croat or a Serb group, while my dialect is unmistakably Bosnian. It is important to acknowledge that my realization of potential issues with my name only came up when I spoke to several internationals, who informed me that they believe the local Bosniak population is beginning to feel extremely targeted and that my name probably suggests to them the possibility of their further stigmatizing the community by voluntarily participating in my research.

Local journalists had, however, a completely different take. They encouraged me to seek out interviews with families and insist on stating my name. Their experience was that, when an individual whose name most likely suggests a Bosniak Muslim tries to talk to family members living in isolated Salafi villages, they have already decided that he or she is no true Muslim. Even worse than a potential Christian, they believe that he or she is a *tekfir* (*non-believer*), a lowlife who is unworthy of a conversation. Of the more than seventy I interviewed, only one expert took particular issue with why I was not researching mercenaries who are fighting alongside the Russians in Crimea, which can also be attributed to a particular frustration over the stigmatization of Bosniaks that was already well under way in the country's election years of 2016 and 2018. Other than these, I encountered no further issues, as all of my interviewees understood the possible benefit of the research.

In addition, almost everyone I spoke with from the international community, and some local officials, attempted to dissuade me from researching this issue. They openly stated that the issue was that I am a woman. However, I did not encounter a single issue related to my gender, other than the awkwardness of forced handshakes with members of the Salafi community. In fact, it proved to be quite the opposite; the fact that I was a woman and a student made it much easier for some mothers and sisters of individuals who had left for Syria and Iraq to talk with me. In those circumstances, I apparently seemed to be more relatable.²⁹³

Some experts, for example Nilan, state that, in qualitative research using interviews, the researcher has “minimal contact” with the interviewee and is “emotionally detached.”²⁹⁴ However, the level of stress involved in an interview setting when talking with a mother or father who had lost their son or daughter affects to an enormous degree how emotionally detached a researcher can in fact be. One particular example, an initial interview in 2016 with a mother of a foreign fighter, while he was still alive, and then a second interview in 2018, when it was almost certain that he was dead, proved particularly stressing and emotionally draining, and could have affected data. The process of relationship building was incredibly fragile over the course of three years; as, to paraphrase Dolnik, the interviewer does not talk to a “terrorist’s mother” but a “human being.”²⁹⁵

More often than not, it was the government officials who refused to talk to researchers, not the common villagers, which suggests two potential explanations that came up as a result of interviews with officials that agreed to talk to me 1) this is another example of the weak governance of both local and international authorities; and 2) they likely have little positive to say.²⁹⁶ As confirmed by a senior diplomat, more often than not, even when asked about some relevant best practices in the EU that the Western Balkan countries could look to, they would not have a straight up or good answer.²⁹⁷ In the case of Bosnia’s Ministry of Justice, which has direct

²⁹³ It was often stated in a number of interviews that they felt they could talk to me much easier than with my male colleagues. As much as I acknowledge the problematic dichotomy, it is not my intention to assign any particular gender bias to what extent a researcher’s sex determines his or her ability to interview or to feel empathy.

²⁹⁴ Nilan, “‘Dangerous Field Work’ Re-Examined,” p. 365, quoted in Marco Nilsson (2017): *Interviewing Jihadists: On the Importance of Drinking Tea and Other Methodological Considerations*, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, p.4.

²⁹⁵ Adam Dolnik, *Conducting Terrorism Field Research: A Guide* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 27.

²⁹⁶ Valery Perry, e-mail correspondence, confirmed in a personal conversation, May 2018

²⁹⁷ Interview with Holger Engelman, April 2018.

authority over allowing the interviewing of prisoners, its officials rejected even the possibility of a written statement; their unofficial stance was to prevent any outside interaction with imprisoned foreign fighters, making it the only country in Europe that isolates high-risk prisoners in such a manner. This stance of course embodies the paradox of actually protecting former foreign fighters from allegedly biased reporters and ill-intended researchers. Kosovo's Ministry of Justice did not act any differently.

Finally, in terms of going into so-called Salafi villages, I had to take into account security risks as well. Although I was confident that no harm would be done to me, as there had not been a single case in which researchers were harmed, a couple of very persistent journalists were not welcomed into the villages, which might speak to the methods and working ethics of journalists as well. The initial position was and will be - the families are not criminals and neither are their children until proven otherwise.²⁹⁸ Throughout the three-year period, I did not encounter a single issue other than the difficulty of building trust-based relationships and obtaining data from the interviewees. The decision to stay in touch with some of them after my research seemed to be a natural one, as I feel I have a moral duty to aid families who are still looking for information regarding those who had departed but might still be alive.²⁹⁹ My unique access to institutions allows me to serve as a bridge between the "common people" and these institutions; the direct link between them has long been broken.

There were a number of other challenges to gathering data. For example, the Intelligence and Security Agency (OSA) of Bosnia and Herzegovina fell back on the country's Law on Protection of Data regarding a number of inquiries I had submitted to them, whereas the State Investigation and Protection Agency was more than open to sharing transcripts of intercepted communications. Officials from Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ministry of Defense openly made it clear that there was no FOI request that a researcher could submit regarding the formation of the 7th Muslim Brigade in November 1992 (comprised almost exclusively of Iranian volunteers

²⁹⁸ Unlike for example Patricia A. Adler, *Wheeling and Dealing: An Ethnography of an Upper-level Drug Dealing and Smuggling Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) who had many ethical observation, studying people who were de-facto criminals, my position was that foreign fighters were outlawed in 2015, whilst majority of the recruits departed prior to that time. In addition, I stated where and why I chose to safeguard some individuals in the study.

²⁹⁹ On this particular problem of families trying to reunite their family members with whom they are still in touch, from Syria and Iraq, and specific difficulties they are experiencing, I will write more in the Analysis section.

and one of the *El Mujahedin* formed exclusively of foreign fighters from Middle Eastern or the Gulf States), for which they would release data. This does not come as a surprise, The Kosovo Police and Prosecutor's Office were more than open to sharing their intelligence and data. The correspondence with both Ministries of Justice proved unfortunate, given their nontransparent and poor selection process in granting researchers permission to speak to prisoners.

Scholars who wish to engage in ethnographic studies in communities or groups typically described as 'terrorist' in the Western discourse cannot be associated with the use of the term without risking both their personal safety and the integrity of their research.³⁰⁰ For this reason, in order to maintain my ethical integrity while conducting research, I made certain to distinguish myself from journalists, policymakers, and law enforcement and other security officials. I broadened my approach by conducting research on extremism in the region in order to gather the research best suited for my purposes. Many scholars encourage researchers to be more explicit and transparent about their methods and open in comparing their experiences, in order to contribute to a better understanding of the empirical possibilities and limitations involved in fieldwork.³⁰¹ One of the early observations I made in relation to this was that the majority of families with whom I spoke expressed their desire to have more "normal" conversations, rather than interrogations by security structures, no matter how professional they were or objectified for the purpose of media sensationalism.

4.4. In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewing for the purpose of this dissertation should be understood as a qualitative method that is more akin to relationship building rather than a simple conversation.³⁰² Most, if not all, of my interviews were semi-structured and context dependent. Some were structured, especially those with representatives of the international community, who requested this. The offices of the EU Delegation in Bosnia and EU Special Representative and the OSCE and the US

³⁰⁰ Breen Smyth, 2004, quoted in Richard Jackson, "Critical Terrorism Studies: An Explanation, a Defence, and a Way Forward," All Academic Research, February 20, 2010, 13, accessed August 19, 2017, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/4/1/3/3/7/pages413378/p413378-1.php.

³⁰¹ Horgan, "Interviewing Terrorists," p. 204, quoted in Marco Nilsson, "Interviewing Jihadists: On the Importance of Drinking Tea and Other Methodological Considerations", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2017, p. 2.

³⁰² Kristin G. Esterberg, *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*, Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2002, 84.

Embassy in Kosovo were the only ones that demanded to clear citations. In very few instances, I noticed a *social desirability bias*, an interviewee's tendency to overestimate or underestimate some responses in terms of what socially acceptable answers might be.³⁰³ In one specific conversation with a former foreign fighter, I noticed that he used the same buzz words that society wants to hear from him – “deradicalization” and “working to reintegrate” were just a few examples of what he told me he wanted to do now that he had served his sentence and paid his debt to society. His very limited vocabulary, combined with the desire to be liked by those seeing his social media profile, made me wary of his answers. For the same reason, I did not pursue one former foreign fighter from Kosovo who was very open and upfront to journalists and researchers; I believed this made him to be an over-used subject.³⁰⁴

The decision on what type of interview I would conduct was clearly informed by the type of interviewee. If it was the mother of a fallen foreign fighter, the interview would be semi-structured or simply open-ended; if it was a European bureaucrat - most likely very structured. Each type of interview has contributed to my dissertation. It is important to acknowledge that to pit one type of interviewing against another is a futile effort, a holdover from the paradigmatic quantitative/qualitative hostility of past generations.³⁰⁵ I also decided occasionally to utilize the life story methodology, a qualitative method of data collection in which I asked people to review their life over a certain period, individual agency, or variation of some of the most important events in their lives. As mentioned above, my analysis of the interviews focused mostly on the descriptive and phenomenological aspects, using the codification grid developed below. This type of research allows for richer descriptions of the interviewee's experience, and through them I was able to determine trajectories and turning points, as well as the triggering mechanisms, of their agency.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Ibid. p. 86.

³⁰⁴ One foreign fighter interviewee, for example, asked me whether I would be “ashamed” to go out for a drink with him, as a friend. I realized that he was struggling with low self-esteem and was interested in building a socially desirable image of himself after this experience.

³⁰⁵ Fontana, Andrea and James Frey, 1994, “Interviewing: The Art of Science,” pp. 361-76, in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, the Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018), 373.

³⁰⁶ Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Methods (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2002).

In transcribing the interviews, I made the conscious decision not to “clean up” the responses. Guided by the notion that spoken language is much less formal than the written one, I made only minor interventions, in order not to lose “the flavor” of the spoken responses and to preserve empirical data as much as possible. I used the method of difference when actually making sense of the responses. The method of or logic of difference is understood as when two or more instances of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstance by which all the instances agree is the potential cause (or effect) of the given phenomenon.³⁰⁷ As mentioned above, I will not name foreign fighters and their families. I employed multiple codes to protect their identities throughout the Analysis chapter. None of the interviews were recorded. I documented interviews by taking extensive notes. The length of the interviews varied, from the shortest being one hour to the longest being six hours. I conducted the majority of the interviews during one sitting, however, some interviews as well as personal conversations were done over the course of numerous visits.

In total, I interviewed 74 individuals. However, while reviewing notes and after a lengthy consideration I decided to exclude eight of them mostly for ethical reasons but also from the point of academic utility. Three were saturated with emotions and consisted of contradicting answers and I was not able to decipher the meaning of the responses. Two were the cases with people who have come forward so many times that their responses I was able to count against media, almost word by word, and where I noticed strong social desirability bias. Five were from the internationals whose knowledge of the region was very limited since they were posted to the region very recently. Below is the breakdown of the interviews I analyzed. None of the initial interviewees agreed to sign a consent document. Realizing that this request was actually closing down opportunities to build trust and considering the sensitivity of the sample, I proceeded to conduct the interviews without requesting the document. It should be noted that some experts claim that starting with such a protocol could “destroy the rapport necessary for such a sensitive interview.”³⁰⁸ In my case, this proved to be true. The breakdown of the interviews is as follows:

³⁰⁷ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive. Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence, and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* (London: Parker, 1843), 454.

³⁰⁸ Anne Speckhard, "Research Challenges Involved in Field Research and Interviews Regarding the Militant Jihad, Extremism, and Suicide Terrorism," *Democracy and Security* 5, no. 3 (2009): 204, doi:10.1080/17419160903183409.

	Foreign Fighters	Family	International Officials	Experts	Local Officials	Journalists	Law Enforcement	Religious representatives
Bosnia	3	10	8	4	8	4	3	2
Kosovo	1	3	7	5	5	0	2	1
Total	4	13	15	9	13	4	5	3

Table 1: Break Down of Interviews

Below is the list of the questions that I asked the families, in one way or another and in no particular order. Similar questions I asked former foreign fighters, but in a much less guided and structured way. Since I conducted the bulk of the interviews with family members and the initial ones in 2015 and 2016 were the most successful, the questions were custom-developed for them. It is important to highlight that, at the beginning of each interview, I would start by building rapport through engaging in small talk. Questions like “How are you?”, “How is your family?”, “How is everyday life?”, “Are you in contact with your son/daughter?”, “How has life changed?”, and “What’s the relationship between you and your neighbors?” often proved to be quite interesting to my interviewees since, as some of them claimed, none of the members of the immediate local community had asked them.

The questions for institutional representatives, local and international officials varied from what has been done, what is being done as we speak and what the future holds for this particular challenge in the country. The questions for other researchers and journalists were mostly about their experiences and best practices they thought are the most useful. For foreign fighters and the family members, after the introductory questions, I asked a combination of filter, probe, bottleneck, control and projective questions:

Filter questions:

1. When did you notice a change in behavior, was there any?
2. How did this change in behavior manifest?
3. To your knowledge, how was he recruited?
4. What aided the recruitment process?
5. How did he behave after joining the group?
6. What was his role in the group?

Probe question:

7. How did his intimate relationship with the group affect those around him?

Control question:

8. What made him embrace the group?

Bottleneck questions:

1. How did he get recruited, and through what channels, acquaintances, and networks?
2. Were there any signs of him actively seeking to leave?

Projective questions:

1. If you were to imagine a future in which this had not happened, what would you do differently as a family member (role within the family)?
2. Do you think the group still operates? To what extent?
3. Do you think the country is successful in preventing violent extremism?

Illustration 1: Interview Sample

4.5. Content Analysis

An increasing number of researchers are using multimethod approaches to achieve broader and often better results. This is referred to as *triangulation*.³⁰⁹ In triangulating, a researcher may use several methods in different combinations. In this particular case I opted for using in-depth interviews with the combination of content analysis, performed via the qualitative analysis software NVivo. In order to overcome the difficulty in gaining interview data, I supplemented my research with the content analysis within the discourse analytical approach³¹⁰ of more than 400 pages of documents, including court orders, witness statements, court testimonials, investigative documents, archival materials and other related documentation to support the research findings.

The underlying premise is pluralist in that while I also recognize that content and discourse methods are based in very different bases and play very different roles in social science research, they can be seen as complementary and even mutually supportive in the exploration of social reality.³¹¹ “Research is, from this perspective, an exercise in creative interpretation that seeks to show how reality is constructed through texts that embody discourses; in this regard, content analysis provides an important way to demonstrate these performative links that lie at the heart of discourse analysis.”³¹² Illustrated, it means this:

³⁰⁹ (Denzin, 1989b) quoted in Andrea Fontana and James Frey, 1994, Interviewing: The Art of Science." pp. 361-76, in The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, edited by Norman K. Denzin, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. p 373.

³¹⁰ For a complementary relationship between discourse and content analysis please see Cynthia Hardy, Bill Harley, and Nelson Philips, Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis, Two solitudes? Qualitative Methods, Spring 2004

³¹¹ Ibid, 19

³¹² Ibid, 21

Dealing with Meaning	There is no inherent meaning in the text; meanings are constructed in a particular context; and the author, consumer, and researcher all play a role. There is no way to separate meaning from context and any attempt to count must deal with the precarious nature of meaning.
Dealing with Categories	Categories emerge from the data. However, existing empirical research and theoretical work provide ideas for what to look for and the research question provides an initial simple frame.
Dealing with Technique	The categories that emerge from the data allow for coding schemes involving counting occurrences of meanings in the text. Analysis is an interactive process of working back and forth between the texts and the categories.
Dealing with Context	The analysis must locate the meaning of the text in relation of a social context and to other texts and discourses.
Dealing with Reliability	The results are reliable to the degree that they are understandable and plausible to others i.e. does the researcher explain how s/ he came up with the analysis in a way that the reader can make sense of?
Dealing with Validity	The results are valid to the degree that they show how patterns in the meaning of texts are constitutive of reality.
Dealing with Reflexivity	To what extent does the analysis take into account the role that the author plays in making meaning? Does the analysis show different ways in which this meaning might be consumed? Is the analysis sensitive to the way the patterns are identified and explained.

Table 2: Content Analysis within the Discourse Analytical Approach³¹³

4.6. Codifying Grid

For the sake of clarity, I have sorted dominating themes and concepts, depending on the level of analysis they fit, and provided them in the chart below:

	ENABLERS		
	Individual Incentives	Networks	Polity
Micro-level Analysis	Feelings/ Grievances ("empathy", "sympathy", "war", "rape", "casualties", "corruption", "devotion", "love", "care", etc.)	Local Community Family ("cousin", "family member", "teacher", "brother", "sheik", "da'ia")	Education Socio-economic parameters and indices (level of education, income, community engagement, sports, hobbies)
Mid-level Analysis	Resources	Kinship	

³¹³ Cynthia Hardy, Bill Harley, and Nelson Philips, *Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis, Two solitudes?* Qualitative Methods, spring 2004, p 21.

	(“logistics”, “travel”, “connection”, “air”, “car”, “bus-station”, “messaging”, “apps”)	Religious Veterans (“family figure”, “local imam”, “El Mujahedeen”, “masjid”, “para-jamaat”, “meqtebs”)	Regional dynamics; corruption and organized crime (data on employment and other socio-economic categories, fragile state index)
Macro-level Analysis	Ideology (extreme ideology that sees violence as a just means to achieve goals)	Underground/illegal Parallel networks (parallel services) Health care, foodbank, transportation, welfare	Post-war transition (institutional failure and the role of the international community, transitional justice, war crimes, ethnic tensions, ethnic incidents)

Table 3: Chart for Codifying and Operationalizing the Data

5. CHAPTER FIVE: CASE STUDIES, EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

The Case Studies, Empirical Findings and Analysis chapter is structured as follows: the first two subchapters will examine current numbers and figures, followed by national responses, in order to reestablish units of analysis and the contemporary state of the foreign fighter phenomena in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. In the second subchapter, I will differentiate and restate key terms, levels of analysis, the analytical framework employed in the dissertation. The entire second subchapter will be dedicated to discussing the many motivations and individual incentives upon which the recruits acted. In the third subchapter, I will deal with mid-level analysis – networks. I will explore how networks were maintained, who maintained them, and how loyalty played a role in the recruits' encapsulation. The fourth subchapter is dedicated to macro-level analysis, that of the polity in which every recruit lived and how the conditions surrounding the recruit played role in his or her radicalization. I will also discuss the issues of foreign fighter return, marginalization and the possibility of recidivism.

5.1.1. Overview of Figures

As of November 2017, a total of 47 men and women had returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is believed that there are 62 Bosnian men and 50 Bosnian women still remaining in the region previously controlled by ISIS. According to official State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) data, the total number of individuals who left Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2013-2017 to become foreign fighters includes 75 men, 48 women, and 46 children, in addition to 54 men and women who died abroad as well. A total of 24 people have been prosecuted and sentenced to a total of 40 years of imprisonment.

In terms of the recruitment numbers from Kosovo, as of June 2018, there were 123 men, seven women, and two children who had returned from the territory known as ISIS. According to

the Kosovo Police, over the course of almost three years, 413 people, including men, women and children, left Kosovo as foreign fighters. Of these, 46 are dual citizens. Of these 73 men, one woman, and one child had been declared dead as of 2018. It is estimated that there are currently 54 men, 41 women, and 95 children still in Syria. The official number of prevented departures for the period between 2012 and 2017 was 55; the unofficial number cannot be determined, given that it was not easy to prove the intention behind the departure in all cases. The 55 departure attempts were perpetrated by those who had been stopped at the border.³¹⁴ The most current statistics on prosecuted foreign fighters from Kosovo are as follows: 135 individuals were arrested, 116 were charged, 69 were sentenced, and 40 are still under investigation. The sentences ranged from 180 hours of community service to 26 years in prison.³¹⁵

5.1.2. National Responses

Since 2012, when the first foreign fighters left the region for Syria and Iraq, the approach to fighting radicalization and violent extremism in the Western Balkans had generated some institutional responses. Foremost, governments in the region, including those of Bosnia and Kosovo, made amendments to their existing national legislation to criminalize the participation of their citizens in foreign wars. Although these amendments were broad-ranging and included many activities related to participation in foreign wars, such as financing and recruitment, most countries also implemented national strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism.³¹⁶

These strategies rely heavily on international and EU-facilitated approaches, which necessitate multi-level and multi-sector involvement³¹⁷, including security structures,

³¹⁴ The unofficial number of prevented departures is higher than 100, the source is protected under Chatham House Rules, interview with DD. May 2018.

³¹⁵ Statistics obtained from the Kosovar Police.

³¹⁶ Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Preventing and Combating Terrorism 2010-2015," Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, http://msb.gov.ba/PDF/STRATEGIJA_ZA_BORBU_PROTIV_TERORIZMA_ENG.pdf, (accessed June 12, 2017); and Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalization Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020," Office of the Prime Minister Republic of Kosovo, September 2015, http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/STRATEGY_parandalim_-_ENG.pdf, (accessed July 17, 2017).

³¹⁷ The response rests upon four pillars: Prevent, Protect, Pursue, and Respond. See: The Council of the European Union, "The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy," November 30, 2005, <https://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2014469%202005%20REV%204>, (accessed July 2017).

communities, the media, academia, civil society and other local actors, in a joint effort to counter the radicalization that leads to violence.³¹⁸ In addition to adopting national strategies, each country appointed a special coordinator to oversee these responses, as well as coordinate groups consisting of local experts to advise and inform the work of the coordinator and other working groups.³¹⁹ In addition, Bosnia established two inter-agency bodies tasked with coordinating efforts to prevent and combat terrorism and violent extremism. The first is the Supervisory Body for Monitoring the Implementation of Strategy and Action Plans. The second, working at the operational level, is the Task Force for Combatting Terrorism, which consists of representatives from all levels of the government. In Kosovo, the National Security Council's Secretariat, which is responsible for assisting the National Coordinator on counter-radicalization issues, oversees governmental and nongovernmental actors.

At this time, both, the Bosnian and Kosovar national strategies are approaching their expiration dates.³²⁰ It will be curious to see what the renewed and revisited strategies will have in store for the next five years. The expert consensus is that both countries have miscalculated their re-assimilation strategies and have lost valuable time by keeping the foreign fighters in prisons isolated from dialogue and rehabilitation services. This appears to be a wasted opportunity and mismanaged approach that has undermined any progress made, despite well-planned and implemented policy measures. In the words of a Kosovar Police representative: “We have squandered the most important time (while they were in prisons). Now it’s up to them if they want to speak to us, participate in our programs... They are free men. They have no obligation to us, neither a legal nor a moral one.”³²¹

The lack of adequate psychosocial services in particular hinders the implementation of rehabilitation programs – from the initial assessment of inmates to determine their needs to the

³¹⁸ One of the major deficiencies of the Strategy is that it is a well thought-out plan, but is plagued with inconsistency in practice. For example, the Strategy does not foresee any standardized nor transparent guidelines for the media, academia, or civil society to be involved at all.

³¹⁹ “The job of the national coordinator is not easy at all, as he or she has to reconcile data from the law enforcement bodies with the methods and analysis from experts.” Source: Interview with Lulzim Fushtica, June 2018.

³²⁰ For criticism regarding Bosnia’s National Strategy, see the forthcoming article by Tanja Dramac Jiries: “The CVE Paradox: Inapplicability and Necessity in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” in Alice Martini, Kieran Ford, and Richard Jackson, (eds.), *Encountering Extremism: A Critical Examination of Theoretical Issues and Local Challenges*, Manchester United Press, 2018.

³²¹ Stated by a Kosovo Police officer under Chatham House rules, June 2018.

provision of applicable psychological evaluation and support, and lastly to the administration of pre-release reintegration counseling and aftercare.³²² Furthermore, the intermittent or, in some cases, total lack of educational and vocational opportunities in prisons limits the ability of inmates to build skills that could help them move beyond the economic and social deficits that might have contributed to their decision to become foreign fighters in the first place.³²³

5.2. Motivations

5.2.1. Introduction

At the beginning of this subchapter, I must first clarify that by “motivations” I do not mean particular psychological or psycho-social influences on behavior, which my scope of study and academic background are unable to fully assess. Rather, I seek to determine the recruits’ perceived reasons for joining, as they appear in empirical accounts by former militants and their families. As social beings, humans act upon many different incentives and stimuli, including grievances, personal moral feelings, duty, material reward, and the ability to enforce their ideas, even in the face of danger. It is the intention of the following subchapters to explore the perceived reasons, motivations, and enabling incentives that propelled foreign fighters to join the cause.

When it comes to individual motivations and the reasons for departure, I adopted della Porta’s useful typology in the Chapter Three, where I elaborate on motivating factors such as aggrieved individuals, opportunists seeking personal gains, and idealists ideologically committed to the movement. I will use these three motivation descriptions throughout this analysis as the foreign fighter typology.³²⁴ More precisely, these motivations can be translated into the more

³²² Vlado Azinovic and Edina Becirevic, "A Waiting Game: Assessing and Responding to the Threat from Returning Foreign Fighters in the Western Balkans," Regional Cooperation Council, 2017, <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/54/a-waiting-game-assessing-and-responding-to-the-threat-from-returning-foreign-fighters-in-the-western-balkans>, (accessed August 15, 2018).

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 26, paraphrased.

³²⁴ There are many typologies of the recruits. For example, the Quantum Report distinguishes nine types of recruits: 1) Status Seekers: See the world that does not understand or appreciate them as they perceive themselves. They want to improve their social standing; their main drives are money, employment, and a certain recognition by others around them; 2) Identity Seekers: Need the structure, rules, and perspective that come from belonging to a group, because belonging defines them, their role, their friends, and their interaction with society. They often feel like outsiders in their original environment and seek to identify with another group. In this context, the “Islamic Ummah” provides a pre-packaged transnational identity; 3) Revenge Seekers: Consider themselves to be a part of an oppressed group, and thus want to inflict harm on their oppressors and anyone who might support them (other oppressors); 4) Redemption Seekers: Perceive their engagement in Jihad enterprise as a vindication from sinful ways of living; 5) Responsibility Seekers: Value ties and want to preserve their family’s wellbeing and

general categories of solidarity, instrumentality, and ideological incentive.³²⁵ “Instrumentality refers to movement participation as an attempt to influence the social and political environment; identity refers to movement participation as a manifestation of identification with a group; and ideology refers to movement participation as a search for meaning and an expression of one’s views.”³²⁶ Concerning identity or “a longing for belonging” as an incentive, I must discern again, that identity studies as a psychological and behavioral concept are well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Simply put, my research and analysis operate on the theories and concepts of political science and not psychology, a discipline to which identity as a distinct analytical category exists, combined with interventions from anthropology, sociology and other social science and humanities.

I will, however, observe and utilize, when possible, data that points to personal psychological tendencies such as qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make up a person alongside the enabling circumstances or the radicalization context, which is the focus of this dissertation. This is not to say that identity as analytical concept is not important. To the contrary, very few controlled empirical studies have been conducted investigating the psychological bases of politically-motivated or religious-inspired violence. Curiously enough, they often do not stop short of calling the perpetrators ‘crazy’. As observed in the Chapter Two, this is not scientifically useful and has been contradicted already many times over. As Jeff Victoroff argued, “Psychological scholarship could possibly mitigate the risk of catastrophic

prosperity by fulfilling the role of the provider/bread winner; 6) Thrill Seekers: Are filled with energy and drive. They want to prove their potential/power by accomplishing an arduous task or surviving a harrowing adventure. They are mostly in it for the opportunity to engage in action while enjoying a certain level of impunity for their acts; 7) Ideology Seekers: Are mainly in search of a certain world view that they can identify with and the “Islamic Ummah” provides a pre-packaged transnational ideology. Unlike the identity of seekers who wish to “belong” to a group, the ideology seekers aim at “imposing” their world view on to the other group; 8) Justice Seeker: Consider what is happening in the conflict areas as a major injustice and feel they have a certain inner calling to reverse this injustice. Unlike the revenge seekers, the justice seekers’ “raison d’etre” ceases to exist once the perceived injustice stops; and 9) Death Seekers: Have most probably suffered from a significant trauma/loss in their lives and consider death as the only way out with a reputation of a martyr instead of someone who has committed suicide. Another expert foresees five types: Missionary, Macho, and Upholder of justice, Adventurer, and Existential man. See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Inside Jihadism: Understanding Jihadi Movements Worldwide* (Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 233-235. A third set is offered in Petter Nesser’s work on ideal types of European jihadis: the entrepreneur, protégé, misfit, and drifter, the first are resourceful individuals as quoted in Thomas Hegghammer, “Revisiting the Poverty-terrorism Link in European Jihadism,” November 8, 2016, http://hegghammer.com/files/Hegghammer_-_poverty.pdf, (accessed June 2017).

³²⁵ Robert Aspray, *War in Shadows*, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 525-526, quoted in Roger Dale Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe*, 1st ed., Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006 .pp. 8 and 116.

³²⁶ Bert Klandermans, “The Demand and Supply of Participation: Social-Psychological Correlates of Participation in Social Movements,” 2007, doi:10.1002/9780470999103.ch16, (accessed April 12, 2017).

attack by initiating the long overdue scientific study of terrorist mentalities.”³²⁷ The identity entrepreneurship as a recruiter’s strategy to lure in new foreign fighters will therefore be left to these colleagues to examine.

We can recall Wood’s “pleasure in agency”, as well as Petersen’s “triggering mechanism”, to elaborate further on the mobilization for, facilitation of, and departure to Syria and Iraq.³²⁸ The pleasure of agency is applicable to those who through rebelling (acting against the law), while fully aware of their actions and the consequences of those actions, took pride or pleasure in the successful realization of their intention.³²⁹ In this case, it is the joining of various factions of ISIS. I will take into account, to the highest extent possible, the multilevel factors that have aided the agency in its logistical or conceptual phase. This is not to claim that all incentives have been the reasons for the agency in every case possible, but rather that they can shed light on empirical data and aid in the search for other inter-related patterns. Indeed, the emphasis is then placed on the inclination that subordinated people, or people who had lost belief in the system as a whole, may take to exercise their agency, which is often based on beliefs from which they had long been denied or excluded in their home setting. This understanding is exactly the basis of my hypothesis that the system, or a community as such, does not respond to the needs of the recruits to successfully mobilize and realize their vision of what’s just or not.

During my empirical research, it became virtually impossible to assess the percentage of each motivational category for the Bosnian and Kosovar groups. A number of perceived motivations were intertwined, and this dissertation will shy away from creating “a perfect recruit profile”. Each individual story is distinct and shines a unique light on a respective recruit.³³⁰ However, there are some commonalities that we might be able to extract from the primary data combined with those from the secondary sources. Most scholars have pointed out low levels of education, rural or suburban surroundings, and poverty as key drivers for the radicalization of

³²⁷ Jeff Victoroff, "The Mind of the Terrorist," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 1 (February 1, 2005), :doi:10.1177/0022002704272040. Abstract.

³²⁸ In her seminal work “The Roots of Terrorism” (1981), Martha Crenshaw distinguishes between factors, or root causes and trigger causes. This analysis will continue to use the “trigger mechanism” term, as it more accurately describes the process and the cogs in the machine that were set in motion before the person decided to join.

³²⁹ Elisabeth J. Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

³³⁰ Vlado Azinovic, the leading expert in the field, has confirmed in an interview that his observations are similar. In a personal conversation in May 2018, he stated to me that, “when talking about individual reasons, each story is different”.

youth.³³¹ However, these claims were exponentially tested during field work. The Islamic State's rhetoric of promising "that (fighters) will be granted direct entry into heaven"³³² also fed fundamentalist Islamic narratives and provided religious legitimacy and motivation in addition to other incentives.

On the other hand, some authors still maintain that it is the prospect of escaping social maladaptation and socio-economic deprivation that constitutes the foundation of the Islamic State's recruitment success in Kosovo.³³³ However, while it is true that some recruits came from extreme poverty, at least six of the 17 interviewees claimed that their socio-economic situation was average for Bosnia and Kosovo. Secondly, as much as it is true that a majority of the foreign fighters had earned a high-school diploma, what statistics failed to account for is that some of them were in their second or third year of college at the time when their radicalization process began, or even when they left to other countries as foreign fighters.³³⁴ Statistics relies on a defined data; therefore, when a researcher checks datasets for education levels, he or she can rarely discern education in progress but can only determine outcomes in terms of the degree obtained.³³⁵ It is my belief that much of the statistical data that measures ongoing processes of subjects being studied miss the stories behind the data, since it is impossible for statistics to be comprehensive in its evaluation of all the factors that contribute to subjects' choices, which can only be revealed with complementary, in-depth, qualitative research. Thirdly, while it does hold true that a number of recruits come from villages and distant and isolated communities throughout the highly decentralized Bosnia and Kosovo, a significant number also came from the

³³¹ In my analysis of the Literature Review, I have already observed how many scholars pointed out the socio-economic challenges of the recruits.

³³² Shadi Hamid, "The Roots of the Islamic State's Appeal," *The Atlantic*, October 31, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/10/the-roots-of-the-islamic-statesappeal/382175>, (accessed June 28, 2016), quoted in Agnesa Dalipi, "Understanding the Roots, Methods and Consequences of Islamic Radicalization in Kosovo." MSU Graduate Theses, (2016): 2958, <http://bearworks.missouristate.edu/theses/2958>, (accessed June 2018).

³³³ Agnesa Dalipi, "Understanding the Roots, Methods and Consequences of Islamic Radicalization in Kosovo," MSU Graduate Theses, (2016): 2958, <http://bearworks.missouristate.edu/theses/2958>, (accessed May 2017).

³³⁴ Or, in some cases, such as that of Ines Midzic (also known as Sallahudin al-Bosni), who was very active in ISIS multimedia content production. He left for Syria just a month before he was supposed to defend his bachelor's degree in English language at Bihac University. He was also very well known as a youth activist from the NGO 'Solidarity', which was active in Bihac. See "Teroristi ISIL-a Zbog čijih Prijetnji Je Balkan Drhtao: Ubijajte Ih Na Svakom Mjestu Gdje Stignete, Po Bosni, Srbiji, Sandžaku..." *Index.ba*, March 12, 2018, <https://www.index.ba/foto-i-video-teroristi-isil-a-zbog-cijih-prijetnji-je-balkan-drhtao-ubijajte-ih-na-svakom-mjestu-gdje-stignete-po-bosni-srbiji-sandzaku/>, (accessed May 23, 2018).

³³⁵ To clarify, I am simply not very confident of the existence of such a profoundly detailed profile of foreign fighters in Bosnia. In Kosovo, the Kosovo Center for Security Studies has created 90 profiles of known individuals, but it doesn't account for those who were in the process of receiving their education.

capital and average-sized towns and cities. As a result, any attempt to design and create a ‘standardized recruit profile’ remains a challenge, and it is my argument that it should be abandoned altogether.

Finally, in Bosnia, a fair number of recruits possessed some type of facial disfigurement or physical impairment.³³⁶ These personal challenges ranged from mild impairments, such as being walleyed or having a slight visual impairment, to the more severe, such as heavy stuttering. These impairments would often be mentioned in interviews with family members as something that likely made the recruits more susceptible to manipulation and prone to the belief that the call to become a foreign fighter is a lure to help those in need and that their perceived shortcomings don’t matter. As well, a number of surveillance documents and intelligence notes speak about specific scouting patterns for new recruits. The documents note that bus stations and other public gathering places were often used as training grounds, where more promising recruits were taught how to scout for young men of a certain age and, preferably, with a slight mental or physical impairment. These trainings sought to familiarize the scouts-in-training on how to make a brief and effective first encounter with prospective recruits and which methods of appeal could be utilized to lure them into a foreign fighter network. Or in the words of one SIPA operative: “They told us that their selection of recruits was not at all incidental. They were thought to seek young men who seem troubled or rejected, or just even that – lonely.”³³⁷

As far as motivation, there are many types, and each is rarely the only reason. This dissertation claims that one of the initial triggering mechanisms for recruitment was ‘resentment formation’. To borrow Petersen’s term, ‘resentment formation’ describes what happened to the people of Syria and Iraq towards their own state of origin or local community; it will be elaborated on further in the macro level of this analysis.³³⁸ The wars’ unbearable loss of human life and resulting rape, abuse, human rights violations, destruction, and aggrieved individuals aided the process of resentment formation to the point where they “had to act.”³³⁹ It was clear

³³⁶ During my field research, I was able to identify at least three Bosnian and two Kosovar recruits with this characteristic.

³³⁷ Interview with SIPA operative, May 2018.

³³⁸ For Petersen’s full matrix of rebellion, please refer to Figure 2. Triggering mechanism by Petersen.

³³⁹ He or she “had to do something,” was often a common explanation when parents were discussing their son’s or daughter’s decision to leave. To me, it sounded almost like a moral imperative.

from the onset of my field work that a number of Bosnian recruits joined the cause out of a sense of moral obligation to repay the debt to foreign fighters who had come to their aid during the 1990s conflict in the Balkans. In Bosnia's Dobož-Zenica Canton, where the 1990s conflict was particularly sharp and where ethnic tensions remain very visible today, some veterans of the Bosnian war, particularly nurtured this sense of debt towards their brethren. In Kosovo, I observed a similar motivation. Some recruits there believed they too would achieve the heroic status enjoyed by Kosovo Liberation Army veterans of the earlier war.

Finally, a number of recruits and their partners were truly attracted to ISIL's propaganda.³⁴⁰ The most important themes that emerged from the interviews with foreign fighters and their family members were a combination of resentment and outrage regarding the oppression of the Assad regime in Syria, the unjust treatment of Syrian and Iraqi civilians, and the desire for a more just social and economic order in the world, wherever that might be.³⁴¹ Likewise, some of the interviewees felt pride and reward in assisting in the creation of "newborn states" in those regions. The following subchapters will disaggregate these motivation patterns and elaborate on them further through micro-level analysis.

5.2.2. Solidarity

In order to move forward in explaining the perceived incentives that drove people to join the foreign fighter cause, I will first define what I mean by solidarity and how I assessed the empirics of this motivational factor. Foremost, solidarity comprises the notion of empathy – the concern for the wellbeing of other members who are less well off than oneself.³⁴² As Christian Arnsperger and Yanis Varoufakis note, it also exists as a reinvented analytical category that explains aspects of human motivation. According to these authors, unlike altruism and natural sympathy, which evoke the interests of specific others onto one's own sense of relatedness, team-mentality is only applicable to members of a team who share a Kantian duty, which demands that "one ought to do the right thing for the right reasons". Essentially, the epitome of solidarity lies

³⁴⁰ Including the "Management of Chaos," the de facto ISIS manifesto.

³⁴¹ If not in their home countries, then in some new place or new country in the making.

³⁴² Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992, p. 472, quoted in Shlomi Segall, "Political Participation as an Engine of Social Solidarity: A Skeptical View," *Political Studies*, Vol. 53, 2005, University of Oxford, pp. 362–378.

in the hypothesis that people are capable of responding sympathetically to a condition afflicting 'others', irrespective of who those others are or whether one has a personal connection to them.³⁴³ Furthermore, as Arnsperger and Varoufakis point out, human societies across history generate social power structures which place whole groups of people, quite arbitrarily, into 'unfortunate' roles and situations. These people become victims of a pervasive social force which pushes them to the periphery of social life or security. The tendency to make and act of making sacrifices on their behalf is defined as radical solidarity.³⁴⁴ Although Mariam Thalos understands the concept of radical solidarity as a principle of simple charity, this is not the perspective of this dissertation as such, given the outcomes, consequences, and action-ready conception born of the notion that the target groups' interests are worth advancing and, for that matter, saving.³⁴⁵ Another reason why Thalos's concept of solidarity is not applicable here is because of her heavy emphasis on the singular or individual agent. Although all the data in this research does point to an individual decision to leave one's country and become a foreign fighter, the act is actually understood in the context of a group effort to help the Syrian and Iraqi people.

To further illustrate exactly how radical solidarity with Syrian people was the incentive largely used and reinforced as a recruitment strategy, I will offer a few specific examples. From an in-depth interview with MK, the mother of a foreign fighter, it became clear that it was her conviction as well as that of one of her son that the brethren and other Muslims were suffering at the hand of the enemy and that it was her family's moral duty to help them. Her son was very well known in online radicalization circles, for he utilized many Facebook accounts to call for and justify aid to ISIS. Known most widely as "Amar Sham" and other aliases, he was very well known to other recruits and ISIS sympathizers in Bosnia.³⁴⁶ Unlike some other parents and family members, MK was well aware of her son's intention to leave and become a foreign fighter. She had been preparing her family for his departure and saw only noble cause in the act. However, she was petrified of the idea of her son as a combatant, since to her knowledge, he did not have any previous combat training. Fearing for his life, she tried to convince him not to go,

³⁴³ Christian Arnsperger and Yanis Varoufakis, "Toward a Theory of Solidarity," 59, no. 2 (September 2003): <https://www.yanisvaroufakis.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/toward-a-theory-of-solidarity-full-published-version1.pdf> , pp. 157-188, (accessed June 2018).

³⁴⁴ Ibid., Paraphrased.

³⁴⁵ Mariam Thalos, *A Social Theory of Freedom*, Routledge, First edition, April 4, 2016, p. 224.

³⁴⁶ At least three more recruits were inspired by his Facebook account.

arguing and spending countless hours with him prior to his final goodbyes. She, as well as he, took particular *pride* in his ability to act upon the human solidarity he felt towards the oppressed in the Middle East. This is best reflected by his numerous Facebook posts, which celebrate the cause and the struggle for the liberation of oppressed Muslims.³⁴⁷ In his mother's words, there was immense pride and joy in raising such a noble man. She started our interview like this:

First, I want to say that I am incredibly proud of my son. My firstborn... He is a *shahid*.³⁴⁸ He went there to defend women and children. He asked me whether I remembered when other *shahids* came to our aid... He showed me YouTube clips of women being raped, children slaughtered. He told me he is going to defend them, and that it is his only duty, and the duty of every capable Muslim.³⁴⁹

Another mother of a foreign fighter was unaware of the departure of her son and daughter in law until they settled in Turkey, from where they called her and explained why they had left. Her son explained:

Don't worry, it will be humanitarian work. I saw them on television. These people are suffering. We need to help them, and it is our duty. Can't you see what's happening? Everyone is against them, and we're their only hope?³⁵⁰

From the 13 interviewed family members and foreign fighters in Bosnia and the four in Kosovo, qualitative documentation shows that all of them took, to some degree, "pleasure in agency" and were motivated by a sense of either jihad, as interpreted by them, and/or the feeling of indebtedness to those who had once helped their countries' cause.³⁵¹

Solidarity and grievances went hand in hand. The recruitment networks used narratives that exploited wartime grievances and existing research suggests that the rhetoric of the legacy of suffering and injustice caused by the wars in the 1990s remains the most striking radicalization tool in recent years. One example is the case of Albert Berisha, a young Kosovar who spent nine

³⁴⁷ His Facebook profile was ultimately blocked or deleted; however, this insight was made possible by security forces, who had made print screen copies of his posts in the hope of using them as prosecutorial evidence.

³⁴⁸ A martyr, or witness.

³⁴⁹ Interview with MK, April, 2016.

³⁵⁰ Interview with KM, March 2018.

³⁵¹ Jihad is a complex phenomenon appearing in the Qur'an. A Western approach to interpreting it is impossible without a thorough understanding of the Qur'an. This is also evident in the reductionist way that the Salafi community in the region also interprets it, which is on the extreme spectrum as well. For these reasons, I have opted not to use the common but pejorative term "Jihadist" to describe individuals who were under the impression that they were fighting a Holy War in the name of religious ideology.

days in Syria and was suspected to have joined the terrorist group Al-Nusra. Berisha maintained that he never joined any terrorist group but made an “emotional decision to help the Syrian people.”³⁵² It is not easy to establish whether it was possible for him not to know what was going on at the time of his 2013 departure, which took place at the height of the media frenzy over thousands of foreign fighters and families departing for Syria in an effort to aid those fighting in the civil war. Based on his court testimony, he maintained that his intention was to join a humanitarian convoy and help in whatever capacity aside from combat, as he was not a soldier. It is also difficult to establish whether he was truly able to recognize that the “humanitarian convoy” he was joining had, in fact, military objectives, claiming at his last hearing that he only realized its militant agenda upon his arrival in ISIS territory. Over the period of nine days spent there, he realized that he had come to the wrong place.

Upon his return after escaping from ISIS, he was arrested and tried in Kosovo for terrorism and received a three-and-a-half year prison term. He appealed this sentence before the Kosovo Appeal Court, but his initial sentence was reaffirmed.³⁵³ While awaiting the final decision, Berisha founded an NGO in an effort to fight prejudice and stigma and reintegrate back into the community. The NGO’s mission was to combat religious extremism and “de-radicalize” those who have returned to Kosovo from the warzone. Similar to Berisha’s experience, many other returning foreign fighters claimed that they thought that passivity towards the foreign fighter cause upon their return would lead to greater disenchantment and uncertainty among their Muslim brothers and sisters who were considering exodus.

Of those interviewed, all were fully aware of the consequences of joining the foreign fighter cause. None of them intended to return to the Balkans, since they believed that they were helping to create an Islamic State that would defend the oppressed. Through this act, they could take pride in living their lives as believers and adherents to the one true faith.³⁵⁴ At the time, ISIS imagined itself to be a co-called “caliphate”, which mimicked an independent state in providing

³⁵² Kosovar Police, May 2018.

³⁵³ Request for a constitutional review of Judgment PML. No. 225/2017 of the Supreme Court, of December 18, 2017, Case No. KI 34/18, available at <http://gjk-ks.org>.

³⁵⁴ Except for two individuals who at first wanted to return but then decided to stay indefinitely. The probability was, at that point, that they had no other option but to stay.

tax services, law enforcement, education, health care and social services, and working tirelessly to establish new institutions on the ground.³⁵⁵ Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that many were led to believe that this new life opportunity, combined with a noble cause to defend their fellow brethren, held in store a better future for them.

5.2.3. Instrumentality

The instrumental motive, or instrumentality, stems from resource mobilization theory, and is further defined and contextualized by Bert Klandermans and Jacqueliene van Stekelenburg. In this theory, the principle of collective action participation originates from the assessment that certain political or social aims are attainable through collective action participation.³⁵⁶ In other words, collective action participation is seen as instrumental to the improvement of the destitute situation of the group. That is to say, as far as instrumental considerations are concerned, values only impact action participation if collective action is perceived to be effective and the efficacy of collective action only matters if it produces something of value.³⁵⁷ Some scholars have written about the deficiency of this concept vis-a-vis its neglect towards the ideological aspects of collective action participation.³⁵⁸ However, given that ideological encapsulation will be assessed in the subchapter below, this critique will be taken into account in the dissertation and properly addressed later.

The scholar Alexandar Lee suggests there is a difference between rich and poor countries when assessing the financial connection to political violence: in short, we can expect terrorists to be middle class in poor countries but lower class in rich countries.³⁵⁹ Essentially, Lee's model is

³⁵⁵ For more on ISIS state-building efforts, see Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *The State of Terror*, Harper Collins, UK 2016; Zeina Karam, *Life and Death in ISIS: How the Islamic State Builds its Caliphate*, Mano Media, Miami, 2016; and Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, Phaidon Press, 2015.

³⁵⁶ Bert Klandermans and Jacqueliene van Stekelenburg, *Social Movements and the Dynamics of Collective Action*, The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology (2 ed.), Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy (eds.), 2013.

³⁵⁷ Jacqueliene van Stekelenburg and Bert Klandermans, "Combining motivations and emotion: The motivational dynamics of collective action participation," *Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development*, February 05, 2017, <https://research.vu.nl/en/publications/combining-motivations-and-emotion-the-motivational-dynamics-of-co>, (accessed July 23, 2017).

³⁵⁸ See, for example, Laura Shill Schragger's *Private Attitudes and Collective Action*, *American Sociological Review* 50, no. 6 (1985): , doi:10.2307/2095509 1985.

³⁵⁹ Alexander Lee, "Who Becomes a Terrorist? Poverty, Education, and the Origins of Political Violence," *Volume 63, Issue 2*, April 2011. pp. 203-245.

based on the premise that one has to be above a certain threshold of intellectual and economic resources to be politically active. Below this threshold, one is too busy vying for the essentials of security for oneself and family. Above this threshold level, however, the opportunity cost mechanism kicks in – the more you have to lose, the less likely you are to engage in high-risk activity. I have adopted this idea in this dissertation as well. What I have found is that most radicalization activities will take place in the segment that is right above the resource threshold, or what Lee calls “the lower end of the politically active class.” Similarly, Hegghammer argues that, on average, European violent extremists are economic underperformers (compared to their adopted countries).³⁶⁰ However, Alan Kruger and Jitka Maleckova have added to the ongoing debate on the correlation between economic/poverty and terrorism by offering findings that indicate they are not fundamentally linked; they suggest that, “There is not much question that poverty has little to do with terrorism.”³⁶¹ However, Hegghammer concludes that this might be true only in the case of Lebanese and Palestinian violent extremists, whom Kruger and Maleckova had analyzed, but cannot be universally applied to all cases of violent extremism.³⁶²

When it comes to the Bosnian and Kosovar foreign fighter constituency, empirical research and analysis indicate that, on average, the recruits were social and economic underperformers, even in countries notorious for unemployment and brain drain.³⁶³ According to Fatos Makolli, of the Kosovar Police, and Skender Perteshi, a Kosovo Center for Security Studies researcher, this is the single most important reason why foreign fighters were recruited in the first place. To illustrate the findings, a majority of the recruits were living in poor surroundings, often with one parent with no steady or only a single income. In almost all the cases of the study, the single parent was a mother; although in the case of at least two, the mothers had died young and the individuals were living with fathers. In one case, both parents

³⁶⁰ Thomas Hegghammer, “Revisiting the poverty-terrorism link in European Jihadism,” Society for Terrorism Research Annual Conference, Leiden, November 8, 2016.

³⁶¹ Quoted in Thomas Hegghammer, “Revisiting the poverty-terrorism link in European Jihadism,” Society for Terrorism Research Annual Conference, Leiden, November 8, 2016, p. 2.

³⁶² Hegghammer also diminishes the relevance of Marc Sageman’s assessment of the poverty-terrorism nexus from *Inside Terrorism Networks*, since Sageman only looks at Al-Qaeda and not ISIS.

³⁶³ The youth unemployment rate in Kosovo averaged 54.17 percent from 2012 to 2018, reaching an all-time high of 61 percent in the fourth quarter of 2014 and a record low of 50.50 percent in the first quarter of 2017. See “About Kosovo,” UNDP, <http://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/countryinfo.html>, (accessed June 2018). The unemployment rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina averaged 42.44 percent from 2007 to 2018, reaching an all-time high of 46.10 percent in February 2013 and a record low of 35.93 percent in May 2018. See “Unemployment, Youth Total % of Total Labor Force Ages 15-24 modeled ILO Estimate” World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=BA>, (accessed June 2018).

were alive but divorced, and the subject lived with one of the parents without close interaction with the other. In short, most families were divided, as a result of divorce, one of the parents being killed in war, or one parent dying young and leaving behind a widow.³⁶⁴ The younger recruits were actively searching for employment without much success. Their job search ceased once they were embraced by the foreign fighter network and provided with what seemed to be a meaningful temporary occupation. This opportunity-creation as a tool for group loyalty will be elaborated in more detail below. The acute struggle for any kind of employment was evident in all of the interviews. One account that particularly stood out and exemplified the hardships of finding a job is from parents who recalled numerous difficulties:

His eyesight was damaged from birth. He had a strong prescription and his opportunities for work were scarce. However, he wasn't discerning. He applied for very difficult jobs, those that were labor intensive... to other kinds of occupations. He applied to them all. We spent months sending in applications. I helped him formulate applications and copy and snail mail hundreds.³⁶⁵

He wasn't a member of the party. He didn't have a father, an uncle, or a grandfather to vouch for him. I didn't have a [bribe] envelope for officials to get him a job. Where was I going to get five or ten thousand convertible marks? An envelope magically opens doors, but I didn't have it, so he didn't get a job.³⁶⁶

As mentioned above, what I found during my field work was that, in my dataset, three recruiters in Bosnia and two in Kosovo had some sort of medical condition which was not treated properly in due time. Much can be attributed to the lack of general health care and poor social services for most citizens in these two countries. However, it is notable that a number of the recruits from the study sample had financial difficulties which prevented them from having a conventional lifestyle, including treating conditions that were easily curable had they sought help early on.

³⁶⁴ Paraphrased from an interview with Mirnes Kovac, a journalist who investigated some 20 families and friends of foreign fighters, March 2018. Similarly, the only family interviewed that was not broken was that of CE from a village around Velika Kladusa. However, after he had left, his parents split up after 30 years of being together. Most of the time, if the family was divided, the father was missing from the unit. The exception was the case of Esmira Dogan-Kargic, who grew up without her mother. She was a non-combatant, although she left for Syria with Amir Kargic, a foreign fighter.

³⁶⁵ Interview with HU, June 2016.

³⁶⁶ Interview with MK, March 2018.

Aside from material instrumentality as an incentive or at least as an enabler, there is evidence that some of the recruits were simply looking for excitement or affirmation. Although a fairly small percentage of the research sample, one could conclude that some were simply thrill-seekers.³⁶⁷ Some recruits merely wanted attention, which also had to do with the need for acceptance or belonging to a group. When screened for the most frequently used words by the interviewees, the one that often came up was “attentiveness.”³⁶⁸ Instrumentality presupposes an effective movement that is able to enforce wanted changes or at least mobilize substantial support.³⁶⁹ Amongst all the practical alternatives to joining ISIS, for at least three recruits, the network represented the successful synergy of a functioning state in the making, which rests upon the pillars of a social welfare state and a value-based polity, that provides them with a sense of belonging in the community. At that stage, their radicalization and rejection of all contemporary ideology and surroundings was completed and their decision to join ISIS as foreign fighters was final.

It is important to note that this dissertation has avoided contributing to the scholarship that profiles specific communities or individuals in the context of radicalization. This is particularly important to stress when it comes to the second part of the incentive chapter on instrumentality and socio-economic incentive debate. That is, the decision to include instrumentality as means to recompense poverty, inequality, marginalization and alienation does not imply that any community or individual belonging to the above-described parameters should be thought of as being a part of counter-extremist measures or should be surveilled as part of a larger preventive strategy. Many authors have recognized this and deemed it important to conclude that neither of these perceived incentives are sufficient enough to profile and target a beneficiary group of policymakers’ surface strategies to counter violent extremism that leads to violence.³⁷⁰ Rather, this is only one set of proposed answers that should be taken into account.

³⁶⁷ Randy Borum and Robert Fein, “The Psychology of Foreign Fighters,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 3 (2016): doi:10.1080/1057610x.2016.1188535.

³⁶⁸ Interview with Vese Kelmendi, June 2018.

³⁶⁹ Bert Klandermans, “The demand and supply of participation: Social psychological correlates of participation in social movements,” <https://research.vu.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/1843998/149794.pdf>, p. 6, (accessed June 2018).

³⁷⁰ Jeff Goodwin, “Review essays: What must we explain to explain terrorism?” *Social Movement Studies*, 3, 2004, pp. 259–265, quoted in Lorezno Bosi and Donatella della Porta, “Micro-mobilization into Armed Groups: Ideological, Instrumental and Solidaristic Paths,” *Qualitative Sociology*, 35, 2012, pp. 361–383.

Other answers have been placed under the solidarity or ideology umbrella of incentives, but it is beyond the scope of this research to determine which motivating factors held greater weight in the subjects' decision to leave as foreign fighters. Based on this and other studies, I would also subscribe to the "additive model" to analyze motivation from all angles.³⁷¹ That is, if all three motives apply, participation is more likely than if only one or two apply; motives may vary from one another completely to the extent that in any one individual case, one or two motives may be altogether irrelevant.³⁷²

5.2.4. Ideology

Bosnia and Kosovo had experienced devastating wars and were supplied with aid from various sources. Many opportunistic foreign actors saw the chaos of the wars as the ideal scenario to gain influence and at least an initial footprint in the region. To gain a deeper understanding on how this took place, we must look back nearly three decades to the convergence of foreign influences in the region during the Bosnian and Kosovar wars. In the case of Bosnia, once the United Nations banned arms supplies to the Bosnian Army in the 1990s, one of the countries that started arming its brethren was Iran, winning unique access to the country.³⁷³ In addition, the Iranians actively trained Bosnian security personnel, in particular intelligence officers, thus gaining access to the country's clandestine networks.³⁷⁴ These Iranian activities paralleled those of Saudi Arabia, which sought to exercise sway on the ground by utilizing a network of well-established and well-organized charities and other nongovernmental organizations in Bosnia (and later in Kosovo) to propel its socioeconomic activities in the region. One of the first NGOs established in Bosnia and Herzegovina was, in fact, a very active youth

³⁷¹ A model developed by Bert Klandermans.

³⁷² Paraphrased from Bert Klandermans, "The demand and supply of participation: Social psychological correlates of participation in social movements," <https://research.vu.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/1843998/149794.pdf>, (accessed May 2018).

³⁷³ James Risen and Doyle McManus, "Clinton Secretly OKed Iran's Arms Shipments to Bosnia," *The Tech* - Online Edition, April 09, 1996, <http://tech.mit.edu/V116/N17/clinton.17w.html> accessed April 16, 2017. In addition, Iran was not the only country that defied the ban. Pakistan did so, with tacit U.S. approval. See Cees Wiebes, *Intelligence and the War in Bosnia: 1992-1995* (Münster: Lit, 2003).p. 195. For a detailed look at the networks of smuggling routes in Bosnia and Kosovo see Marko Hajdinjak, *Smuggling in Southeast Europe: The Yugoslav Wars and the Development of Regional Criminal Networks in the Balkans*, Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy, 2002, pp. 10-13.

³⁷⁴ Steven O'Hern, *Iran's Revolutionary Guard: The Threat That Grows While America Sleeps*, Potomac Books, Inc., 2012. For more on Iranian network and influence in the Balkans as well as the world, see Richard. Bennett, *Espionage: Spies and Secrets*. Ebury Publishing, 2012.

organization known as Active Islamic Youth. Interestingly enough, there is even evidence to suggest there was Saudi cooperation with Serb extremist groups, predominantly the "*Cetnicki ravnogorski pokret*" (The Ravna Gora Movement) which was actively working to stop migration, the return of refugees, and freedom of movement.³⁷⁵

Neither of these foreign influences resonated well with the majority of citizens of Bosnia and Kosovo, as the authoritarian and conservative interpretation of Islam imported by these two disparate enemies, was alien to the liberal Islam practiced in Bosnia and Kosovo, where the secular state acted as the main political authority. However, there were some inroads made because of disillusionment with the Western liberal democracies, which failed to intervene in time to help the drastically under-armed Bosniak Army, but did so later in Kosovo.³⁷⁶ For this reason, Turkish influence in the two countries was slightly better received, although Ankara did not necessarily establish strong military and security ties; it rather opted for offering humanitarian, cultural, and educational programs that, despite the paternalistic approach, successfully took root in the region.

Yet another source of foreign influence, one that sought ties with the Islamic institutions of Bosnia and Kosovo, was the country of Malaysia. Indeed, a significant number of Bosniaks and Kosovars educated in this Southeast Asian state went on to become influential diplomats, powerful CEOs, and politicians.³⁷⁷ Although the Malaysian influence was largely under the radar operating as a humanitarian, charitable and educational endeavor, there exist no in-depth accounts of its religious impact on Islamic teachings in the Balkans. Given that syncretistic Islam is still commonly practiced in the rural areas of Malaysia, if its influence did not become properly integrated in Bosnia and Kosovo, it most certainly added to the complexity and competition over the desired monopoly of other influential religious players who sought to control interpretations of Islam in the two countries. To add to the numerous divisive factors

³⁷⁵ Alfred C. Lugert et al., eds., "Preventing and Combating Terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina," National Defense Academy Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management, Vienna, http://www.bundesheer.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/luge01.pdf, (accessed May 2018).

³⁷⁶ For more on the process of Bosnia "divorcing" itself from the West in the 1990s, see Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, New York, Basic Books, 2002.

³⁷⁷ See Hamza Karcic, "'One-Way Ticket to Kuala Lumpur'," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 42, no. 124 (2014): 400-417, doi:10.1080/13639811.2014.938449.

competing for influence in post-conflict Bosnia and Kosovo, this interplay of foreign religious influences acted to further fragment Islamic life in both countries.

Another instance of how foreign ideology was propagated in both countries was through imams who had studied abroad on scholarships in the Gulf States and Egypt, where they were influenced by ISIS ideals. Some even found themselves behind bars for spreading ISIS-inspired propaganda, such as Rexhep Memishi, a Kosovar who had studied in Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the early 2000s.³⁷⁸ Zekerija Qazimi and Xhazair Fishti, two other Kosovar ISIS sympathizers, had also reportedly studied in Egypt on sponsored scholarships.³⁷⁹ Upon returning to the Balkans, these imams took it upon themselves to actively spread ideology that promoted extremist views in their local communities.

In addition, many fractions and dominations of Islamic teachings have branched out from the official, government-led influences over religious affairs. A number of opposing fractions also reemerged and took root in Bosnia and Kosovo, the most influential being the movement of Fetullah Gulen, which officially promotes a secular and tolerant Islam based on altruism and education but also has its critics who claim that it also has the goals of influencing and infiltrating the Turkish state and military. These movements still operate as networks of international universities, TV and radio outlets, educational bodies, NGOs, and think tanks, which have left a unique and ongoing footmark in the social fabric of Bosnia and Kosovo for more than two decades.

A number of local experts have noted that the dangers of foreign interference in the religious practices of Bosnia and Kosovo did not, in fact, go undetected. Avdo Avdic, an award-winning journalist who first investigated the Salafi footprint in Bosnia, claimed that “a number

³⁷⁸ Shepend Kursani, “Report inquiring into the causes consequences of Kosovo citizens’ involvement as foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq,” Kosovo Center for Security Studies, 2015, http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Report_inquiring_into_the_causes_and_consequences_of_Kosovo_citizens'_involvement_as_foreign_fighters_in_Syria_and_Iraq_307708.pdf, (accessed March 2018).

³⁷⁹ Labinot Leposhtica, “Xhihadi i Imam Qazimit”, Gazeta JNK, 2016, <http://kallxo.com/gjnk/xhihadi-imam-qazimit>, accessed July 2017, quoted in an independent report by Behar Xharra and Nita Gojani, “Understanding Push and Pull Factors in Kosovo: Primary Interviews with Returned Foreign Fighters and their Families,” United Nations Development Program, November 2017: p.9. http://unckt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/UNDP_Push-and-Pull-Factors_ENG.pdf, (accessed March 2018).

of academics and theologians warned of the dangers and changes in Bosnian Muslim society, but that they were ostracized by the Islamic Community and their message went largely unheard.”³⁸⁰ A senior diplomat was adamant in noting that, “they did not ask too many questions about what came with the money.”³⁸¹ Muhamed Jusic maintains that, with the rise of *para-jamaats*, the Salafi influence hit too close to home. He believes that the Islamic Community has a great role to play in strengthening social capital and preventing the further influence of Salafi ideology by engaging and training younger imams on how to aid their constituencies. Jusic also claims that the Islamic Community was largely dormant and passive precisely because it didn’t believe that Salafism would take root in Bosnia to begin with.³⁸²

5.2.4.1. Salafism

The one religious movement that effectively took root in the Balkans in all of its forms is Salafism, an ideology that promotes a conservative interpretation and practice of Islam. It was introduced to the region during the 1990s.³⁸³ Salafism is a movement based on an ultraconservative doctrine which holds that “women should not be seen in public and should remain segregated from males; education should be anchored in Islamic theology and memorization of the Qur’an; and that most visual arts should be forbidden.”³⁸⁴ After Mujahidin foreign fighters were successfully assisted in Afghanistan in the 1970s by Arab states and U.S. intelligence services, and the Soviets were expelled from Afghanistan, influential Salafists assumed that, upon their return from exile, they would be able to overthrow their countries’ rulers. However, “the failure of ‘jihad within’ (inside the Islamic world), gave rise to the ‘jihad without’ (in the non-Islamic world).³⁸⁵ That was the beginning of the Salafist war against the

³⁸⁰ Interview with Avdo Avdic who quoted Resid Hafizovic and cited his article “They are coming for our children,” which was published in the Bosnian newspaper *Oslobodjenje* in November 2006. This was a prophetic pretext for the occurrences that took place a decade later.

³⁸¹ Interview with DD, a senior EU diplomat, under Chatham House Rules, May 2016.

³⁸² Paraphrased from an interview with Muhamed Jusic, May 2018.

³⁸³ In mainstream Bosnian and Kosovar societies, the terms “Wahhabi” and “Salafi” are used interchangeably. In this study, preference is given to the term Salafi, except in direct quotations. For the importance of standardized terminology and the problems that arise when this isn’t the case, see Juan Carlos Antúnez and Ioannis Tellidis, “The power of words: the deficient terminology surrounding Islam-related terrorism,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 6:1, 2013, pp. 118-139.

³⁸⁴ Tarek Osmani, *Islamism: A History of Political Islam from the fall of the Ottoman Empire to the Rise of ISIS*, Yale University Press, 2017, p. 45. To discover more about the early beginning of Salafism as a cultural and modern avant-garde movement in Islam, see pages 46-52.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

West, and especially the U.S.”³⁸⁶ As a result, the Salafists began gradually shifting their attention to the West and their network locations to European cells. The following paragraphs are but a brief summary of the Salafist movement that crept into Europe’s backyard. I do not possess the tools necessary to assess the Salafist movement in its entirety.

While trying to understand the ideological basis of this radicalization, Western analysts and policymakers have become inundated in attempting to untangle the various theological strands within Islam, notably Wahhabism and Salafism, and often misinterpret the nuances that distinguish these doctrinal concepts. Another problem also lies in agreement over the practical use of the term; an Azharite theologian opposed to terrorism would consider himself a Salafi, as would a young radical who supports the use of terror but whom the theologian would consider to be completely misguided.³⁸⁷ Simply put, Salafism is an attempt to institute the same form of Islam as it was practiced by the earliest generations of Muslims. “The Salaf were the first three generations of Muslims and the term is Arabic for ‘predecessors.’ The Salafi movement and the doctrine of Salafism promote Islam that emulates the Salaf as an eternal model for Muslims and rejects later developments and alterations to the religion (*bid’ah*).”³⁸⁸

One of the first preachers of Salafism in Bosnia was a former volunteer in the infamous El-mujaheed unit, the Egyptian Imad el-Misri, who ran a network of 19 madrasas throughout Bosnia, where attendance was a requirement for the unit’s volunteers.³⁸⁹ It is important to note that many authors have examined the actual relationship between the indigenous populations and foreign fighters and concluded that the relationship was anything but symbiotic or cooperative. However, in practice they officially joined the Bosnian army as a part of the Seventh Muslim Brigade within the Third Corps of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ABiH).³⁹⁰ Several years after the end of the war, almost all senior US and international officials, working to help Bosnia clean up its citizenship rolls, urged senior of the Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA) officials to support the work of the Citizenship Review Commission (CRC) and facilitate

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³⁸⁸ Edina Becirevic, “Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims,” Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo, 2016. P.8

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁹⁰ On intra-Islamic conflicts between the Mujahedeen and local combatants, see Darryl Li, “Jihad in a World of Sovereigns: Law, Violence, and Islam in the Bosnia Crisis,” *Law & Social Inquiry* 41, no. 2 (2015): 371-401, doi:10.1111/lisi.12152.

the deportation of Abu Hamza and other foreign fighters who stayed in Bosnia after DPA was signed, which required all of them to leave shortly after entry into force.³⁹¹ Some of them had gained BiH citizenship illegally, and others sought to obtain it by marrying Bosnian women. Some senior SDA officials in government positions, including the then Minister of Security, Tarik Sadovic of the SDA, were obstructing the CRC's work and actions, such as by not signing deportation orders for Abu Hamza. Miroslav Lajcak, then High Representative threaten openly to the Minister, that he would be ousted if his ministry was too slow in extraditing foreigners, including Abu Hamza, whose citizenships have been revoked.³⁹² The other reason why CRC and departure of foreign fighters was so important is because it was needed to get EU visa facilitation and then liberalization. The EU needed to have confidence that people who have BiH passports are lawfully citizens of the country.³⁹³

As well, foreign fighters from the Middle East and the Gulf States were not the only foreigners in the country. At the same time, a group of Russians also unofficially joined Serb-led military forces, but were soon blocked by a decision of the Russian Parliament. Embarrassed by the (often inebriated) support of Russian recruits to the Serb forces during the Yugoslav wars, the Duma approved a law banning the recruitment of combatants within Russia, along with arming, financing and training of mercenaries, in 1993.³⁹⁴ Greek volunteers fighting alongside the Serbs in eastern Bosnia did not go unnoticed, but did remain under the radar. Other than Hikmet Karcic, not many authors dealt with this.³⁹⁵ The issue of Greek volunteers involved in Srebrenica atrocities had also been silenced within the Greek Parliament and an inquiry that was opened was never completed.

After el-Misri was expelled from his position after the September 11 purge, the fragmented Salafi movement was revived somewhere around 2006 by its most prominent and

³⁹¹ Franco Galdini, "From Syria to Bosnia: Memoirs of a Mujahid in Limbo." *The Nation*, 29 June 2015, www.thenation.com/article/syria-bosnia-memoirs-mujahid-limbo/, (accessed September 2018).

³⁹² "Bosnia: High Representative Demands Expulsion of Islamic Radicals - Adnkronos Security." *ADN Kronos*, July 2017, <http://www1.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Security/?id=1.0.1150259371>, (accessed June 2016).

³⁹³ Interview with DD, June 2018.

³⁹⁴ Janusz Bugajski (1993), quoted in David Malet, "A History of Foreign Fighters," in *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civic Conflicts*. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2013.

³⁹⁵ See Hikmet Karcic, "'Fear Not, For You Have Brothers in Greece': A Research Note," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 3, no. 1 (2008): doi:10.3138/gsp.3.1.147.

passionate leader, Jusuf Barčić. An important local figure who spoke the native language and could relate to the Bosnian population, Barčić was the ideal figure to represent the Salafi movement in Bosnia.³⁹⁶ In addition, he was the first domestic leader to gain prominence in propagating the Salafi philosophy.³⁹⁷ He was the first to openly condemn the official Islamic community in Bosnia and other countries and to gain notoriety for his aggressive and often physically hostile stance against imams.³⁹⁸ Barčić was the first publicly known Salafi leader and amongst the first religious preachers to use the “Srebrenica genocide as an example of what can happen to Muslims when they trust Serbs and do not lead a purified life.”³⁹⁹ He was also one of the first missionaries to verbally attack imams appointed by the Islamic Community.⁴⁰⁰

In 2006, one of the most prominent theologians and academics, Resid Hafizović, published an article in a daily Bosnian newspaper, *Oslobodjenje*, warning about extremist leaders who are “coming for our children.”⁴⁰¹ In both the extreme cases of Barčić’s rhetoric and Hafizović’s article pointing to its damaging effect, the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina displayed active denial over the possibility of religious influences spreading beyond their control. Immediately after the Hafizović article was published, the Islamic Community condemned it and declared that there was not one entity that was operating and teaching Islam outside of its authority. To quiet any skeptics, the Community announced the establishment of a special commission that would investigate the article’s claims. Indeed, the commission later found that there were, in fact, 26 so-called religious assemblies (*para-jamaats*) which were delivering teachings not endorsed by the Community. It also stated that the Community had tried

³⁹⁶ Jusuf Barčić was the first leader to openly attack Bosnian imams and utilize YouTube as a medium for propagating his ideas. For example, the video of him berating and lecturing” Bosnian imams has more than 300,000 hits on the site. . Jusuf Barčić Drži Lekciju Hodjama," YouTube, June 23, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwdTdQMICQQ&t=94s>, (accessed February 2017).

³⁹⁷ Jusuf Barčić’s funeral was attended by several thousand people, including the then Mufti of Tuzla, now the Grand Mufti (Reis ul-Ulema) of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Husein Kavazović. See "Dženaza sejhü Jusufu Barčiću," YouTube, August 09, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxyxQ8MvhJE>, (accessed February 04, 2017).

³⁹⁸ Jusuf Barčić Drži Lekciju Hodjama, YouTube, June 23, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwdTdQMICQQ&t=94s>, (accessed February 25, 2017).

³⁹⁹ Srebrenica Kao Opomena - Jusuf Barčić, YouTube, January 28, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCatJdlQc9U>, (accessed September 25, 2017).

⁴⁰⁰ Barčić’s video attacking imam generated more than 300,000 views: [Jusuf Barčić Drži Lekciju Hodjama, YouTube, June 23, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwdTdQMICQQ&t=94s, accessed February 25, 2017.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwdTdQMICQQ&t=94s)

⁴⁰¹ Resid Hafizović, “Oni dolaze po nasu djecu,” *Oslobodjenje*, November 25, 2006.

to reach out and enforce dialogue and compliance but was unsuccessful in the alleged negotiations with all of them.⁴⁰²

Interestingly enough, a cursory review of the nature of relations between the Islamic Community and the Islamic assemblies outside of the Community suggest that the former did, in fact, have close relations with the founding leaders of the Salafi movement and that it actively condoned experts who warned of the changing nature of Bosnia's Islamic tradition and Muslim society. After the Salafi groups became more prominent and gained a more followers, their visibility ignited conflict between Bosnia and the international community.⁴⁰³ Only after the effects of the controversy started negatively impacting on the Community itself, did it begin openly condemning outside teachings.⁴⁰⁴ Soon after, following allegations and warnings that the government had problems in controlling and sustaining its territorial integrity, law enforcement became involved.⁴⁰⁵

The Islamic Community in Kosovo was quicker to recognize that foreign influence and aid indeed posed a threat to the way Muslim live their lives. As Rexhep Boja, the former head of the Islamic Community in Kosovo, noted:

There are people who come here and want to tell us how we ought to do things. We have been Muslims for 600 years, and we do not need to be told what Islam is. We have our own history and tradition here, our own Islamic culture and architecture. We would like to rebuild our community and to rebuild our mosques, but we want to do it our way.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² One imam revealed that there were, in fact, more than 70 *para-jamaats* present in Bosnia, but the Islamic Community agreed to endorse a smaller number so as not to alarm the public: Interview with CK under Chatham House Rules, May 2018.

⁴⁰³ Barčić's funeral in 2011 was attended by some 3,500 people.

⁴⁰⁴ Prof. Izet ef Čamdžić, the main imam in Zavidovici hutba, spoke out against foreign fighters and ISIS: Islamsku Drzavu(is) Kakvu Drzavu Je Ta(is), Gdje Njema Mjestu Za Druge Vjere, YouTube, September 25, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=228s&v=V0S8qf-B31I&app=desktop>, accessed May 22, 2017, (accessed June 2018).

⁴⁰⁵ One of the first police raids was called "Operation Light." It included 600 policemen and took place around the village of Gornja Maoca, near Brcko. All police forces in the greater area of the Tuzla Canton and the Brcko District of Bosnia took part in the raid. In the words of the BiH Prosecutor's Office, this operation was carried out under the orders of the Prosecutor's Office of BiH and the Court of BiH. The aim was to investigate and prosecute persons suspected of crimes endangering the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a deliberate attack on the constitutional order of BiH and provokes national, racial or religious hatred, strife and intolerance. This operation was the largest joint police action in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina. It included officers of the OSA BiH, as well as members of the regular Police, Border Police, Foreign Affairs Service, State Investigation and Protection Agency, RS Ministry of the Interior, Police of the Brcko District of BiH, and Police Directorate of Cantonal Ministries of Interior in FBiH, as well as the representatives of the EUPM mission in BiH. For a great overview and implications of the "Operation Light" see: Vlado Azinovic, "The True Aim of Bosnia's 'Operation Light'," *Radio Free Europe*, February 12, 2010, https://www.rferl.org/a/The_True_Aims_Of_Bosnias_Operation_Light/1954254.html, (accessed April 2015).

⁴⁰⁶ Schwartz, "The Arab Betrayal," pp. 49–50, cited in Ina Merdjanova, *Rediscovering the Umma, Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism*, Oxford Scholarship, May 2013, p. 84.

Today, most Salafi teachings are sustained by a network of *da'is* (missionaries), who hold open-door preaching sessions, travel throughout Muslim communities, utilize social media and another traditional media extensively, and who look to slowly but steadily grow their base. There was a market for it: "The chaotic post-war environment, rich with competing narratives of victimization and marked by more questions than answers, had, not surprisingly, left some attracted to the straightforwardness of Salafism."⁴⁰⁷

It is also important to understand that Salafism is not a monolithic teaching, but to the contrary, consists of four main branches.^{408,409} Each not only opposes one another ideologically and by interpretation but also methodologically and in their relationship to violence, which the teachings view either as a legitimate or an illegitimate tool in the struggle against other Muslims or other faiths.⁴¹⁰ Unfortunately, as is the case with the majority of foreign influences in Bosnia and Kosovo that were imported from other sociocultural contexts, the Salafi influence was misinterpreted and thus deserves particular attention when it comes to deciphering its complexities.⁴¹¹ In addition, the term "Salafism" had become synonymous with "radical Islam" (it is often interchangeably used with "fundamentalist Islam," "Islamism," "Salafism," and "Wahhabism") and this terminology has subsequently permeated the public sphere and consciousness in the Balkan region. The notion itself is highly problematic, as it ascribes a certain normativity and oversimplification to the essence of a religion, rather than to ascribe observable generalizations to particular groups of people who self-identify as followers of this

⁴⁰⁷ Edina Becirevic, "Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims," Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo, 2016, p. 20.

⁴⁰⁸ The four-type typology was developed by by Muhamed Jusic, "The Complex Narratives and Movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina," ed. Vlado Azinovic, in *Between Salvation and Terror: Radicalization and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in the Western Balkans*. (Sarajevo: Atlantic Initiative, 2017).

⁴⁰⁹ A three-type typology was developed by Quintan Wiktorowicz. He maintains that "Salafis share a common religious creed, they differ over their assessment of contemporary problems and thus how this creed should be applied. Differences over contextual interpretation have produced three major Salafi factions: purists, politics, and jihadis": Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): 207, doi:10.1080/10576100500497004, p. 207. However, this dissertation will utilize the typology developed by a local theologian, Muhamed Jusic.

⁴¹⁰ For a detailed discussion and typology of the various Islamic movements associated with these terms, see Ahmad Moussalli, "Wahhabism, Salafism, and Islamism? Who Is the Enemy?" *Wahhabism, Salafism, and Islamism? Who Is the Enemy?* January 2008, <http://conflictsforum.org/briefings/Wahhabism-Salafism-and-Islamism.pdf>, (accessed June 2018).

⁴¹¹ For different versions of Salafism and its manifestation in the two countries, see by Muhamed Jusic, "The Complex Narratives and Movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina," ed. Vlado Azinovic, in *Between Salvation and Terror: Radicalization and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in the Western Balkans*, Sarajevo: Atlantic Initiative, 2017, and Edina Bećirević, "Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims," Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo, 2016.

religion and who hold radical views justified by references to Islam.⁴¹² As a well-observed historical trend that had dire consequences in the Balkan region, public generalizations made from fabricated observations and a lack of awareness on how special interests can subvert ideas, philosophies, and teachings as a means of control can create dangerous beliefs about ‘the other,’ which can be used to incite greater divisions and mistrust by the strategic propagandizing of these mistruths and false beliefs by public authority figures. At least this is well practiced and documented in the wars of the 1990s in this region.

The first branch of the Salafi movement is the *Taqliidiyun*, a division based on traditional conservatism that is unequivocally apolitical but whose followers strongly oppose the more liberal authority of the Islamic Community and who favor the proliferation of so-called *para-jamaats*⁴¹³. Its followers do not endorse violence and consider it as tainting and damaging to their beliefs. The second division of the Salafi movement is called the *Sahwa Movement* (the Awakening Movement), which advocates for Islamization in education and which is in favor of social reforms based on Islamic principles. Its followers advocate for Islamization through gradual reforms, with a strong emphasis on education and an eventual ideological (but not militant) confrontation with secularists and Westernized liberals.⁴¹⁴

Jihadists constitute the third group. They represent the confrontational branch of the Salafists and consider war as the religious duty of all Muslims, but only under the condition that Muslims are attacked and the enemy is commonly identified and acknowledged as responsible. This group is one of the most misunderstood movements; it is often erroneously labeled as the only operating Salafi group. What is often not discussed in the public sphere concerning jihad is the complexity of jihadi philosophy, which has been purposefully stigmatized and politicized, without the proper contextualization of its philosophical roots. Part of the origin of the derision of the jihadi concept rests within the extremist groups themselves. Indeed, Armando Spataro

⁴¹² Paraphrased from Ina Merdjanova, *Rediscovering the Umma, Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism*, Oxford Scholarship, May 2013.

⁴¹³ The term “*para-jamaat*” was coined by the Islamic Community and endorsed by the mainstream media and security officials. *Jamaat* is the term for a small congregation, and *para-jamaat* is supposed to be an “illegal” congregation that operates outside of the purview and authority of the Islamic Community. It is a place of worship that is not common or out in the open and is led by preachers who oppose the mainstream values of Bosnian society and who are unrecognized by the Islamic Community.

⁴¹⁴ Muhamed Jusic, “The Complex Narratives and Movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” ed. Vlado Azinovic, in *Between Salvation and Terror: Radicalization and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in the Western Balkans.*, Sarajevo: Atlantic Initiative, 2017, p. 44.

believes that violent groups use the subversion of core religious concepts to justify their own ends by creating a “distorted view of the principles of Islam and a violent and criminal interpretation of the obligation of Jihad [which] constitute the main factor of their drive.”⁴¹⁵ The word *jihad* has certainly been politicized and reduced to its violent application, although there is, for example, a concept of jihad that is used as an act of religious transformation in oneself or one applied to educational progress. In a 2005 interview, Mustafa Cerić, then known as Reis-ul-Ulema (Grand Mufti), emphasized that, after the end of the lesser *jihad* (the Bosnian war of the 1990s), the Bosniaks “have to fight a bigger, second *jihad*, one that is intellectual and educational in nature.” He stated that: “We need to do our utmost to educate our children and help them gain knowledge about Islam.”⁴¹⁶ Western experts refer to this push for the Islamization of social institutions as Salafi-jihadism, but Islamic scholars in Bosnia, as well as a majority of the Salafi followers, view this term as derogatory and problematic, because it militarizes the meaning of jihad and links it intrinsically to terrorism.⁴¹⁷ The fourth and most militant, extreme, and reductionist group within the Salafi Movement are the *Takfirists*, who engage in a moral assessment of what they deem “right and wrong” and who assume the role of judging anyone who does not identify with their ideas by identifying them as unbelievers and traitors. In one form or another, all four Salafi branches are currently present in both Bosnia and Kosovo and throughout the Balkan region. However, it is extremely useful to remember that “not all so-called *para-jamaats* in BiH are Salafist, nor do they all advocate violence. Yet, the fact remains that all Bosnian foreign fighters who departed for Syria and Iraq have belonged to Salafist groups.”⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵ Armando Spataro, “Why Do People Become Terrorists?: A Prosecutor’s Experiences,” *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, Volume 6, Issue 3, July 2008, pp. 507–524.

⁴¹⁶ Interview with Mustafa Cerić by Nadeem Azam, 2005, www.angelfire.com/hi/nazam/Aceric.html, quoted in Ina Merdjanova, *Rediscovering the Umma, Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism*, Oxford Scholarship, May 2013. p. 64.

⁴¹⁷ Ahmet Alibasic, “Militantni Ekstremisti, Haridžije Našeg Doba,” ed. Ahmet Alibašić and Muhamed Jusić, in *Savremene Muslimanske Dileme* (Sarajevo: Centar Za Napredne Studije, 2015) quoted, pp. 376-380 quoted in Edina Bećirević, “Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims,” Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo, 2016, p. 36.

⁴¹⁸ Muhamed Juric, “Bosnia and Herzegovina” in Vlado Azinovic, “Between Salvation and Terror,” Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo, 2017, *ibid*, p. 43.

5.2.4.2. The Contest over the Interpretation of Islam

When it comes to the religious interpretation of Islam in Bosnia, there is a clear struggle over who, in fact, possesses the moral authority to interpret Islam in the region.⁴¹⁹ In this context, a number of research questions puzzle academia; one that stands out the most is what, for example, motivates women to join a cause that so blatantly violates their basic rights? No matter what branch, Salafi treat women only as wives and mothers. Furthermore, they openly state that women should not to be allowed to travel alone for more than 75 km and that they should not study or obtain higher education, which would only further enable their independence. Salafi also openly promote polygamy, which is outlawed both in Bosnia and Kosovo.

In the Salafi belief-system, the lives of women and men are highly regulated into a meticulous and organized system of strict duties and responsibilities. A number of experts claim that there is an intended social engineering motive behind the Salafi prescription for the reverence of certain conservative principles of Muslim communal life, and that their strict enforcement is not carried out in an unintended way.⁴²⁰ When it comes to active discussion about the impact of this phenomenon in policy making and human rights circles, most are silent, or silenced; there is no widespread reaction. There is a legitimate fear of criticizing the Salafi, as many other parties vying for influence are readily looking to point fingers and create their own distracting narratives that could detract from serious security concerns over the potential existence of illegal practices and the need for the protection of basic human rights.

As far as the reaction by the official Islamic Community in Bosnia, which emerged as a religious body from a socialist sociopolitical and economic system where religious practice had been largely discouraged, it can be concluded that the Community did not respond in an adequate or timely fashion, partly because it lacked the tools and appropriate narratives to address foreign influence. Likewise, the ongoing internal debate within the Community over what the right approach to dialogue looked like and who should own the processes compromised what could have been a structured and authoritative stance from it. The Community's passive approach was

⁴¹⁹ Becirevic, "Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims".

⁴²⁰ From a personal conversation with Vlado Azinovic, Sead Turcalo, and Edina Becirevic.

heavily influenced by the fact that it believed Muslims in the Western Balkans are among the most tolerant and secular followers of the faith, very immune to the outside influence, and that their constituency was not susceptible to conservative and radical influences. In other words, the Islamic Community thought it was ‘safe.’⁴²¹

Many theologians claim that one of the reasons why some Muslim women and men are so ready to give up their secular freedoms and life rewards after the threat of near extinction during a genocide can be attributed to the belief in the notion of ‘order in chaos.’⁴²² In addition, some would claim that the so-called ‘fear of freedom,’ coined by the psychologist Erich Fromm, pervades this social phenomenon. The concept explores what happens to humanity in the context of its shifting relationship with freedom, with particular regard to the personal consequences of its absence.⁴²³ Muhamed Jusic, an adviser to the Bosnian Grand Mufti and a leading Islamic theologian in the region, explains that, in the face of unjust and dysfunctional society, some choose the familiarity of hyper-regulated daily activities, which give these individuals a much-needed confirmation of safety and stability, as well as the sense that something beneficial has been accomplished.⁴²⁴ Sead Turcalo, a local expert and professor at the University of Sarajevo, further explains the reasons behind the appeal of the Salafi strict and moral guidance to Bosnian Muslims:

In their public lectures, they speak about different subjects. I mostly attend the political teachings, listening to their views on elections and political life. But the questions they get from the audience are largely non-political. They receive guidance-like questions from those who need guidance in everyday life, as if they require step by step supervision. This is where the Community has failed in providing healthy guidelines and a beneficial and inclusive framework for every individual to find his or her productive role in life. Speaking about the Salafist movement, this is where Islamic Community has failed.⁴²⁵

Without entering into debate about why this particular “need for guidance” explanation might be very problematic, if only from a post-colonial or feminist point of view, the fact that the

⁴²¹ Paraphrased from an interview with Muhamed Jusic, May 2018.

⁴²² The term is borrowed from “Order and Chaos,” the first ISIS manifesto.

⁴²³ Interview with Muhamed Jusic, drawing on Eric Fromm’s *The Fear of Freedom*, Routledge Classics, 2nd Edition, 2001.

⁴²⁴ Interview with Muhamed Jusic, May 2018.

⁴²⁵ Interview with Sead Turcalo, March 2018.

Salafi doctrine remains successful and has attracted thousands of followers over the years speaks volumes about academia's and policymakers' inadequacy in offering their own competing visions of the possibilities for a new social fabric in the Western Balkans. Turcalo offers additional concerns: "We allowed the formation of very secluded communities. Radical norms are becoming normal norms."⁴²⁶ Here, he is speaking precisely about the neglected demographics of the social fabric that are most susceptible to seeking religious guidance and adopting conservative practices. He further explains:

It is important to note, too, that even though a majority of Salafi live peaceful lives, they abide by an ideology obsessed with "pure Islam," and thus with purifying the traditional Islam in the Balkans. The fact that most *da'is* stop short of advocating violence does not mean they do not help create a discourse and culture that raise hostility toward everyone outside their own circles. This culture is a breeding ground for radicalism that is just short of advocating violence.⁴²⁷

While analyzing data, it was difficult to distinguish between the solidarity and ideology-related motivations, as they were heavily intertwined and used to reinforce one another. One can conclude, however, that some of the initial recruitment efforts occurred in 'regular' mosques attended by young people in the cities.⁴²⁸ After first contact, they were invited to visit "different, purer mosques," where they would meet radical teachers who challenged or reinforced their beliefs. In some instances, families were not able to recall if these recruitment institutions were part of regular mosques; but in the case of northwest Bosnia, some accounts state that teachers were actively involved in radicalizing young people in standard *meqtebs*⁴²⁹ and instrumentalizing them for the community's needs, although the author is familiar with only two of these cases author.

In another instance, older family members first introduced the different interpretation of Islam to the recruits. The entire process of adopting the ideology of "purer" Islam rather than the one most practiced in Bosnia and Kosovo and adapting beliefs and practices that are different

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Edina Becirevic, "Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims." Sarajevo: Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo, 2016, p. 37.

⁴²⁸ By 'regular,' I mean those under the auspices of the Islamic Community.

⁴²⁹ Elementary schools.

than the ordinary can very much stem from a specific parenting style and family setting. In terms of their children's progressive radicalization, some more observant parents and friends saw gradual changes but did not suspect them to be a problem. For example, CK noted about her son:

He had a Cherokee hairstyle as well, before that. So I didn't mind it when I saw that he grew a longer and particularly styled beard without a moustache. I thought it was just a phase, as it was with the Cherokee. I thought it was a young people's fad... that it would pass. It was a different style of beard, but I didn't see it as a worrying sign.⁴³⁰

In other cases, the process of ideological encapsulation, or the "increasingly elitist definition of self"⁴³¹ was far more steadfast but, in the words of the family, "they failed to see it coming." The only family member living with Nerdin Ibric, his mother, recalled that his transformation happened almost overnight:

The entire change happened so fast, in the blink of an eye. He spilled *rakija* (hard liquor made in the Western Balkans), and our neighbors even laughed at him, cussing him out for 'spilling fortune' and good *rakija*. He soon started shutting off the radio in the house. I did not know where all of this was coming from.⁴³²

Another parent also observed changes:

He tore up all his photos, everything. His mother even hid this from me. What religion bans photography? That's absurd! He ripped up all the photos but one, which I copied. He was a good boy. I wish he had listened to me.⁴³³

Ideological encapsulation could take place in group or individual settings without much difference; it depended primarily on the availability of influential sources. It was only when the influenced individual had already become heavily attracted to radical ideas that he or she would feel compelled to reach out to the collective to further reinforce his or her ideas. This was not the case with all members of the observed sample; in a couple of instances, it can be noted that individuals first explored "different literature" on their own.

⁴³⁰ Interview with OF, April 2018.

⁴³¹ Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 31.

⁴³² Interview with Halima Ibric, the mother of Nerdin Ibric, April, 2016.

⁴³³ Interview with IC, March 2018.

There was not a single case in the observed sample in which ideological indoctrination occurred under threat or through any form of blackmail. It simply took place as a result of skepticism and suspicion regarding the existing order, as well as inquisitiveness and a search for order and guidance. We may never know how many prospective recruits considered the same ideals but were not content with the answers provided by an extremist community. In essence, we cannot discern what dissuaded potential recruits from joining the Salafi movement and what factors they considered before deciding against it. As a result, there is very limited literature on the fallouts.

Almost all parents to whom I have spoken have unequivocally stated that their children were “abducted” from them, but they admitted to not having a proper response to the rapid change through which their child was going. Using the very specific term “abducted” speaks to their self-perceived, passive role in their child’s transformative process and their seeming inability to have an impact on their child. The parents also seemed to share something else in common – a feeling of mistrust in the existing system and rule of law. Several admitted that this had been the case with their other children or family members; they did not know what they could have done differently. They often cited a lack of institutions to turn to for help, having to process a radical and drastic change in a loved one within a very short time period, parental emotions, and a general distrust of authority as the main reasons that prevented them from intervening in their child’s or family member’s radicalization process or reporting them to the police. In several cases, parents resorted to physical violence against their own children in an effort to deter them from attending special gatherings or witnessing their increasing religious behavior and practice. Once evicted from the family home, however, the radicalized children’s recruitment and departure as foreign fighters usually occurred within days. The ineffective methods of parental deterrence simply further estranged their children and all they could do at that point was to passively anticipate their children’s departure.

These insights enable us to conclude that radicalization is usually an outcome of ideologically better-guided and governed communities that exert social influence as opposed to dysfunctional elements in the family, community, or state. Although this conclusion is not unexpected and is more or less self-evident, it must not be overlooked. It can serve either as the

foundation for policy making within less radical religious groups vis-à-vis their constituencies or as part of a radicalization disengagement strategy by law enforcement agencies, civil society and other layers of society.

When it comes to discussions about ideology, I agree with Ina Merdjanova, who maintains that sensationalist journalists and misinterpreting researchers have advanced ill-informed narratives about the Balkans being the hub of transnational Islamism and particularly susceptible to extremism.⁴³⁴ Simply put, the extremist and radical teachings of Islam lack historical roots and an attraction to the majority upon which they could build their first foundations in the region. The aim of this dissertation is not to join the debate regarding the depth of the extremist influence but rather to help paint its picture based on primary evidence. While we should not ignore extremism of any sort in particularly fragile countries in the region that have proven to be susceptible to external forces, such as Bosnia and Kosovo, we must not forget that all while the enabling circumstances are present and given the cause, people can be mobilized.

Where I differ with Merdjanova is when she outlines the confines of the opportunities for the spread of faith-based extremism.⁴³⁵ As per much empirical research by local experts, extreme voices easily permeate the most susceptible pores of society. The type of questions that radical preachers receive at their weekly public gatherings provide guidance like, for example "if it's allowed for their daughters to play soccer, or if they can sleep on their bellies," as already mentioned. These speak volumes about the audience of these gatherings, their failing societies, and the ease with which a willing mastermind can twist things to their favor.⁴³⁶ In postwar

⁴³⁴ And here I reference books that have basic facts wrong, for example: Loretta Napoleoni and Christopher Deliso, *Coming Balkan Caliphate: The Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (Praeger, 2007). John R. Schindler, *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qaida, and the Rise of Global Jihad* (St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2007). For a detailed and informed discussion on this see: Marko Attila Hoare, "Christopher Deliso, John R. Schindler and Shaul Shay on Al-Qaeda in Bosnia," Greater Surbiton, August 08, 2012, <https://greatersurbiton.wordpress.com/2008/06/02/al-qaeda-in-bosnia/>, (accessed August 11, 2015).

⁴³⁵ "It seems fair to conclude that Balkan Muslims have significant internal defense mechanisms against potential radicalization. They have remained rooted in their traditional Islamic practices and beliefs and have strongly opposed foreign-instigated re-Islamization projects. Both religious and liberal publics have resisted attempts to spread Islamic ideas that are perceived as extremist or potentially harmful for the social peace. The resistance against imported Islamic radicalism thus operates both within the Islamic communities and on a larger social level, not to mention on the level of state policies in compliance with the pressures imposed by the post- 9/11 security climate. "Radical Islam" in the Balkans therefore lacks both historical roots and a social base," as Merdjanova concludes.

⁴³⁶ Interview with Sead Turcalo regarding his many observations of the Salafi gatherings, April 2018.

societies, there is simply nothing else visible, be it value or ideology, that one can offer as an alternative to which these communities would be able to refer. In turn, they receive a reductionist worldview that regulates their lives in such detail that it is very easy to disseminate to people who are in search of supervision, seeking authorities who would help them to understand their roles in societies and help them feel accomplished.

5.2.4.3. Extreme Politics

I observed at the beginning that the highest security threats currently in Bosnia are extreme groups that are endorsed and normalized in public discourse by politicians, who present a viable political option such as the Serb-nationalist party SNSD, for example, or the Croat-nationalist party HDZ, that center their election campaigns on narratives of secession to masquerade their deficiencies in providing for their constituency. Extremist radical groups inspired by extremist Islamic teachings still don't have a corresponding match in the political life of the country. The main criticism is not that the leading Bosniak-nationalist party SDA doesn't have secessionist aspirations, as it is the only dominant party that advocates for precisely the opposite, but that it also is composed of conformists, is too corrupt to care for its constituency, and is too compromised to embrace the values of the extremist voices amongst its constituency.

The leader of the Salafi community in the village of Osve has a curious view regarding the power dynamic and the future political landscape in Bosnia. Important to note that Osve and other so-called Salafi-villages are in the triangle Teslic-Tuzla-Brcko area. Brcko, it was an area of focus for Bosnian police and security services, both because of its important role as trade enter port and a potential avenue for traffickers, but also because of the presence of extremists located on Brcko District's periphery.⁴³⁷ He maintains that Salafi groups have been tacitly endorsed and tolerated, even used, by the leading Bosniak-nationalist party, the SDA, to rally the voices of Bosniaks from rural areas who are traditionally voting "correctly" but were, in election years, reassured once more that their party in power had abandoned them, but would win the next election. According to him, only after they did not obey party demands did the SDA politicians unofficially call every Salafi leader over the telephone during negotiations over the closing the

⁴³⁷ Interview with a senior international diplomat, June 2018.

illegal *para-jaamats* and bringing them under the auspices of the Islamic Community, conspire with the Islamic Community, and oust them from the community, or at least attempt to do so.⁴³⁸ As this is a far-fetched accusation, without proper evidence, it won't be discussed further; however what came out of the interview was his ambition or at least pondering about entering political life with the desire to represent a viable political option for all of his brothers and sisters who are not properly represented and hence cannot fight for their rights.

The SDA is not representing our interests. They never have. They are manipulative and only care for us every second year, during the election campaigns. As a war veteran and a citizen of this country, I too deserve to have a road to my house, a job, a school for my children...

They (the SDA) are terrified of me starting a new party. They keep coming to my house, calling me... I only jokingly said that I will found a political party to get them to do something in our community, to help us out. Now, I see that they are actually terrified of losing a part of their constituency. If I start a party, I would for sure have people voting for me... They would for sure vote for us. Think about me winning 2,000 votes in my community. That means at least a seat in the Municipal Council.⁴³⁹

Once I voiced my findings in discussions with local experts, I was further assured that it is quite possible that the extreme radical and right wing elements of the SDA voters might not be entirely happy with how their constituencies are represented and, if they actually had alternative, further right representations, they would have voted for them. In addition, reciprocal extremism was brought up again; its logic might be too simplified, but can hold true: "if these secessionist have a party for which to vote, why won't we have a party that more firmly opposes this trend, and more importantly, upholds our true values."

In Kosovo, there was an option for the conservative Muslim population called the Fjala (The Word) Party, led by Gezim Kelmendi that ceased to exist after it won only one percent of the vote in the 2014 elections. Prior to that, the party had two MPs in the government. In addition, another party, the Levizja Islamike Bashkohu (Islamic Movement Unite, or LISBA),

⁴³⁸ Interview with Izet Hodzic, March 2018.

⁴³⁹ *ibid*

which had originated as hardline conservative, religious organization briefly thrived in the political life of Kosovo. These two groups fought to build a central mosque in Pristina and advocated for women to wear the hijab in schools and public institutions and the inclusion of religion in school curricula. Their alleged connection with radical Salafi groups came to light when one of their leaders, Fuad Ramiqi, was arrested in connection to foreign fighter departures from Kosovo. Both of these political options were short-lived and are not present in Kosovo's current political life.⁴⁴⁰

There were clear attempts by extremist religious organizations in Kosovo to undercut the country's Muslim clerical apparatus, but they encountered resistance from local conventional believers, including the chief Muslim cleric, Naim Ternava.⁴⁴¹ This is in a line with what Shpend Kursani concluded; in short, the attitudes of the 300 fighters from Kosovo who have joined ISIS since its creation do not reflect those of the general Kosovar population, which is roughly 1.8 million, in general regarding the West, and especially the U.S., as the latter is seen as the country's savior from Serbian oppression. Kursani cited a recent KCSS security barometer, which indicated that 94 percent of Kosovo's citizens believe that the country should join the EU, and 89 percent support membership in NATO.⁴⁴² Furthermore he highlighted that 93 percent of Kosovo's citizens' state that the country should further its partnership with the U.S.⁴⁴³ As Lulzim Fushtica, a Kosovo government representative mentioned in an interview, "these conservative organizations tried to become political factors in Kosovo, but the community rejected them."⁴⁴⁴

There is, however, no prescription to what in fact this new power-dynamics might hold for Bosnia, a country that has never witnessed an attempt by conservative religious organizations that would appeal to Muslims, to take political form. The attitudes of this country's population towards the U.S. are slightly different and they, of course, differ across the ethnic lines. The most

⁴⁴⁰ See Nektar Zogjani, "Kosovo Police Swoop on Hardline Muslim Leaders," *Balkan Insight*, September 17, 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-police-swoop-on-hardline-muslim-leaders>, (accessed July 15, 2017).

⁴⁴¹ Stephen Schwartz, "Kosovo Political Leaders Challenge Islamists," *The Weekly Standard*, January 20, 2014, <https://www.weeklystandard.com/stephen-schwartz/kosovo-political-leaders-challenge-islamists>, (accessed July 20, 2017).

⁴⁴² Shpend Kursani, "Two Myths about Kosovo's 'ISIS Problem'," *Prishtina Insight*, June 08, 2016, <https://prishtinainsight.com/two-myths-kosovos-isis-problem/>, (accessed August 02, 2017).

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁴ Interview with Lulzim Fushtica, June 2018.

recent opinion poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) show that, while a majority of Bosniaks (64 percent) and Croats (56 percent) have a mostly or somewhat positive view the role of the U.S., just 26 percent of Serbs hold this view. Attitudes towards European Union integration correlate with these preferences: while a majority of Bosniaks (65 percent) and Croats (59 percent) strongly support accession, a mere 18 percent of Serbs strongly favor joining.⁴⁴⁵

The poll also revealed strong feelings of pessimism among citizens and indicated vulnerabilities to external influence. Given the general dissatisfaction of the people in a country in which mass civil protests against injustice and corruption in high places are held in even the least likely cities and entities, this development warrants a closer look.⁴⁴⁶ In addition, a general contempt with the current political situation in Bosnia and the personal quest for fulfillment has resulted in an increase in attendance of conservative, ad-hoc preaching gatherings that are, in fact, becoming far more organized and sustained now than they were a few years back.⁴⁴⁷ Finally, with value-based ideas come socio-economic influence. An experts have noted, “In the hotels and shopping centers they build in Bosnia, they forbid serving alcohol, for example. They have a preference for employees who are Salafist, which gives young people who are not Salafists an incentive to change their lifestyle in order to get a job.”⁴⁴⁸ The concern is that more young people will be motivated by the possibility of employment to adopt or accept Salafism.

⁴⁴⁵“IRI’s program in BiH focuses on three major objectives – to research the topic, to inform and equip political stakeholders to better understand the scope of the problem, and to offer sustainable and realistic solutions. By bringing together IRI’s experience in public opinion research, expertise from the academic community, and the political capital and media exposure of partners from political parties, IRI strives to steer the public discussion on P/CVE related themes towards measured, realistic, and fact-based conclusions and recommendations.” Interview with Borislav Spasojevic, March 2018. See the IRI poll at http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/march_28-april_12_2018_bih_poll.pdf, (accessed March 2018).

⁴⁴⁶ "In Bosnia, Young Man's Death Stirs Nationwide Protest," France 24, July 07, 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20180707-bosnia-young-mans-death-stirs-nationwide-protest>, (accessed July 27, 2018).

⁴⁴⁷ Edina Becirevic, "Bosnia and Herzegovina Report," British Council, April 2018, https://www.britishcouncil.ba/sites/default/files/erf_bih_report.pdf, accessed May 2018, found that “Research participants from intelligence and police agencies were among those who expressed concern about the activities of *para-jamaats* and their influence on youth living in their vicinity; but they also routinely told researchers that they worried about increasing numbers of urban youth from Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Zenica being attracted to non-violent Salafi narratives. An Islamic scholar explained that, “since their acceptance into the Islamic Community, [Salafists] have increased their online presence. But they are also much more present now in local communities, offering lectures. They are now much more organized. When they agreed to come under the umbrella of the IC... the agreement was that they can organize gatherings and lectures at non-IC premises if they tone their message down, but they don’t even respect that. In some towns where local imams are friendly to them, they even hold these lectures inside Islamic Community mosques.” p.34.

⁴⁴⁸ See Edina Becirevic, "Bosnia and Herzegovina Report," British Council, April 2018, https://www.britishcouncil.ba/sites/default/files/erf_bih_report.pdf, p.40, (accessed May 2018).

5.2.5. Concluding Remarks

As it is now well understood, there is no single profile of the foreign fighter, and there is no single motivation that led to his or her decision to leave. I have observed perceived motivations that fall under one of three categories: solidarity, instrumentality, and ideology. I have concluded that each of these has been used to reinforce the other, especially the first and the last. Solidarity was, in the case of Kosovo, combined with perceived “heroism” and, in the Bosnian case, as “repaying the debt” to foreign fighters that had aided that country in the 1990s. As much as socio-economics mattered, it is the conclusion of this work that it was not greed that led these young people in their decisions. However, one must observe that they were typically underperformers in these areas, even in countries like Bosnia and Kosovo, and that most lived with one parent on a single or irregular paycheck. Those living in rural areas lived in very run-down housing conditions. Finally, although there were cases of some individuals who were not well versed in religious interpretation or were simply lacking the cognitive skills to understand the nuances of Islam, reductionist and simplified ideology served as a glue to the new identity – entrepreneurship. Finally, all of the recruits felt a certain ‘pleasure in agency’; their decision to leave was their own, and it was facilitated by larger networks, which will be elaborated on in the following subchapter.

5.3. Enabling Networks⁴⁴⁹ and Organization

5.3.1. Introduction

In an effort to operationalize the data of the sustained networks that aided or deterred recruits, I have divided it into three subgroups, or rather, three themes based on interview responses and other secondary sources. ‘Networks’ in this dissertation are understood as what Marc Sageman defines as “social bonds predating ideological commitment, that inspire alienated young men to join [the jihad]. These men, isolated from the rest of society, were then transformed into fighters. The tight bonds of family and friendship, paradoxically enhanced by

⁴⁴⁹ In his “Understanding Terror Networks,” Marc Sageman was one of the first authors to argue that a thorough understanding of the networks that allow terrorists to proliferate is key to mounting a defense against political violence.

the tenuous links between the cell groups only further reinforced the existence of such networks.”⁴⁵⁰ This is especially true when neither the institutions nor the community had an adequate response to this trend. In general, the term network here also denotes a clique – ‘often built on human similarities, [...] dense networks that members form [...] that are local and that are based on face-to-face encounters, attraction, and development of long-term bonds.’⁴⁵¹

I subsequently split the dataset into three themes that pervaded the responses and could be qualified either as a type of network by default, or as an operationalized network which was used for specific ends, often administered by hierarchy and sustained by loyalty that reinforces the recruitment process. The first theme is *Family* – the smallest influential unit represented that has played a very different role, depending on the national context of the recruits (either in Bosnia or in Kosovo). Hence, in the following chapter, the unit of the family will be examined within its geographical scope, and the findings will be related in separate Bosnian and Kosovo subchapters. The second theme is one I have termed ‘*Inexpensive Prospects*’, which were used extensively to sustain the network in the case of Bosnian recruits, but not very much in the case of their Kosovar counterparts. Finally, the concept of various networks being utilized as active, growing and sustainable platforms for enabling and furthering radicalization will also be examined separately. Among these network platforms, a brief introduction will be made of online networks, or rather networks that utilize the online space for maintaining contact and how this communications translate to the offline world. To conclude, a comprehensive observation and analysis will be made on how all of these networks originated, were maintained, and became part of a widespread effort to produce ideological agents and willing foreign fighters, a multifactor process which is at the core of the research investigation of this dissertation.

5.3.2. Family

5.3.2.1. Bosnia and Herzegovina

As noted, a majority of the sample of the observed foreign fighters came from a broken or dysfunctional family. Single parenting is never easy, let alone in the context of perpetual

⁴⁵⁰ Although Sageman's systematic analysis highlights the crucial role the networks played in the terrorists' success, he concludes that the choice to embrace violence was entirely their own.

⁴⁵¹ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terrorist Networks*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, p. 152.

poverty and unemployment. These individuals witnessed hardships and setbacks since birth. In one specific example, TC's son, IC, grew up mostly with his father, who displayed signs of suffering from psycho-sociological problems.⁴⁵² TC's wife left them both some years back but, according to other family members, their marriage was far from functional even while it lasted. They lived in a poor household, in the rural area around Velika Kladusa, with a dirt floor and regular periods without running water and electricity. After his mother left them, IC and his cousin BC found refuge with Husein Bilal Bosnic, an individual notorious for recruiting new network members, including his own family members and friends. Having escaped from a broken family and dire living conditions, IC sought guidance and found himself in simple, yet very welcoming and comfortable surroundings, where he even managed to find employment in the community. At the tender age of 18, he found a new family and a new home. He stopped coming back to his own house, returning only to pick up things he'd left behind. This escalated matters with his father. TC recalls these disagreements with his son:

He was disrespectful, trying to forbid me from smoking, criticizing me for *haram* (sin). I told him, as long as he was under my roof, poor as it is but which I built, he would have to obey my rules. Many had tried to take away my dignity and my freedom, and I was not going to have my youngest take away my will. He hadn't even seen what real life was, he saw only a little bit. He told me, well, I have a new home now, and then he left.⁴⁵³

Nerdin Ibric, the Bosnian attacker of Zvornik, found himself as a toddler in a hospital in a Serb-dominated city that was soon to be ethnically cleansed of all Bosniaks. He was later exchanged, probably being the youngest captured toddler who had faced such trauma. Although physically unharmed, it is hard to establish whether and to what degree this event traumatized him for life. His mother claims that this event, and the fact that he grew up without a "proper male figure, a father figure," were the triggering mechanisms for him to seek guidance elsewhere. His older brother was already in Switzerland, so Ibric lived with his mom in the village of Kucuk Kula in a small, yet functional house. In comparison to the rest of the village, they did not endure financial struggle. One of the main giveaways to Nerdin's mother that something was amiss with her son was his insistence on equipping the second floor of the house with gym gear, where he started

⁴⁵² As a researcher, I acknowledge that, without the proper skills to actually assess the psycho-sociological state of an interviewee, this might read as an overstretched statement. However, given the length of the interview – six hours – the subject's clear anxiety and paranoia attacks, and oft-repeated statements all contributed to this conclusion.

⁴⁵³ Interview with TC, June 2016.

spending much of his time and exercising extensively. Being occupied with farming and everyday life, these seemingly innocent changes went largely unnoticed by her, although she did get alarmed when he started turning off her radio; among many daily activities, he started to label music as sinful. She assigned these acts of controlled rebellion to his young age and lack of energy.⁴⁵⁴ In several cases, friends and family quickly noticed drastic changes to his behavior and normative judgment regarding activities he'd previously enjoyed, from attending soccer games to enjoying music, or drinking alcohol for that matter.

Although fairly better educated than the average, MK and KM raised their sons alone. They weren't preoccupied with farming, for each had a steady job in a small local company. However, both admitted to have neglected their sons to some degree.⁴⁵⁵ It is not a simple task to assess whether the guilt that plagues many of the mothers interviewed is a self-inflicted way of dealing with the loss of their child and their way of justifying the conscious choice made by their children to go to war. However, unlike some, this particular individual a "fatherly figure", an uncle who acted as a father in many situations. MK's brother -in law, a war veteran himself, had already joined one of the *para-jamaats* in the country and was probably the initial introductory reference to radicalization networks for him.

In the case of the first suicide bomber from Bosnia, Emrah Fojnica, he grew up with both parents, although his father was admittedly often absent.⁴⁵⁶ Hamdo Fojnica maintained that his son's unjust arrest and police harassment at the time when his son was a suspected to be aiding Mevlid Jasarevic, a shooter at the Sarajevo-based US Embassy in 2011, only further legitimized his son's ongoing radicalization.⁴⁵⁷ Fojnica was released for lack of legitimate evidence of his involvement in this crime, but apparently this event prompted him to seek further guidance and indoctrination in the radical Salafi circles. Out of the women who joined radicalization networks, AD, VK and JP, all grew up without one parent.⁴⁵⁸ In the observed sample, the case of FF1. FF2

⁴⁵⁴ Interview with Halima Ibric, 2016.

⁴⁵⁵ She was tending to her dying mother for a long time and admittedly neglected her son.

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with Izet Hodzic, April 2018.

⁴⁵⁷ Mevlid Jasarevic received a 15-year prison sentence for terrorism, while Emrah Fojnica and Munib Ahmetpahic were acquitted of all charges.

⁴⁵⁸ Based on interview with AD and an analysis of SIPA documents. In the case of AD, she grew up without a father. VK grew up without a mother, while JP's father was largely absent, or when present, very violent.

and FF3 are particularly interested, because they grew up with both parents, although in two cases, entire families have left Bosnia to join ISIS.

5.3.2.2. Kosovo

One of the main findings about the Kosovo recruits and a major difference in the Bosnian case study, is that the family was the primary source of recruitment and served as a radicalization hub for many. In fact, out of 110 profiled foreign fighters, nearly 70 per cent had some sort of family connection or family ties to Salafi ideology, and most of the recruits had known each other prior to departure by belonging to the same faith-based grassroots organization or by following the same religious clerics.⁴⁵⁹ In contrast to Bosnia, the lack of any parallel or competing networks in Kosovo can be ascribed to the fact that family and social ties were well-functioning recruitment processes in their own right.

As the research suggests, strong emotional bonds can be utilized as effective recruitment mechanisms. Extant research suggests that the presence of one radicalized family member increases the likelihood of other family members becoming radicalized as well.⁴⁶⁰ Albert Berisha, who twice appealed his sentence for joining rebel groups in Syria and who was very active on social and traditional media in his outreach to demystify his experiences while awaiting his sentence, claimed that he knew of 60 families, each of which has produced at least one foreign fighter.⁴⁶¹ In one particular Bosnian case, a family of eleven members left. As a matter of fact, there were numerous cases of family members, relatives, siblings, or cousins who travelled together to Syria and Iraq. The following is one particular account, by FF1, who had numerous family members leave as foreign fighters:

I left with three of my cousins. They told me we will do well there, we will fight for freedom. The four of us were pretty lost upon arrival, but we stuck together as a family. I am the only one that has made it back home alive. The way I escaped was that I said my family needed help since my father was in a critical condition. I lied, but I just wanted to return to my other family.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with Vesa Kelmendi, June 2018.

⁴⁶⁰ UNDP report, Push and Pull Factors, p. 34.

⁴⁶¹ Interview with Kujtim Bytyqi, June 2018.

⁴⁶² Interview with FF1, June 2018.

Radicalization that occurs through an already radicalized family member appears to have been particularly effective in the case of women. The majority of females who travelled to Syria and Iraq were married, suggesting that they most likely followed their husbands; however, this assumption remains generally unsubstantiated. It appears that imams, foreign fighters, and other close associates on the ground engaged with one another as a tight-knit and organized network unit that acted in cohesion to bring about the process of indoctrination and travel coordination to ISIS-held locations to their its community members. This inference is in line with the theory of group dynamics and socialization as influential forces that aid in the process of radicalizing individuals.⁴⁶³

In addition, many experts and law enforcement representatives view the family ties of extremist and violent groups to be increasingly more tight-knit and organized in the past ten years, since the members tend to marry from within the group, rather than engaging with outsiders who may have more moderate views. The pattern of cohesion and alienation becomes even more pronounced as the heightened attention to their communities exposes members to even greater scrutiny and marginalization.⁴⁶⁴ This scenario is reflected in the case of FD, who married ED, a dual citizen of Austria and Bosnia, who became a foreign fighter. Her own family was stunned at how conservative their new in-laws were. AD's daughter from a previous marriage was already wearing the Islamic head cover at the age of eight, and AD was not allowed to visit her male cousins alone nor participate in family gatherings at which both sexes were present. Her family accepted it, as she had not been forced to enter into the marriage, although they started to question and fear the new family dynamics. Their fears were justified when they learned that AD, her daughter, and husband had moved to Syria.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶³ Randy Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 7-36, doi:10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.1. Quoted in an independent report by Behar Xharra and Nita Gojani, "Understanding Push and Pull Factors in Kosovo: Primary Interviews with Returned Foreign Fighters and their Families," United Nations Development Program, November 2017, http://unckt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/UNDP_Push-and-Pull-Factors_ENG.pdf, p. 36, (accessed March 2018).

⁴⁶⁴ More on marginalization and stigmatization will be elaborated in the subsection below.

⁴⁶⁵ The word "fear" came up several times during the interview. The family members explained that fear was underlying this new family dynamic, as not only were they fearing the impact of the new practices to which their daughter was subject out of ignorance, but also out of the desire to protect her, as her liberties were rapidly being stripped away.

Fatos Makolli, director of the counter terrorism department at the Kosovo Police (KP), points to familial background, common values, and familiarity as precedents for enabling radicalism to thrive:

We observe marriages, for example, between the widow of a fallen foreign fighter and another extremist that we have placed on a watch list. It is nothing new that a member of a similar value system would marry into a familiar value system. What we cannot predict is the overall change in society that those extreme voices would pose.⁴⁶⁶

The family is a powerful micro-unit.⁴⁶⁷ This has proven to be the case in the Bosnian example, where many interviewees pointed to their son's or daughter's susceptibilities to ideological persuasion as stemming from not having a proper family or family setting, a guardian or a patron, or the love and care of an absent mother. The familial dynamics constituting susceptibility to radicalization in the case of Kosovo were somewhat different. Many family members departed together to join ISIS, and it is clear that the family unit acted as the most influential catalyst and incubator for the recruitment, radicalization, and formation of foreign fighters. Given these trends, an important question emerges: in the case of Bosnia, what elements acted in unison to sustain the radicalization networks and what impetus guaranteed loyalty if not family members who also joined? This question will be further explored and elaborated on in the subsequent subchapter, which discusses the findings concerning the semi-newly coined concept of 'inexpensive prospects.'

5.3.3. The Bait of 'Inexpensive Prospects'

As defined in the previous paragraphs, foreign fighters from Bosnia and Kosovo were not paid for their services; that is, they did not receive a regular pay check for their contributions to the ISIS network. Many interviewees confirmed that they were aware of small allowances given to foreign fighters to help them get by and afford basic necessities for their families, but that there were no extravagant rewards flowing into often shared households. They were also not paid

⁴⁶⁶ Interview with a Kosovo Police officer, Chatham House rules, June 2018.

⁴⁶⁷ For an interesting study on Balkan family dynamics, see Karl Kaser, "Introduction: Household and Family Contexts in the Balkans," *The History of the Family* 1, no. 4 (1996): 375-386, doi:10.1016/s1081-602x(96)90008-1.

for their services to the community if they had joined one officially prior to their departure. However, the majority were offered basic service jobs and opportunities prior to their departure, an incentive that I term “Inexpensive Prospects”. The term ‘inexpensive’ is pretty self-explanatory; it implies that, since these jobs were set up within the rural community and serviced the community, the self-sustaining mechanisms became important for survival and had very little cost in terms of implementation and delegation. And since most rural households rely on such opportunities for their livelihood in the first place, instituting similar methods of community empowerment did not entail major investment to operationalize and uphold.

The term ‘prospect’ is much more complex, encompasses much more than simply employment, and requires further elaboration. Synonyms for the term include ‘vision,’ ‘potential,’ ‘chance,’ ‘search,’ etc. The term was specifically used in interviews with family members, who were well aware of these occurrences but also by those who would mention it as something their sons would often speak about. It is by far understood that the new concept does not serve to play into the ‘back to the socio-economic incentive debate.’ As stated that it is not greed that drove the young people to join the cause. The semi-new concept offers a combination of all of the above, and it underlines its crucial role in ideological encapsulation and separation from their biological family to their new family.

The fact that recruits utilized and, in a way, institutionalized the network speaks of their ability to think proactively about creating order out of chaos and uncertainty. Indeed, the community was able to sustain a network of beneficiaries of inexpensive prospects and thus further incentivize and ideologically encapsulate the recruits by providing them with opportunities to have meaningful work, build self-confidence, and generate group loyalty in exchange for a more personal contribution of limited time and energy. One interviewee, BH, reported on his son’s newfound duties in the community:

He told me there is a *mesjid*⁴⁶⁸ in D, which he will take care of and act as a superintendent. I was happy that he finally had a job. Later, I learned that he and his ‘brothers’ were doing all sorts of jobs – selling books, selling things in the market, chopping wood and selling it. He didn’t get paid much. I later learned all of this, but he didn’t want me to worry. I know he didn’t make

⁴⁶⁸ A place of worship.

much, if anything at all, because if he had earned enough, he would have given some to his mother and brother.⁴⁶⁹

Official and open source data in Bosnia attests that 70 percent of foreign fighters were unemployed.^{470, 471} However, while both Bosnia and Kosovo rank first in youth unemployment rates in Europe, the Bosnian young recruits were far from unemployed.⁴⁷² What is usually unreported in these statistics is that, in fact, many of these individuals did have informal types of employment. Nearly all the recruits from the sample were capable young men who offered their skills for the use and betterment of the communities they had joined. The community leaders, in turn, provided its members not only spiritual guidance, but also material satisfaction and self-realization. Seasonal jobs, although undocumented, provided meaning, passed time productively, and delivered much needed livelihood. What is implied by undocumented work in these contexts is that informal employment ‘contracts’ were usually unwritten and were simply verbally negotiated, understood, and accepted.

This systematic and systemic approach to utilizing people’s skills and putting them to good use is often overlooked when discussing the mechanisms of how recruiters were able to lure prospective members into the community and solidify their ties and loyalty in the group. It seems that recruiters readily and quite skillfully exploited these gaps between the labor market and acute unemployment in Bosnia.

In addition to the types of employment activities mentioned, there is enough evidence to suggest that this parallel employment network was well executed and that the selection and designation of specific work activities to individual recruits was not incidental. Two interviews revealed that there was an infamous “Hamzibeg Estate” in the northeastern part of Bosnia, in the vicinity of the city of Tuzla, where people who chose to join the Salafi community had been offered small daily wages for all types of farm work. Speaking of Hamzibeg, we should note that it is most likely Muradif Hamzabegovic who established the estate; he was involved in organized

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with BH, April 2018.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with Mirsad Crnovrsanin, BiH Prosecutor’s Office, March 2018.

⁴⁷¹ Interview with Mario Janecek, BiH Ministry of Security, May 2016.

⁴⁷² Alan Crosby and Lela Scepanovic, “Jobless Balkan Youths Find It’s Not What You Know but Whom,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, August, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/jobless-balkan-youths-find-its-not-what-you-know-but-who/28699704.html> (accessed October 12, 2017).

human smuggling and received a six-year sentence but fled to Syria in 2013 to avoid jail.⁴⁷³ One of these sources reported that Hamzabegovic's nick name, "Hamzabeg," was used as a password for foreign fighters entering Syria from Turkey at the ISIL-controlled Bab al-Hawa border crossing.⁴⁷⁴

Similarly, in the northwestern part of Bosnia, a self-appointed Islamic preacher, Husein Bilal Bosnic, who was accused of recruiting young Bosnians to fight for the Islamic State and subsequently was sentenced to seven years in prison, had been known to organize a "shepherd's network" for hundreds of goats and sheep he had purchased with Saudi-donated money.⁴⁷⁵ A network of beekeepers operated in the villages in central-eastern Bosnia, providing much needed employment to local communities. Evidence suggested that regular exchanges of goods occurred between households in which, for example, one jar of honey would be exchanged for some other good.⁴⁷⁶ In turn, the community's security, self-sustainability, and loyalty were guaranteed and sustained.

The reasons why these inexpensive opportunities matter is not only because of the material security they provided, but also because they generated a sense of usefulness and worthiness in disempowered individuals, something that the post-war Bosnian government had failed to do. Interestingly enough, 'Inexpensive Prospects' are unique to the Bosnian case study and recruitment patterns. Research suggests that when it comes to the Kosovo case, there were no similar attempts to maintain and sustain the network by providing inexpensive prospects to individuals.⁴⁷⁷ The most likely answer and the one that this analysis had previously suggested is that the network had already been solidified through family ties and needed no further leverage of influence to enforce its recruitment agenda and ideological indoctrination.

⁴⁷³ Second-Instance Verdict, Prosecutor v. Mirsad Bektasevic and others, No. X-KŽ-06/190, May 21, 2007, <http://www.sudbih.gov.ba>, quoted in Vlado Azinovic and Muhamed Jusic, *The New Lure of the Syrian War –The Foreign Fighters' Bosnian Contingent*, The Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo 2016, p. 41.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁷⁵ A SIPA interview, April 2016.

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with GD, March 2018.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with Rudina Jakupi, June 2018.

5.3.4. Parallel Networks

5.3.4.1. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Along with the quasi-employment apparatus, there were a number of other community service structures in place that further sustained a solid network of recruiters and recruits. As emphasized by some of the interviewees, they were aware of a number of other services and opportunities provided by the group. Some of these included basic healthcare and transportation privileges, while others were more elaborate, such as one set up in the northeast region of Bosnia, where a group took care of those who were less privileged. For example, this particular group had set up a food bank, at which all types of food products were available to all. These food banks acted somewhat like grocery stores without price tags, and operated under the premise that each person would fill an available basket with all products needed and would pay as much as they were able to afford. These “transactions” were not facilitated by any particular person; however, an unofficial leader of the community would supply the store once a week.⁴⁷⁸ Many were aware of this peculiar system but did not know for a long time who operated it, until other villagers took notice and notified the police about suspected “ideological bribes”.⁴⁷⁹ There seem to have been no other occurrence of similar schemes in other parts of Bosnia, and none recorded in Kosovo.

The case of Elvira Balic, the only known Bosnian woman combatant who joined ISIS (the only two women known to have taken up arms from Kosovo are Qamile Tahiri and Laura Hyseni), points to other forms of services with which the group was provided. Elvira complained that she was possessed with a “*dzin*”, or *evil spirit*, although, looking into her case more deeply, it is quite possible that mental illness could have played a role. She did not seek help for this ailment through traditional institutions, understanding that she could not afford them, nor did she know to whom to turn. In the end, she found a local “healer” who was connected to radical groups. This was her first face to face connection to someone from radical circles, although she did look for other connections in the Salafi online community and found members from

⁴⁷⁸ Interview with Samira Bilalic, May 2016.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Germany with whom to communicate. Eventually, she connected with someone online, and decided to leave for Syria.⁴⁸⁰

Another intriguing aspect of recruitment patterns is that the majority of, if not all, recruits from the far northwest region of Bosnia's Krajina (an area that comprises the cities of Velika Kladusa, Bihac, and Cazin), had parents or other family members who belonged to the "Autonomasi," a group of Muslims loyal to Fikret Abdic, who briefly headed a group that was antagonistic to the Bosnian Army led by Alija Izetbegovic in the 1990s.⁴⁸¹ "The brief conflict had Abdic's forces embarrassed and ostracized for being traitors, as this puzzling intra-Muslim conflict was an additional piece of complexity at the beginning of the war, as for the relevant actors were many, and goals were different and conflicting."⁴⁸² Abdic was a Bosnian tycoon of the large "Agrokomerc" poultry conglomerate in Velika Kladusa, and rebelled against the Bosnian Army at the onset of the war in order to maintain control of the breakaway Bihac enclave. Nearly 2,000 people lost their lives in this intra-Muslim conflict.⁴⁸³ The family members of those combatants must have felt some sort of resentment towards the system that would allow this to happen. Even more demeaning, as members of the "Autonomasi," they had no right to the state-provided veterans' allowance or pension, and they were most probability placed at the bottom of the list for job opportunities after the war. Their leader, Mr. Abdic, was found guilty of war crimes and received 18 years in prison.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁰ There are some reports that Balic was, in fact, a part of the Sharia police, was very active on social media, and tried to recruit additional supporters and fighters as well. She assumed a number of aliases, and also bragged about the execution of an Al-Hansa brigade member on social media.

⁴⁸¹ The term 'majority' in this context refers to those interviewed from the region.

⁴⁸² Christia Fotini, "Following the Money: Muslim versus Muslim in Bosnia's Civil War." *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 4, July 2008, pp. 461-480.

⁴⁸³ The faith had nothing to do with this conflict, so the term Intra-Muslim war is used because of how the ethnic group was marked at the time, but has nothing to do with inter-religious war as the term would suggest.

⁴⁸⁴ After he served his sentence, Abdic returned to Bosnian political life and was elected a mayor in the 2016 local elections. For the nexus between the criminal and the political, and more on the personality cult that Fikret Abdic relished, see Francesco Strazzari, "The Decade Horribilis: Organized Violence and Organized Crime along the Balkan Peripheries, 1991–2001," *Mediterranean Politics* 12, no. 2 (2007): 185-209, doi:10.1080/13629390701388661 and Michael Pugh, "The Political Economy of Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Spoils of Peace," *Global Governance* 8, no. 4 (2002): 467-482. For similar works about Kosovo, see Francesco Strazzari, "LOeuvre Au Noir: The Shadow Economy of Kosovo's Independence," *International Peacekeeping* 15, no. 2 (2008): 155-170, doi:10.1080/13533310802041378.

The initial relief felt by some family members that their children finally were belonging to a religious group or that they are being recognized and accepted by others was evident in all the interviews from the Krajina region.⁴⁸⁵ Here is one excerpt:

When he started going to the religious school organized by some people, I was happy. They said he was a good student, and he had learned Arabic immediately. They cared for him. I was happy that somebody cared. I had nothing to offer to him, other than my year-long battle for our lost property.⁴⁸⁶

The sense of belonging and loyalty to a welcoming group was a more prominent theme in this part of the country than in the Tuzla region, where, for example, the usefulness in society and the family are emphasized along with the desire for belonging. This local context is often overlooked when speaking about the motivations of foreign fighter recruitment, although this research points to exactly the opposite. Even in a country as small as Bosnia, the local context, regional dynamics, and community history have had a profound effect on the particular approaches deployed to recruit new members. As much as the common ideology that was ubiquitously shared by the networks that operated throughout Bosnia, certain ideas and loyalties took root simply because of particular historical outcomes related to the events that took place during the 1990s war.

5.3.4.2. Kosovo

At least dozen imams had been arrested in Kosovo in 2014, and a few more in 2015, for preaching extremism, inciting hate, and helping to recruit militants for ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria. The Kosovo Police confirmed that they had targeted 16 locations across the country in their raid. Atifete Jahjaga, then President of the country, had, beyond her constitutional purview, ordered the raid and confirmed that it was the largest and most organized law enforcement operation in Kosovo to date.⁴⁸⁷ Among those arrested was the

⁴⁸⁵ In three of the interviews in northwestern Bosnia, there was common knowledge of efforts to recruit people from Bosnia for the First Chechen War in 1996. There was also one case of a person from the region who had dual citizenship but who had been suspected of working for the German Federal Intelligence Services (BND) and was sent to Afghanistan. Source: Interview with a SIPA Officer, Bosnia, 2015.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with TC, May 2018.

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with Atifete Jahjaga, June 2018.

influential cleric Shefqet Krasniqi from the Grand Mosque in Pristina. Another was Fuad Ramiqi, the leader of the radical Islamic political party LISBA. The Special Prosecutor of the Republic of Kosovo (SPRK) filed an indictment against Krasniqi on the criminal charges of “inciting terror activities,” “inciting hatred,” and “perpetrating tax evasion.”⁴⁸⁸ Three years later, he was acquitted of all terror-related charges.⁴⁸⁹ The Prosecutor failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubts that Krasniqi had incited young people to join armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq, or to carry out terrorist attacks closer to home.⁴⁹⁰

What is important to note is that research by the local think tank Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS), based on primary accounts, indicated that influences from Saudi Arabia, spread via local imams, may have helped spearhead more conservative Islamic ideas and practices in Kosovo, but it does not find them to be a cause of extremism among Kosovars. Instead, the research suggests that imams from neighboring Macedonia played a larger role in spreading extremist ideology in Kosovo.⁴⁹¹ As such, my research concludes that imams who speak Albanian and come from either the ethnic Albanian population in Macedonia or from Kosovo played an instrumental role and was at the forefront of spreading radical ideologies. Moreover, the dataset obtained from KCSS revealed that 12 of the 110 foreign fighters were in fact either imams or self-appointed preachers or, in two cases, employees of the Islamic Community in Kosovo (BIK).

At the same time, a crackdown on the country’s Islamic Community was heavily criticized by some native Islamic scholars. Their argument was built on the premise that, under the cloak of nation and state building, political leaders made sure to suppress religious identity, and that it followed the doctrine of the heavy-handed communist regime that had existed in Albania and shaped the identity of all ethnic Albanians, including those in Kosovo. As a result of this

⁴⁸⁸ “Pristina Imam, Shefqet Krasniqi, Indicted of Terrorism,” *Gazeta Express*, February, 2017, https://www.gazetaexpress.com/en/news/pristina-imam-shefqet-krasniqi-indicted-of-terrorism-172172/?utm_source=referral&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=copyright, (accessed March 2017).

⁴⁸⁹ “Kosovo Court Clears Grande Mosque Imam of Inciting Terrorism,” *Arab News*, March, 2018, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1272061/world>, (accessed June 2016).

⁴⁹⁰ He was also cleared of inciting and spreading hatred, and stirring national racial and religious intolerance.

⁴⁹¹ Shpend Kursani, “Report Inquiring into the Causes and Consequences of Kosovars’ Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq.” Kosovo Center for Security Studies, 2015, http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Report_inquiring_into_the_causes_and_consequences_of_Kosovo_citizens'_involvement_as_foreign_fighters_in_Syria_and_Iraq_307708.pdf, (accessed March 10, 2018).

historical influence, religious life during that time was not very visible or influential in Kosovo in contrast to its current, post-war presence, which is interpreted as prominent and even radical in comparison. Besa Ismaili, one of the interviewees and a professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Kosovo, points out:

Once you are a practicing Muslim, then they equate you with being anti-Albanian. It is evident that certain circles have profited from Islamophobia, and the unofficial stance when the departures began was to let all of the extremists go. In fact, the political leaders encouraged it first. What we have now is *Religiophobia* as an official position in the country. They believe that, if they push aside religion, they would be able to build a better society.⁴⁹²

Indeed, at the beginning of the Syrian war and, in an effort to win recognition as independent state from Serbia and the world, some Kosovar politicians called for aid to rebel forces against Assad. The idea was to gain favors from a post-Assad, new Syrian government.⁴⁹³ At the same time, many informed local experts warned that, “it is evident that policy and decision-makers as well as the general public do not make clear distinctions between religious proliferation efforts by religious authorities (i.e. imams) and violent extremist efforts (other imams and extremist activists), which [are] distinct in terms of ideology, and what they stand for.”⁴⁹⁴

Similar to Bosnia and other post-communist, post-conflict countries, the reemergence of religion as an unavoidable social identity construct occurred in Kosovo as well. The new, post-war circumstances activated a process of competing identities which, in the case of Kosovo Albanians, was somewhat of a confusing and multilayered affair. Since *Albanianism*⁴⁹⁵ had been viewed for a long time as a favored form of a secular national identity for both Muslim and

⁴⁹² Interview with Besa Ismaili, June 2018.

⁴⁹³ See Louis Charbonneau, "Kosovo Voices Strong Support for Syria Opposition," Reuters, May 14, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-kosovo/kosovo-voices-strong-support-for-syria-opposition-idUSBRE84D1E120120514>, (accessed May 15, 2017).

⁴⁹⁴ Shepend Kursani, "Report Inquiring into the Causes and Consequences of Kosovo citizens' involvement of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq", April 2015, 28, http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Report_inquiring_into_the_causes_and_consequences_of_Kosovo_citizens'_involvement_as_foreign_fighters_in_Syria_and_Iraq_307708.pdf, 2018. p. 28. (accessed March 2018).

⁴⁹⁵ Cecilie Endresen, *Is the Albanians Religion Really "Albanianism"?* Religion and Nation According to Muslim and Christian Leaders in Albania (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013). For earlier works on Albanianism, please see Gerlachus Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (University of Amsterdam, 1999). Also, Naim Frashëri Bektashi's chapters in: Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd Jürgen Fischer, *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002, 60-69.

Christian Albanians, the geopolitical changes and pressures by different international, faith-based organizations that had surfaced in the post-war setting have created a schism in this identity and propelled a national dialogue over finding a new one.

Albanianism is generally understood as in the definition set forth by the scholar Cecilie Endresen in her seminal work “Is the Albanian’s Religion Really ‘Albanianism’? Religion and Nation According to Muslim and Christian Leaders in Albania,” which focuses on the issue of religion and national identity in Albania. The author argues that there is a peculiar myth, which is essential for the understanding of post-communist Albanian nationalism. The myth suggests that the social and political Albanian space is intrinsically tolerant and enables a peaceful religious coexistence between Christians and Muslims. On the other hand, the myth suggests that this harmonious and peaceful national community is under constant threat due to the activities of the ‘other’ religious communities that reproduce, sometimes unknowingly, the political agenda of neighboring enemies, and thus endanger the existing national unity.

This reexamination of post-war identity through a religious lens is very similar to what took place in Bosnia, where a peculiar form of Islam was introduced to the country, most likely by international organizations and foreign fighters, which had not practiced there beforehand. Under the pretext of humanitarian aid, such organizations exploited the poverty, dire situation on the ground, and fragmented social conditions of Kosovar Albanians, especially those living in rural areas. Operating under auspicious conditions, they covertly infiltrated civil society and challenged cultural traditions and the way of life in these communities. However, as was the case in Bosnia, there was a tacit agreement to this aid; without asking too many questions, politicians were more than willing to accept help, often during pre-election campaigning.

When it comes to the role of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), it appears that it did not pay too much attention to these rogue influences, even though it had been warned for some time about these escalating changes being observed on the ground. In fact, since 2004, Kosovo’s Law Enforcement had noticed worrying signs of growing religious extremism and tried to place it at the top of the agenda for national, political discussion, but did not succeed. To that end, the Director of the Kosovo Counter Terrorism Unit, Fatos Makolli, declared:

We could have done this much better, since we knew about the ideology, vulnerable people, and those promoting extremism. We knew how they operated and how they were winning the hearts and the minds of the people. We also saw the conflict between the Islamists and moderate religious leaders. The mastermind of Islamism not only in Kosovo but in the region traveled to Syria, and we reported it along with its possible outcomes, but our politicians did not see this as a problem.⁴⁹⁶

Makolli stated that his unit begged prosecutors to open up cases, to which they replied that no one in Europe was doing anything in regard to this issue and that this was not a priority for them. After Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia, the event “coincided with the global expansion of radical Islamic networks, the so-called Arab springs, and the creation of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). These factors juxtaposed together created a reality that, in turn, resulted in the radicalization and extremism of certain layers of Muslim Albanians in Kosovo.”⁴⁹⁷

Having attained their national and political aspirations for statehood, Kosovo Albanians became the subject of bickering between those who identified with the new, reinvigorated, and externally driven religious identity, and those who identified with the traditional, secular identity. These divisions resulted in significant social and identity shifts among Kosovo Albanians.⁴⁹⁸ While some saw as their country having a distinct, secular, ethnic identity and religious cohabitation and tolerance, a very different reality soon emerged. For some, civil life was gradually reshaped into rapid ethnic religiosity and became increasingly religious, ethnically intolerant and more extremist.

These new social changes had their beacons and promoters. The connection of preachers or *da'is* to their mentors in the Gulf States has been elaborated on in detail earlier. Similarly to Bosnia, many students in Kosovo sought further guidance, support, and acceptance during the difficult times of post-war life, and were attracted to Saudi Arabia's many schools that readily

⁴⁹⁶ Interview with Fatos Makolli, June 2018.

⁴⁹⁷ Argon Demjaha and Lulzim Peci, Lulzim, “What Happened to Kosovo Albanians? The Impact of Religion on the Ethnic Identity in the State Building Period.” Kosovo Institute for Policy Research and Development, 2016, http://www.kipred.org/repository/docs/What_happened_to_Kosovo_Albanians_740443.pdf, (accessed July 15, 2017).

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

accepted them.⁴⁹⁹ In addition to the fact that official imams were accused of inciting hatred, unofficial preachers, who operated through private gatherings, were also arrested and were awaiting trial. In a similar manner, a more organized and institutional approach was implemented by Saudi-sponsored charity organizations that gained unique access to the communities and were largely left unregulated by Kosovo state institutions.⁵⁰⁰

The tension between state and nation building internally, coupled with the externally driven democratization process and pressures of global security, left vulnerable cracks in the society and a unique space for radical and foreign interference to refashion this newly emerging society in their own image. Once local actors started owning this process of radicalization and gained access to communities and families, the number of recruits skyrocketed, and the institutional response to counter this influence was both inadequate and tardy. In addition, existing research suggests that the growing Islamophobia/Religiophobia discourse in Kosovo added to the “Islam under threat” rhetoric capitalized on by extremist groups and utilized by recruiters who embraced the narrative in order to gain more followers.⁵⁰¹ This pressure between what constitutes a real Kosovar identity as it relates to the recent flux between conflicting religious interpretations caused some individuals to feel marginalized from their communities and susceptible to radicalization by groups that projected themselves as true protectors of their faith and their right to practice openly in a secular society.⁵⁰²

5.3.4.3. Online Networks

The role of social media or the Internet in the process of ideological encapsulation and network-sustainability cannot be neglected. In at least 90 percent of the interviewed cases, the Internet was regarded as a legitimate source of information; it was a place where the recruits spent significant time reinforcing their beliefs through local and English-language social media

⁴⁹⁹ Ali Imran, “Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn Abdul Wahab & Ibn Saud: The Partnership of Extremists,” *Iqra Online*, January 2012, <https://www.iqraonline.net/ibn-taymiyah-ibn-abdul-wahab-ibn-saud-the-partnership-of-extremists/>, (accessed July 14, 2018).

⁵⁰⁰ For a discussion about the often ambiguous approaches and impact of Western donors and organizations promoting interreligious peace-building in Kosovo and the wider Balkans as well, see: Ina Merdjanova and Patrice Brodeur, *Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans*, Continuum, London, 2009, pp. 118–122.

⁵⁰¹ An independent report by Behar Xharra and Nita Gojani, “Understanding Push and Pull Factors in Kosovo: Primary Interviews with Returned Foreign Fighters and their Families,” United Nations Development Program, November 2017. http://unct.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/UNDP_Push-and-Pull-Factors_ENG.pdf, (accessed December 15, 2017).

⁵⁰² Interview with AK and BK, also reflected in an interview with FK, June 2018.

and other outlets that propagated Salafi ideology, the benefits of joining the war and injustice perpetrated towards the civilians. Most of the recruits also spent significant time interacting with their counterparts from abroad and especially those located in Germany, Austria, or the Sandzak (southern Serbia), where a significant number of like-minded “brothers” resided. The role of diasporas in the radicalization of Bosnian and Kosovar recruits should not be underestimated. Not only because the bulk of financing that supported radicalization networks was supplied from abroad (mostly from European countries but also from Canada), but also because the diasporas utilized online networks to reach out to their counterparts back in Bosnia and Kosovo. Different law enforcement agencies discovered vast financial networks that had striven to spread missionary work and also enabled the logistics necessary for recruitment and departure, a streamlined process that was mostly evident in northwest Bosnia and southern Kosovo.

The instructions for the individuals, who would often travel back and forth from the countries of Western Europe, Bosnia, and Kosovo carrying money or equipment, were often encoded and sometimes even written on pieces of paper so that, in the event they were caught, they would swallow them. These techniques served as an alternative to digital footprints that became increasingly easier to trace.⁵⁰³ However, according to the data available on online networks, online communications and using the Internet in general were utilized only after the initial contact with radical ideology had taken place in person. In some cases, the time spent communicating with online networks was not very long before individuals could find a similar means of connecting offline. One parent, in an effort to put a stop to the radical-leaning online activity of her son, and in order to give him a greater opportunity to find employment, sent him to live in Vienna. Little did she know, however, that it was precisely in Vienna that the main ideological authorities and architects of the foreign fighter recruiters were living and that he had already made connections with them online. Indeed, three very prominent and militant Salafi leaders ran the most elaborate financial network and an online recruitment hub from the Austrian capital.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰³ Interview with a SIPA operative under Chatham House Rules, 2016.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

There were also a couple of cases in which the Internet was used to gain initial access to potential recruits but the real radicalization and indoctrination process took place offline and person to person, whether mostly in private homes, mosques or other gathering places. The online space was heavily used in the so-called ‘romantic radicalization’ process, in which female recruits met an individual online, decided to marry him, and left with him.⁵⁰⁵ Such was the case not only with the previously mentioned female from Bihac but also of another two, all who met radicalized men online and decided to join them in their activities. In case of one of the women, she was already married with four children; but she decided to abandon her family and leave. As there is no method to quantify the level of their radicalization at the time, the sheer fact that they were taking on a tremendous risk and giving up so much for a stranger and an uncertain cause is sufficient to position the online space as a quite effective tool for radicalization. A much better picture would be gained if experts could assess their cognitive capabilities and general mental health. Perhaps the online space did not facilitate the recruitment process alone. Nor was its influence adequate in cementing radicalized activity. But it most certainly did act as a facilitating agent that brought similar voices together across borders and built distinct, self-proliferating networks that operated largely unregulated. Unregulated in that it took the law enforcement two years before they finally took notice of the online space and, although they had already seized a significant amount of equipment in their raids, they were unable to establish a connection nor were they properly trained to analyze the vast data they obtained. To that end, it is sufficient to say that it is extremely difficult for even well trained and equipped institutions to detect, track, analyze, and act upon “online radicalization,” for even if they do observe threatening online surfing patterns, it is then difficult for the prosecution to prove beyond a reasonable doubt the connection between the intent (online) and the act (offline).⁵⁰⁶

Interestingly enough, in the case of one particular former foreign fighter who returned to Kosovo and served prison time for his involvement, he became even more active on social media networks. To this day, he maintains Facebook and Instagram profiles and frequently posts self-aggrandizing content. In his own words, he does so in an effort to gain friends again, pass the

⁵⁰⁵ A term ‘romantic radicalization’ coined by Prof. Vlado Azinovic.

⁵⁰⁶ The highly publicized and debated cases of Sabina Selimovic and Samra Kesinovic, who did not have Bosnian citizenship but were of Bosnian origin, completely revealed the role of online networks. The two were among the first who were radicalized by engaging in romantic chats with foreign fighters and left for Syria, where they married and died before they ever turned 17.

time, and rebuild his image. Social media, in fact, offered him a connection to the world that he had once lost. He seemed to be particularly worried about what other people think of him and how they see him now that he is a convicted foreign fighter with a controversial reputation. In his conversation with me, he understood the effects of his past on his present search for acceptance:

Online, I can be whoever I want to be. For example, I am curious – if I was to add you on Facebook, would you approve?” [After I have confirmed that I would approve him, given my general inactivity on Facebook and that my profile did not reveal anything personal and was mostly maintained for information] “But would you, for example, allow me to be your friend offline, after you’d learned what I had done? I am sure you wouldn’t. But that’s okay, I have friends online that might turn into offline ones someday.⁵⁰⁷

When it comes to the communication tools that recruiters and recruits most often used when they took up online networking, most often Facebook Messenger, Skype, Viber, and WhatsApp top the list. However, as the communications became more intensified, they would start to use the greater encryption guards provided by Signal and Telegram. These encryption applications could be downloaded on Android phones and desktops to secure all communications conducted on standard social media applications. However, law enforcement and intelligence agencies were soon able to track these online communication by picking up buzz words that were common in these networks, which then further prompted the recruits to start using non-traceable and self-erasing chat rooms similar to Snapchat and to be more protective of the secrecy of their communications. Undoubtedly, the emergence of new social media technologies that offer encryption, privacy options, and self-erasing text was instrumental in enabling online radicalization networks to further organize behind the scenes and protect their agenda from prying authorities.

One particular report contracted by UNDP that looked into the personal backgrounds of the Kosovo recruits suggests that the subjects understood the radicalization and recruitment process to be one of active engagement and communication, both in physical and virtual

⁵⁰⁷ Interview with FF1, June 2018.

spaces.⁵⁰⁸ Indeed, the online space can facilitate access to vast information and possibly create opportunities for deeper radicalization, but a plethora of research, including mine, cannot objectively and decisively establish the connection between online and offline influences. There will always be fertile ground and enabling technological and social structures for “echo chambers: places where individuals find their ideas supported and echoed by other like-minded individuals.”⁵⁰⁹ However, my own research has not established any credible correlation vis-à-vis online content (only) and offline, radicalization-driven activity. In this regard, I will refrain from stating that the exposure to and filtration of online content did not further impact or enrich recruits’ views on radicalization ideology. If this can be true of any interest, why could it not be the case in this context?

5.3.5. Concluding Remarks

As observed, parallel clandestine networks as informal setups that solidified group coherence and predate departure were well-established prior to the 2012-2015 period. Once established as a member of a reliable community, a person is likely to be very well entrusted as a part of a clique and also fairly solidly radicalized and delegated with tasks off of which networks feed. Networks can be micro setups, like the family, which played a very different role in Bosnia and Kosovo. In the latter, it served as a self-incubating successful recruiting generator, whereas in Bosnia dysfunctional families often produced insecure individuals who were in search of a better functioning larger family. Families mostly did not resort to any institutional mechanism to address the challenge, as there is no trust in institutions nor in the system that is designed for such challenges.

In addition, in Bosnia, clandestine service networks operated and stepped in where the state failed, be it from providing social services to allocating goods that helped to maintain a group of people loyal to the common cause. In Kosovo, cracks created in the process of the new state-building and its surrogate nation-building were filled by networks that claimed to provide

⁵⁰⁸ An independent report by Behar Xharra and Nita Gojani, “Understanding Push and Pull Factors in Kosovo: Primary Interviews with Returned Foreign Fighters and their Families,” United Nations Development Program, November 2017, http://unckt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/UNDP_Push-and-Pull-Factors_ENG.pdf, p. 9, (accessed March 2018).

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

space for those who perceived their new secular state was failing them and who felt ostracized for simply being believers. The imam network was more tightly knit and organized in providing moral guidance and spiritual advice to those who looked for help and it consisted of charismatic leaders who had unique access to remote communities.

5.4. Enabled and Stimulated Agency – Recruitment and Departures

Once radicalized and persuaded to travel to ISIS territories, the travel logistics were often not very easy to implement, as Syria and Iraq are far away. It would frequently take days to locate, settle, and coordinate the training of the new recruits. Modes of transportation differed from case to case, but sometimes they would be moved by car, bus, airplane, or foot. A couple of the recruits from the Kosovo case study traveled by air from Tirana to Istanbul, and then on to the Turkish city of Gaziantep, where they crossed the Syrian border, briefly attended military training, and then joined the rebel groups. The majority traveled directly from Pristina, Kosovo's capital. In a majority of the cases, the recruits used low-cost air carriers, like Pegasus Airlines. After the Kosovar Police took notice of the increased traffic of suspicious individuals departing from Pristina airport, the recruits recognized heightened security measures and started departing from Skopje, Macedonia, and Tirana, Albania, so that they could avoid being detected and targeted by local authorities. The departures from Bosnia took place in a similar manner, where individuals would travel to the capital, Sarajevo, from which they flew to Istanbul, illegally crossed the border with Syria and joined the rebels. In other cases, they traveled by car via Serbia and Bulgaria, Turkey, from where they would enter Syria via the cities of Bab al-Hawa, Syria, and Istanbul, Antakya, and Haritan, Turkey. Some recruits were met in Kilis, Turkey, from which they would illegally cross the border into Syria. The majority were instructed that if they were caught by the Turkish Police, they should create a persuasive narrative and claim they are medical or humanitarian workers. This ploy runs counter to the stories of recruits having authentic humanitarian motives to join the foreign fighter cause, but it was also understood that the burden of proof of intent rests with the prosecutor's mandate. In several cases, individuals travelled to Sarajevo and bought tickets directly at the airport to avoid leaving suspicious tracks

online. In other instances, individuals who travelled from northwest Bosnia would make a stop in Zenica and then proceed to Sarajevo.⁵¹⁰

Upon arriving to Syria, the recruits would be redirected to various military groups, including the Free Syrian Army, Al-Muhajirin, Ahrar-Sham, Al Nusra Front, ISIL, and others. This highly organized network spotlights the multilayered players and stakeholders engaged in the rebel networks alone, which speaks volumes about the even greater number of actors comprising the totality of the Syrian war. This complexity, in turn, led to the initial confusion in the recruits from Bosnia and Kosovo, who at first did not know of all the rebel groups involved or even which military faction they had joined after they were given arms.⁵¹¹

The methods in which their travels were financed also varied from case to case. Usually, the individuals would receive funds up front to purchase their tickets, but a number paid for their own travel expenditures. In fact, according to the Kosovar Police, the majority of the recruits paid for travel expenses themselves, and actually worked prior to their departure in order to finance their trip. It has been noted that some leaders, such as the Bosnian Bilal Bosnic and the Kosovar Fatos Rizvanolli, received close to \$200,000 to facilitate the recruitment and departures of recruits. The financing was traced as originating in Saudi Arabia.⁵¹²

For the observed foreign fighters who returned home from Syria, the extent of war and brutality of the conflict had shocked them, yet only two wanted or attempted to come back before their service time was complete. The majority received some form of training and were assigned to smaller units, where they often found themselves in a group composed of other Balkan recruits. Only two did not maintain any contact with their family; eventually, their families learned about their deaths via the media or law enforcement representatives. In five other Bosnian cases, the recruiters attempted to establish connections with other male family members in the process of radicalization back home, but without much success. The Bosnian investigative journalist Avdo Avdic, related a conversation he had with one foreign fighter, who had decided to speak to the press; he recalled how the man had claimed that the reason his own

⁵¹⁰ From an intelligence report obtained from and cleared for paraphrasing by law enforcement and intelligence services.

⁵¹¹ Interview with FF2, March 2018.

⁵¹² Interview with Mirsad Crnovrsanin, Prosecutor's Office, March 2018; and Interview with Fatos Makolli, June 2018.

brother was not attracted to the foreign fighter cause was that his brother was simply more solidly focused on his religious faith in the way it was traditionally practiced in Bosnia. “When I spoke to Fikret Hadzic from Kakanj, I asked him how come his brother did not go to Syria, and he said that it was because his brother’s *iman*⁵¹³ is stronger than his.”⁵¹⁴ In another case of long-distance recruitment and connection, a parent recalled how his son was speaking of friends from another part of the country, which was suspicious given that his 19-year-old son had never traveled to that part of the country:

We were having coffee with our neighbor, who was speaking about a relative visiting from a village around Zenica. He then said that he knew of that particular village and that he has brothers there. What brothers? It is almost 400 kilometers away. What does it mean? Who are these people? Why does he call them brothers?⁵¹⁵

The same parent recalled how his son did not even have a passport but soon obtained one, and that he was falsely convinced that his son was trying to find employment in Slovenia, as majority of his peers from this region were working in either Slovenia or Austria. Days and months of preparation, logistics, financing, and paperwork point to a highly facilitated departure coordination scheme that was one of the most organized subsets of the recruitment process.

5.5. Politics in Transition

5.5.1. Introduction

The following subchapter will look into the macro-causes that enabled the process of radicalization and recruitment. The polities of origin of the recruits were far from being socioeconomically prosperous places. To contextualize their hardships, I shall first note some statistics on the economic and social underperformance of Bosnia and Kosovo, utilizing data from leading economic forums and figures from indices and briefly discussing the role of international aid. Second, I will touch upon the concept of corruption, as well as organized crime, and how they permeate the societies of the Western Balkans. This will further lay out the

⁵¹³ A believer's faith in the metaphysical aspects of Islam.

⁵¹⁴ Interview with Avdo Avdic, March 2018.

⁵¹⁵ Interview with TC, May 2016.

background and the particular stories of foreign fighters and their families, who had personal encounters with corruption, and how it altered their lives for the worse. Finally, we will review the de facto state failures as they relate to systematic neglect of post-war legacies, incomplete transitional justice, and narratives of division that have fueled political, and consequently, religious radicalization.

5.5.2. Personal Experience of Corruption and System Failure

After the Dayton Peace Accords were signed in 1995, more than \$5 billion was donated to Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1996-2001 period.⁵¹⁶ This dizzying figure was intended to rebuild infrastructure that was devastated, renovate industrial facilities, finance systematic administrative reforms, and most importantly, secure the much needed social peace. The amount of aid has dropped significantly since then. As for Kosovo, the economy still relies heavily on the international community's aid, as well as the Kosovo-Albanian diaspora's remittances, for economic and technical assistance. For example, in just the year 2016, remittances to Kosovo totaled €62.1 million, mainly from diaspora communities in Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries.⁵¹⁷

When it comes to the systematic corruption that permeates both Bosnia and Kosovo, according to the 2017 Index of Corruption by Transparency International⁵¹⁸, Bosnia scored 38, whereas Kosovo scored 39. The Index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption as rated by various experts and businesspeople, uses a scorecard of 0 to 100, where 0 denotes the highest level of corruption and 100 indicates no detectable corruption. For the year 2017, the Index found that more than two-thirds of the countries scored below 50, with an average score of 43, which places both of our countries well below the world average and far below the European average.⁵¹⁹ Simple economic analysis

⁵¹⁶ Ensar Halilovic, "Transitional Economies: The Case Study of Bosnia and Herzegovina." College of Economic Studies, Prague, <https://nf.vse.cz/wp-content/uploads/Halilovi%C4%87-Ensar.pdf>, p. 9, (accessed June 2018).

⁵¹⁷ BTI Kosovo country report, <http://www.bti-project.org/de/berichte/laenderberichte/detail/itc/RKS>, (accessed March 2018).

⁵¹⁸ The 2018 report is not yet published as of August 2018.

⁵¹⁹ 2017 Transparency International Corruption Index: https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017#table, (accessed March 2018).

paints a very dire picture for both EU aspirants.⁵²⁰ Politically, both are doing even worse. Kosovo has an issue with its lack of commitment to transitional justice efforts and the rule of law. This is further obscured by the constant dispute over its sovereignty with Serbia. Bosnia doesn't fare much better politically. The country's tripartite presidency and more than 100 ministries eat up 40 per cent of the country's GDP and perpetuate ethnic divisions by fueling fear among each ethnic group to achieve its own political ends. If one is to take into account the Human Development Index, which was created to emphasize that human capital and potential should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development trends of a country – as opposed to looking at economic growth alone – the picture is even more deplorable for our two countries.⁵²¹ This Index measures average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development – a long and healthy life, education prospects, and a decent standard of living, which have barely seen any improvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period of 1990-2015; the situation is very similar in Kosovo.⁵²²

This brief socioeconomic analysis serves as an introduction to the dire state of affairs that these two countries were facing, both politically and economically. It did not come as a surprise that all of my respondents came face to face with corruption and hardships while living in Bosnia and Kosovo. As I had previously observed, this struggle holds true for almost all residents and is not exclusive to the violent extremists. The common thread in all of the interviews with the family members of the recruits with whom I spoke is a clear disillusionment with some aspects of the government, such as disappointment with corruption, and the country as a whole. Personal encounters with corruption prompted a greater rejection of community norms and was often the triggering event for changing one's life circumstance.

As many other experts have concluded, the majority of the recruits had personal experiences with corruption and feelings of powerlessness.⁵²³ These feelings came up in the interviews not as an attempt by the family or the veterans to excuse their actions, but rather as a

⁵²⁰ In addition, both current and former politicians in Bosnia claim that corruption is a top priority to be tackled in the country. Source: interview with Zeljko Komsic and Sasa Magazinovic, May 2018.

⁵²¹ Human Development Report for 2016, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf, (accessed March 2017).

⁵²² Kosovo was viewed as a Serbian province in the report during the given time frame.

⁵²³ Paraphrased from an interview with Ana Vlahovic, June 2018.

missed opportunity for them to pursue other meaningful interests. For example, in the case of ED, a third-year student at the Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, who was a state champion in kayaking and an award-winning skier, his early university experience was the catalyst for his dismay about the far-reaching tentacles of corruption. In his first years at university, he reported his inappropriate sports coach to the team's authorities, after which he was expelled from the team and prevented from representing his country at the European Championships. ED's mother further explained the impact of this incident:

He was a champion in everything he pursued. During high school, he was an active gamer, and towards the end of school, he said he wanted to be a kayaker. He asked me to buy him some very expensive equipment, and he promised to himself that he will be world champion. I told him to first be champion of Bosnia river kayaking. He trained so hard and was so committed. As a sportsman, he couldn't bear the fact that his trainer made inappropriate comments to his female teammates and that he made them uncomfortable by touching them. So he reported him. Instead of expelling the trainer, they expelled my son.⁵²⁴

In addition to the expulsion, he never realized his ambition of opening a special department for water sports at his university because of all the bureaucratic obstacles. As his mother elaborated, he was so devoted to sports and sportsmanship that he only had the best intentions. Soon after, in his third year, the university administration shut down the initiative he and a couple of his peers and professors were operating, which sought to create more opportunities for water sports to flourish, given that the country had the potential and natural resources to excel in them.

When it comes to universities and radicalization, student dorms appear vaguely as places where some recruiters attempted to gain access. Only in one instance during my fieldwork did I hear that a student dorm – in Nedzarici⁵²⁵ – was employed as a place where extreme voices were propagated and the use of violence was present. However, in the example of Nihad Berkovic, also known by the alias Abu Jihad Al-Bosni, there is widespread belief by a number of his college peers that he was radicalized in a student dorm.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ Interview with KM, March, 2018.

⁵²⁵ The suburbs of Sarajevo.

⁵²⁶ Interview with Maja Gasal Vrazalica, May 2018.

The case of Nerdim Ibric from Zvornik points to a similar confrontation with a system that is unable to meet the demands of youth's desire for innovation. Ibric changed his mind about traveling to Syria and instead decided to attack a local police station, during which he killed one and wounded another police officer. His behavior had likely been prompted by his experiences with the local administration, which had shot down his proposal for a local business. His mother explained:

My other son, who lives in Switzerland, spoke with him about his prospects. He did not want to go there to join him, as he wanted to stay with me, but they decided to open up a small chicken farm here in our village. Everyone in Bosnia eats chicken. We have a lot of land and my other son was supposed to make the investment and Nerdim was supposed to run it, to create for himself a solid income, maybe even hire a couple of villagers to help him, after he had expanded. The locals did not let him.⁵²⁷

In her explanation, she further relates how the local administration had requested “impossible documents” from them to comply with local rules on investments and the self-starting of businesses. Due to its complex and bureaucratic administration, it is ubiquitously difficult to start a business in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, corruption makes it very hard for people to engage in entrepreneurship, therefore making the state the biggest employer in the county.⁵²⁸ Even more burdensome, employment in public institutions is nearly impossible without party affiliation or a bribe, hence precipitating the influence of corruption not only at the higher levels of governance, but also into the depths of society. As a consequence, Bosnia's unemployment rate is the highest in Europe and, of all the Western Balkan countries, the brain drain is most evident in Bosnia and Kosovo.⁵²⁹ Slight improvements in the labor market in recent years were not sufficient to discourage young, educated people from emigrating. For decades, the region has seen an outpouring of migrants, with close to one third of the resident population of

⁵²⁷ Interview with Halima Ibric, the mother of Nerdim Ibric, April 2016.

⁵²⁸ As is the case with Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the ratio of government expenditure to gross domestic product is 42 percent, according to <https://www.statista.com/statistics/454193/ratio-of-government-expenditure-to-gross-domestic-product-gdp-in-bosnia-herzegovina>, (accessed June 2018).

⁵²⁹ Western Balkans Labor Market Trends of 2018, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/565231521435487923/pdf/124354-WP-P158508-PUBLIC-16-3-2018-10-13-39-WBLabormarkettrends.pdf>, (accessed June 2018); and Alida Vracic, “The Way Back: Brain Drain and Prosperity in the Western Balkans,” Policy Brief, European Council on Foreign Relations, May 2018. https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_way_back_brain_drain_and_prosperity_in_the_western_balkans, (accessed June 2018). For earlier works on the brain drain, see the work of Bruno S. Sergi, Ann Henry, Gregory Weeks, Hazel Slinn and Yoanna Dumanova, *Four accounts of the brain drain in the Balkans*, SEER: Journal for Labor and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe, Vol. 6, No. 4, February 2004, pp. 13-26.

the Western Balkans currently living outside of the region (not counting the diaspora population which left as a result of the wars of the 1990s).⁵³⁰

The Ibric case is interesting for another reason. This attacker, whose name likely suggests that he was Bosniak, killed one and wounded another police officer, whose names suggests they were Serbs. Zvornik is a city where some of the worst atrocities in the 1990s were committed by para-militaries coming from Serbia, who killed, raped, ethnically cleansed, and looted the local population. Izudin Ahmetbegovic, president of the attacker's local community recalled the tension that the event generated in the community after the attack:

I will be completely honest. I was terrified. A local Muslim killed two Serbs. My phone heated up and, after I learned what had happened, I was very scared... Luckily Zoka (the mayor of Zvornik, a Serb) called me and reassured me that I needed to come, that it is safe, and that people needed to see us together. I was petrified. It was the middle of the night. I called my cousin and we drove to Zvornik. I was greeted by Zoka and he reassured me nothing would happen to me nor to anyone, but that we needed to calm people down immediately.⁵³¹

This event could have escalated but didn't because the local leaders were responsible. The entity leaders were a little less responsible. The Republika Srpska's Ministry of Security immediately reacted with inflammatory rhetoric but, fortunately, nothing happened.⁵³²

In another example, one of the most devoted Salafi leaders, who was believed to be one of the main recruiters for the Bosnian contingency of foreign fighters, was a former police officer from the village between Zvornik and Tuzla. In a major corruption scheme, he had been the main whistleblower, uncovering illegal sports betting schemes, and exposing a corrupt and compromised police officer with ties to the political system, who was also involved in a vast mafia network in Tuzla Canton. These allegations consequently got him dismissed from the force in an attempt to silence him, after which he and his family moved to a surrounding village where

⁵³⁰ Western Balkans Labor Market Trends for 2018, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/565231521435487923/pdf/124354-WP-P158508-PUBLIC-16-3-2018-10-13-39-WBLabormarkettrends.pdf>, (accessed September 22, 2018).

⁵³¹ Interview with Izudin Ahmetbegovic, May 2016.

⁵³² Ministar Lukac, "Napad u Zvorniku je teroristički čin, ovo očekivati i u buduće!" <https://novi.ba/clanak/16660/14>, April 2015, (accessed May 2015).

they sought shelter and comfort in the Salafi community. A local journalist, Samira Bilalic, recalls this police officer's case and his desire to break with a corrupt system that had failed him:

He was an exemplary police officer and could not stand the silence surrounding corruption and dirty cops. Everyone knew what was happening, but he was the only one who spoke up. In a normal country, he would have been awarded and put on a pedestal. But in Bosnia, he was dismissed from service. He was seen as a liability. After that, everything changed for him. He moved with his family, looking for a more just micro-system. That's how he found himself in Bocinja, from what I heard.⁵³³

In this respect, once these recruits who faced backlash from the system for uncovering corrupt practices joined radicalized groups, they held the state and its institutions in contempt. Since the state did not provide them with the opportunity to thrive, nor offer basic services, when the time came to face prosecution due to their radicalized activity, these men acted as if the state court had no jurisdiction over them or any relevance when it came to administering justice. The general contempt for the state and its institutions was also observed in the case against Amir Haskic, which I have observed over the course of several months. During the trial, Haskic refused to stand up and sit down as the court officials were entering the courtroom, stating that it was against his religious beliefs. In addition, when asked questions, he would answer by citing the Qur'an and was subsequently removed from the courtroom for failure to comply with the proceedings. The Court finally ruled him a free man, given the Prosecutor's decision to give him another chance to turn his life around.⁵³⁴ Izo Tankic, a senior court official explained the decision: "Irrespective of the defendant's conduct throughout this proceeding and contempt for the court, the Chamber has decided to give him one last chance not to commit any more crimes and exempts him from penalty, bearing in mind that he is a young person with no prior convictions."⁵³⁵ Additionally, the experience of dealing with suspected foreign fighters was best summarized in the words of the President of the State Court:

I was not the assigned judge in those cases, but many of my colleagues and myself were interested in the process of prosecuting individuals who were

⁵³³ Interview with Samira Bilalic, March 2018.

⁵³⁴ Haris Rovcanin, "Bosnia Frees Man Who Wanted to Fight in Syria," BIRN Sarajevo, July 2018, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-frees-man-who-wanted-to-fight-in-syria-07-09-2018>, (accessed July 2018).

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

suspected of joining armed forces in Syria and Iraq. Those who did not negotiate lower sentence in exchange for intelligence, were very dismissive of the legal institutions. I was somewhat surprised in how much derision there was for the court. They would not even listen to the proceedings. They would simply turn their palms upwards and pray the entire time. For them, this country's institutions were irrelevant and this court illegal.⁵³⁶

The individuals' contempt for the system as a driver of their political grievance was observed long ago. Although many had pleaded guilty in an exchange with less severe penalties and intelligence that would implicate others, the individuals accused of terrorism and related to Salafi circles showed contempt towards judges, prosecutors, and institutions. Judge Tatjana Kosovic, who handed out the most severe sentence for the attack on the police station in Bugojno to Mirsad Causevic – 35 years – received regular threatening letters from him.⁵³⁷ Naser Palislamovic, who was also implicated and indicted as an organizer of the attack, also threatened her and the prosecutor. Palislamovic spent four years in solitary confinement without ever being convicted and, upon his release, sued the state and received 200,000 convertible marks in recompense.⁵³⁸

A number of researchers and practitioners found that the precondition for any successful peacebuilding process is local ownership of the process and a deep native understanding of the variables and contexts that lead to conflict and peace.⁵³⁹ In this context, if long-lasting peace is understood as merely the absence of war, then 23 years after Dayton, Bosnia is by these terms at peace. However, if we only observe the current situation of the Bosnian state – the party capture, endemic corruption, ethnic-related strife, hate speech and hate crimes, and other worrying signs – this clearly exemplifies that the country is in the state of a frozen conflict rather than on the path to permanent peace.⁵⁴⁰ In the words of a local expert on the country's Salafi influence and extremist politics:

⁵³⁶ Interview with Ranko Debevec, President of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, March 2018.

⁵³⁷ Interview with Judge Tatjana Kosovic, March 2018.

⁵³⁸ "Drzava platila 1,5 miliona KM zbog nezakonitih pritvora! Posljedice lošeg rada pojedinih tužilaca snose građani," *Dnevni Avaz*, <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/219566/istrazujemo-drzava-platila-1-5-miliona-km-zbog-nezakonitih-pritvora>, February 2016, (accessed April 2016).

⁵³⁹ For an example, see C. Coning, "Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, Volume 2, No. 1, 2013, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁰ To read more on the misguided post-war reconstruction and a critique of the international community for the bureaucratic state architecture and its inefficiencies, especially regarding the recent and hastily brokered constitution that fortified ethnic divisions, see David Chandler, *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton*, Pluto Press, London, 2000.

Political radicalization is aiding other radicalizations. We normalized ethnic radicalization, but only when another form of radicalization manifests itself do we take interest. My students had a hard time coming up with radicalization scenarios that we could debate in the classroom, because we have normalized all radical behavior. Any “new” form of radicalization is an anomaly.⁵⁴¹

For an illustration of ethno-nationalist tension and sense of political grievance that this can generate, I will point to a specific example. One foreign fighter, at a certain point, started dating a local girl who belonged to a different ethnic group (the Croats). He was severely beaten on a couple of occasions by the local Ustasha-inspired skinhead group and the girl was threatened for seeing a Bosniak. In the account of his mother, he was targeted, like her late husband, because he was Muslim.

All he heard was ‘*ubijte baliju, ubijte baliju.*’⁵⁴² He was guilty for being Muslim. He was not supposed to mix with pure ethnicity. It’s disgusting what they did to him. Nobody cared, nobody served any time in prison for it. He knew all of this was simply because of his name. I barely stopped him from marching into a house and beating the boy who was also in that group and who was our closest neighbor.⁵⁴³

As was the case of using Srebrenica genocide to stroke fear amongst Muslim population of what would happen if they did not have the “right leaders” to protect them and their interests, so was the case with ethnic tension. In many cases but particularly in Zenica-Doboj Cantone, the ethnic tensions were used to reinforce fear of others and fear of the past repeating itself, unless the constituency takes preventative measures first.

5.5.3. Concluding Remarks

From such accounts of a non-existent or much-contested value system, growing social and institutional vacuums that are vulnerable to corruption and the self-serving ideological aspiration of authority figures, one can easily conceptualize how this foundational context of social, political, and economic failure was the enabling triggering mechanism for

⁵⁴¹ Interview with Sead Turcalo, March 2018.

⁵⁴² ‘Kill *balija*, kill *balija*’ – *balija* is a pejorative term for Bosniak Muslims.

⁵⁴³ Interview with AD, June 2016.

disillusionment, along with systematic injustices, which propelled many to seek support elsewhere. The concept of social capital, as understood by Harvard professor Robert Putnam, constitutes “features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.”⁵⁴⁴ In other words, “the term social capital emphasizes not just warm and cuddly feelings, but a wide variety of quite specific benefits that flow from the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks. Social capital creates value for the people who are connected and – at least sometimes – for bystanders as well.”⁵⁴⁵ Some authors argue that it is precisely the missing component of social capital that made the democratization process in the Kosovo state-building process half-complete. The gaps created by deficiencies in social capital were willingly exploited. Prominent experts explained how religious networks used a weakened civil society infrastructure and substandard social capital as a tool for their own objectives:

Para-jamaats represent a serious social and security problem that goes beyond the sphere of spirituality; increasingly, they are filling gaps in almost every sector where reduced governmental capacities (due to political obstruction, corruption, nepotism, and incompetence) mean the needs of citizens are no longer met by public agencies, usually under the auspices of nonprofit organizations.⁵⁴⁶

In addition, the extremist narrative often feeds off of individuals’ vulnerabilities and isolation. In the case of Kosovo, extremist groups exploited the European Union’s ambivalent attitude towards the growing dissatisfaction surrounding Kosovo’s international isolation and the uncertain status of its statehood recognition and finalization process. A number of experts argue that, the fact that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) are leading Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs when they have no credibility to work in Kosovo given that the institutions have no seat for Kosovo in international policy circles, gives fuel to extremists who are successfully using this scenario as an argument of hypocrisy by the Western liberal democracies and their colonial

⁵⁴⁴ Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993, p. 167.

⁵⁴⁵ Robert D. Putnam website, Social Capital Primer Section, <http://robertdputnam.com/bowling-alone/social-capital-primer>, (Accessed June 2017).

⁵⁴⁶ Vlado Azinovic, ed., “Between Salvation and Terror: Radicalization and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in the Western Balkans.” Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo, 2017, http://www.atlantskainicijativa.org/bos/images/BETWEEN_SALVATION_AND_TERROR/BetweenSalvationAndTerror.pdf, (accessed December 2017).

attitude towards Kosovo.⁵⁴⁷ The fact that Kosovo still has no seat at the UN, yet UN agencies are leading de-radicalization and disengagement efforts in the country, does not resonate well even among educated Kosovars who have prospects and jobs.⁵⁴⁸

5.6. Return and Recidivism

After ISIS was de facto defeated, one question that continued to linger was what will happen to all those remaining foreign fighters who went there to support ISIS, now that it almost does not exist. The U.S. Department of Defense estimated that, in 2018, somewhere between 15,500 and 17,100 ISIS fighters remained in Iraq in the provinces of Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salah ad Din, although estimates of the numbers of remaining ISIS fighters are incomplete without accounting for the cells in Syria.⁵⁴⁹ The Islamic State's flagship Anglophone magazine *Rumiyah* had already engaged into downsizing the extent of the defeat through the extensive promotion of martyrdom, as observed by Miron Lakomy.⁵⁵⁰ Lakomy ascertains that ISIS is well aware of its defeat, is engaged in damage control, and is trying to turn its defeat into the victory in order to motivate those loyal to the cause to do what is possible against nonbelievers anywhere they are.

It actually appears that the UN has a different take when it comes to actual faith of ISIS itself. Pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011), and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, the Security Council Committee concluded in July 2018 that ISIS has in fact rallied again in 2018, despite being militarily defeated a year prior to that date. In fact, its report states that the lost momentum of the forces against ISIS, gave it "breathing space to prepare for the next phase of its evolution into a global covert network."⁵⁵¹ As for the foreign fighters, the report

⁵⁴⁷ Interview with Vese Kelemendi and Rudina Jakupi, June 2018.

⁵⁴⁸ As observed in informal gatherings at cafes and restaurants and when meeting young Kosovar activists who would express their frustrations over the situation.

⁵⁴⁹ Inspectors General of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of State (DoS), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), quarterly reports to Congress, Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P), https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/06/2001950941/-1/-1/1/FY2018_LIG_OCO_OIR3_JUN2018_508.PDF (accessed August 2018).

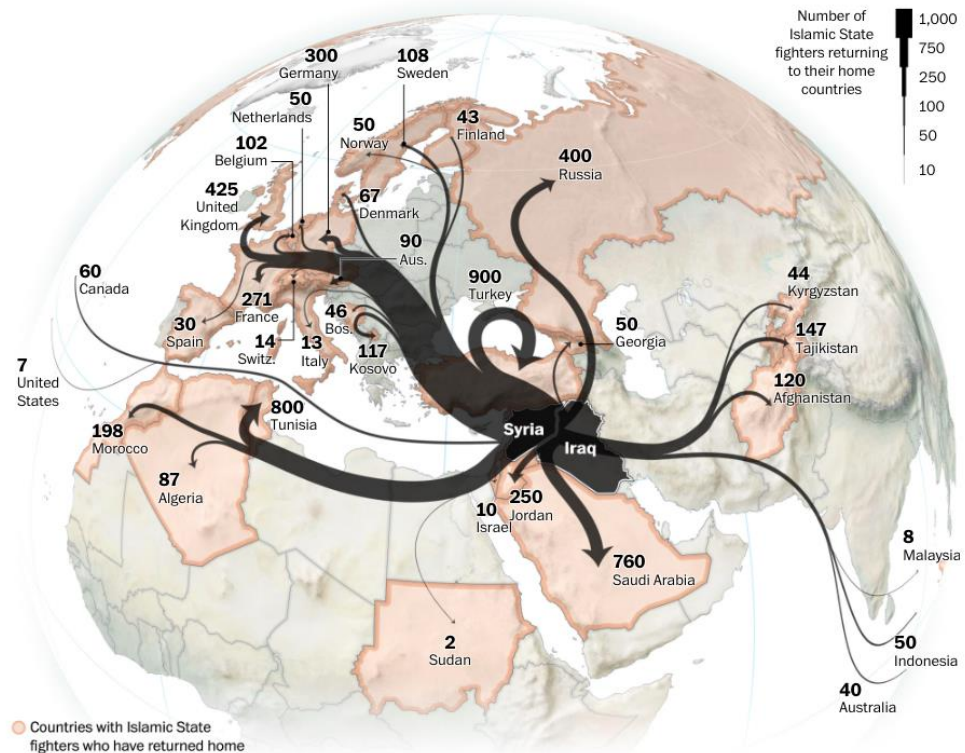
⁵⁵⁰ Miron Lakomy, "One of the Two Good Outcomes: Turning Defeats into Victories in the Islamic State's Flagship Magazine *Rumiyah*", "Terrorism and Political Violence, 2018, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1506335.

⁵⁵¹ Twenty-second report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities <http://undocs.org/S/2018/705>, July 27, 2018, (accessed July 2018).

is more encouraging; it suggests that the momentum has been lost for additional recruitment and flow, which can be partially ascribed to the fact that ISIS does not control much territory anymore and that its polity in the making was substantially degraded. The net flow of foreign terrorist fighters away from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic remains lower than expected. Many fighters melt back into the local population and stay there, while others may lie low in certain neighboring States.

No other arena has emerged as a favorite destination for foreign terrorist fighters, although significant numbers have made their way to Afghanistan. In Europe, the great majority of nationals who leave the conflict zone and neighboring States return home. Member states welcome Security Council resolution 2396 (2017) but some consider it insufficient and others are struggling to implement it.⁵⁵²

As for the returnees and the threat they pose, according to the report, member states maintained that much of the domestic terrorist activity in the previous months involved individuals with no prior security records, or others who had been dismissed as low risk.



⁵⁵² Ibid.

Illustration 2: Returning Foreign Fighters⁵⁵³

Moreover, recent terrorist attacks in the cities of Western Europe were perpetrated by individuals who had never travelled to a conflict zone. The issues of whether they had been inspired by ISIS ideology and whether, in fact, the perpetrator(s) had any previous ties with ISIS operatives are yet to be explored. In addition, it also remains unresolved whether claims of ISIS responsibility for these terror attacks might just be part of a damage control strategy or if indeed they were responsible. The attackers tended to use cheap and easy to obtain weapons, such as knives, and unsophisticated methods, such as vehicle ramming, but had a large impact because they targeted crowded civilian areas and the attacks were heavily reported in the international media. In their reporting to the Committee, member states noted that flows of returnees and relocates from Iraq and Syria had not materialized to the degree expected, but that the vast majority of those who had successfully left the conflict zone and surrounding area had returned home rather than relocating elsewhere. Once there, they faced prosecution and had to stand trial for their offences.⁵⁵⁴ Many member states expressed concern that such individuals could increase their threat by disseminating their specialized knowledge and skills related to drones, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. In addition, these individuals were not only war veterans but had learned how to operate in challenging circumstances and could potentially become liabilities to their countries' respective national securities. Some ISIL fighters had the ability to assemble weapons from commercial, off-the-shelf items. The conclusion of the report is that beyond the operational impact of the movement of foreign terrorist fighters, their return to Europe *might have* galvanize local sympathizers. In addition, despite the weakening of the ISIL core and the reduced quality of its propaganda, the high quantity of messages sent using commercial encryption still has a strong impact in the spheres of radicalization, recruitment and instruction. In this regard, "measures taken by Member States that had largely prevented travel to Iraq and Syria has created a different problem, with

⁵⁵³ Tim Meko, "Now that the Islamic State has fallen in Iraq and Syria, where are all its fighters going?", *Washington Post*, February 22, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/isis-returning-fighters/?utm_term=.3dd62fc9574b, (accessed April 2, 2018).

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

aspiring foreign terrorist fighters becoming “frustrated travelers.” ISIL has thousands of these supporters who are active online and represent recruitment opportunities for terrorist networks.⁵⁵⁵

For any state, including Bosnia and Kosovo, when it comes to assessing the risk posed by the returnees, there are plenty of challenges in objectively gauging the threat and even more in actually weighing the effectiveness of de-radicalization programs that are designed to keep the risk at minimum. To date, there is no consensus on what constitutes success in “reforming a terrorist,” let alone regarding what even constitutes reform in this context.⁵⁵⁶ How can one even talk about recidivism if there is no accurate standard against which we can measure this. And how can this be measured? What, for how long, until when, and what is the cost associated with it? These are questions that one must ponder and for which many governments are still testing approaches. Recent research suggests that many of those who disengage or desist from terrorist activity are not necessarily de-radicalized, as primarily conceived via a change in thinking or beliefs. De-radicalization is not necessarily a prerequisite for ensuring a low risk of recidivism.⁵⁵⁷ In addition, many de-radicalizing programs have a direct socio-economic support component to former terrorists so as to prevent them from falling back into the situation that aided their process of radicalization in the first place.⁵⁵⁸ However, it then might look as if it’s a reward program for a terrorist and could create quite the opposite – an incentive for such action.

Based on the work of Andrew Silke, when considering risk assessment in the context of a terrorist prisoner upon which one might built successful policies to reduce said risk, there are three sources one can consult: 1) interview(s) with the individual being assessed; 2) specialized testing; and 3) third party information (e.g. court reports, prison documents, police reports, etc.).⁵⁵⁹ So far, the author is familiar with only one report that was produced based on a sample

⁵⁵⁵ Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities Report, <http://undocs.org/S/2018/705>, July 2018, (accessed July 2018).

⁵⁵⁶ John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, “Rehabilitating the Terrorists? Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalization Programs,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22, 2010, p. 268.

⁵⁵⁷ John Horgan, *Walking Away From Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements*, Routledge, London, 2009, quoted in John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, “Rehabilitating the Terrorists?: Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalization Programs Terrorism and Political Violence,” 22, 2010, p. 268.

⁵⁵⁸ Such was the IOM program in Kosovo, for example.

⁵⁵⁹ Andrew Silke, “Risk assessment of terrorist and extremist prisoners,” in Andrew Silke, ed., *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalization and Reform*, Routledge, London, pp. 108-121.

of eight individuals who had been imprisoned on terrorist charges in Bosnia, and one that had been compiled with a sample of six prisoners in Kosovo.⁵⁶⁰ These do not constitute a sufficient body of literature when it comes to specific prisons in these two countries and they represent only small samples from select prisoners. This field remains underexplored in terms of deradicalizing programs. In this context, one must acknowledge that I and other researchers have been refused for three years in a row access to these prisoners, so the nonexistent standardization of the external evaluation of the prisons is an additional challenge.

According to the BiH Commission for monitoring prisons within the BiH Parliament and a report on an unannounced visit to a prison in Zenica, there are no any specialized trainings provided to the inmates or professionals employed there. As well, the prison is particularly affected by a drastic decrease in the number of skilled trainers who work with the imprisoned individuals. Moreover, there are 70 less security guards than actually planned for a prison of that size and number of inmates.⁵⁶¹ In the same report, the Commission observed that one particular inmate reported that a certain prisoner was distributing religious materials and that, as a result, he was becoming more religious. No other follow up was made in regard to this claim; as the Commission observed, when it comes to that particular finding, it does not fall under the body's jurisdiction to investigate and address further.⁵⁶²

As we note this state of affairs, we must also take into account what has been researched about this previously. Although much has been said about the so-called “Universities of Terror,” those using the term should make clear that the prisons are inadequate, understaffed, or simply lack specific de-radicalization programs and this, in turn, creates a sterile incubator and safe space for spreading extreme ideologies. However, it appears that, simply put, this is not the case with the prisons in Bosnia and Kosovo. The concept of a “University of Terror,” where prisons are seen as places where extreme teachings that are unsupervised can only flourish, has been challenged in theory as well as in practice. For example, Clarke Jones concludes that the

⁵⁶⁰ Prison Radicalisation Assessment Report, an EUSR contracted report by Sar Consultancy, Zenica Prison, 2018; and an independent report by Behar Xharra and Nita Gojani, “Understanding Push and Pull Factors in Kosovo: Primary Interviews with Returned Foreign Fighters and their Families,” United Nations Development Program, November 2017.

⁵⁶¹ Report about the work of the Independent Commission for monitoring the conditions of prisons, 05/6-50-13-27-27-4/18, February, available at www.parlament.ba.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

radicalization and recruitment of mainstream prisoners by terrorist inmates under certain prison conditions is not necessarily a given outcome.⁵⁶³ The fact that one inmate from the Zenica prison mentioned religious texts being distributed amongst other inmates does not constitute a completed or attempted radicalization, and most certainly not a “school of terror.” Moreover, empirical research also states explicitly that, “despite the presence of individuals who follow what many may perceive to be an ‘extreme’ interpretation of Islam, the Zenica prison does not appear to be a ‘university of terrorism.’” The Zenica prison is a place of incarceration where the majority of convicted foreign fighters served their sentences and where currently there are 11 doing time.⁵⁶⁴

“Furthermore, there is no significant evidence to suggest that prisoners held on terrorism related offences in the high security pavilion are actively trying to radicalize and/or recruit.”⁵⁶⁵ However, the report also concludes that, as many inmates see Salafism as a power dynamic that is unbent and associate it with power and authority, rather than a religious concept, these like-minded individuals may pose a threat of being radicalized. In addition, the report finds that some instances of inmates’ renewal of faith or proselytism within prisons is actually tied to certain privileges and unsupervised access to the prayer room, thus highlighting opportunism in this change of behavior.⁵⁶⁶ In Kosovo, there was a case in which the prison actually served as a security measure to protect returning foreign fighter from threats he was receiving upon his return to Kosovo, as he was seen a traitor to ISIS. Apparently, in one of the prisons, guards commented to researchers that the court sentenced one returned fighter to prison mainly as a security measure, to protect him from any potential revenge from ISIS.⁵⁶⁷ Although mentioned as a potential issue that those who are radicalized may spread extremist ideologies and influence the prison population, the report conducted regarding six Kosovo inmates acknowledges that such radicalization is, in fact, not taking place.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶³ Clarke R. Jones, “Are prisons really schools for terrorism? Challenging the rhetoric on prison radicalization,” *Punishment and Society*, Research Article, January 7, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474513506482>, (accessed June, 2016).

⁵⁶⁴ As of June 2018.

⁵⁶⁵ EUSR report, Sar Consultancy, Prison Radicalization Assessment Report, Zenica Prison, 2018.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid. Tanja Dramac Jiries PhD Dissertation

⁵⁶⁷ An independent report by Behar Xharra and Nita Gojani, “Understanding Push and Pull Factors in Kosovo: Primary Interviews with Returned Foreign Fighters and their Families,” United Nations Development Program, November 2017, p. 58.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., p.74.

One issue that hasn't yet been discussed is the role of the preexisting criminality and access to criminal networks of either the country of origin or the regional networks. One reason it has not been discussed until now in this dissertation is because that the observed sample for the primary sample in this research, in both Bosnia and Kosovo, had no individuals with a previous criminal record, not even for a petty crime. The second set of profiles, generated from court transcripts and intelligence reports, included some individuals who did have a criminal background. The general consensus in literature on preexisting criminality is that roughly either one quarter or one fifth of the individuals engaged in terrorist activities had a previous criminal record. Marc Sageman found a similar picture with a slightly smaller sample of terrorists, in which again roughly one quarter had a prior criminal record, though these were all for ordinary crimes rather than politically motivated crimes.⁵⁶⁹ Furthermore, one must also acknowledge that, out of 23 individuals that were sentenced for being foreign fighters from Bosnia and 40 in Kosovo, only two had previous minor felony convictions in Bosnia and four in Kosovo.⁵⁷⁰

It appears that hard-liners and those with previous heavier criminal offences were less likely to attempt to come back, knowing that they would face persecution and that their previous criminal record would play a larger role in court. They instead opted to stay or try their luck elsewhere, in a community where their preexisting criminality did not matter. In addition, it might be concluded that it is not the ideology but more likely pragmatism that lured these people to join in the first place, which leaves our sample with more "pure" and less pragmatic reasons to in fact join the cause.

An incomplete review of intelligence and court documents indicates that at least one quarter, 26 percent of Bosnian men believed to have travelled to Syria and Iraq from December 2012 to December 2015, had criminal records, including offences such as terrorism, illegal possession of arms and explosives, robbery, and illegal trafficking. The report proceeds that "it seems safe to assume that with greater access to these types of files and a more thorough

⁵⁶⁹ Marc Sageman, *Misunderstanding Terrorism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2016.

⁵⁷⁰ The data for Kosovo has not been crossed checked and should be used with extreme caution.

analysis, we would find this percentage to be even higher.”⁵⁷¹ The criminal offenses for which these individuals have most often been investigated, prosecuted, or sentenced include: theft, armed robbery, extortion, child abuse, rape, domestic violence, assault and battery, counterfeiting, fraud, tax evasion, illegal possession and distribution of narcotics and/or arms, human trafficking, membership in organized criminal groups, and terrorism. When it comes to Kosovo, 37 percent of those who left for Syria from Kosovo also had criminal records before becoming foreign fighters. The data was derived from two-thirds of the entire Kosovo contingent.⁵⁷² The charges are similar: assault, fraud, domestic abuse, assault and battery, human trafficking, organized crime, and terrorism.

As the UN report suggests, when considering the threat of potential domestic terrorist events upon their return and the potential for recidivism, governments have put forward many policies that unfortunately have collided with the influx of migrants from the war-affected areas and were discussed in a similar setting. In order to be actually able to speak about the threat, we can consult the most recent study that indicated the majority of attempted attacks (if they occur) take place within one year, with a median lag time of just four months.⁵⁷³

Paramedics face a ‘golden hour’ in which they have the best opportunity to save the lives of traumatic injury victims. Conversely, it seems there is a ‘dark window’ of approximately five months after their returns in which foreign fighters are most at risk for becoming domestic terrorists and then the threat declines sharply.⁵⁷⁴

Similarly, David Malet and Rachel Hayes have observed that security and reintegration efforts should be targeted within the critical six months after return, which diminishes the risk of attack considerably.⁵⁷⁵ There has not been a domestic terrorist attack in Bosnia since 2015. There

⁵⁷¹ Vlado Azinovic and Muhamed Jusic, “The New Lure of the Syrian War—The Foreign Fighters’ Bosnian Contingent, the Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo, 2016.

⁵⁷² Shpend Kursani in his report inquiring into the causes and consequences of Kosovo citizens’ involvement as foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, KCSS, April 2015, uses a sample of 210 foreign fighters that he obtained from the Kosovo Police, which is roughly two thirds of the entire foreign fighter contingent.

⁵⁷³ David Malet and Rachel Hayes, “Foreign Fighter Returnees: An Indefinite Threat?” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1497987.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

was one thwarted terrorist attack in Albania in 2017 that involved some Kosovars. It is also safe to assume that there will not be a mass influx of returning foreign fighters as was feared in the beginning. Roughly one-fourth of the Bosnian and Kosovo contingent is either missing or presumed death, one-quarter has returned and has been processed or is awaiting the trial, and the rest are scattered throughout the region previously controlled by ISIS. Statistically speaking, this should mean that these two countries are not in any immediate threat of a domestic terrorist attack by returning foreign fighters, and that the threat and warnings of recidivism and a plunging back into terrorist activity are limited.

In addition, Silke found that prisoners charged with terrorism crimes have very low reconviction rates in any case, and maintains that less than five per cent of all released terrorist prisoners will be re-convicted for involvement in a terrorist-related activity.⁵⁷⁶ Foreign fighters who return to plot domestic terror attacks are few and far between, and when they decide to do engage in terrorism at home, plan it and execute it - it is nearly always within a couple of years of return. As with conventional criminals, the risk of recidivism drops steeply after this point.⁵⁷⁷ “Security and social service resources should be targeted within the critical first few months after return to have an impact. There is some danger of terrorism from returning foreign fighters, but returnees do not appear to pose an indefinite threat.”⁵⁷⁸

In looking at “frustrated travelers,” as the UN penned them, it is truly a difficult task for all parties involved in prevention to accurately foresee the real threat of those who wanted to travel to territory controlled by ISIS but were persuaded against it, stopped at the border, simply lacked the courage to pursue the plan, or were dissuaded from the idea given the tighter border controls that were enforced after the foreign fighter flow really took off. The same applies to domestic sympathizers – it is indeed a difficult task to establish any coherent threat assessment. What is important to acknowledge is that the optimal time in which the disengagement efforts should have started is already past and that the former foreign fighters’ personal disillusionment

⁵⁷⁶ Andrew Silke, “Risk assessment of terrorist and extremist prisoners,” in Andrew Silke, ed., *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform*, pp.108-121, Routledge, London, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid. p.6.

⁵⁷⁸ David Malet and Rachel Hayes, “Foreign Fighter Returnees: An Indefinite Threat? Terrorism and Political Violence,” DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1497987, p. 16.

with the experiences of war is probably the main reason why the recidivism has not taken place in Bosnia and Kosovo.

With this cautiously optimistic assessment, one must also not forget that those fighters who have served their time in jail, upon dismissal come home most likely to the same social milieus or “cliques” as per Sageman and face the same economic deprivation and social marginalization that might have made them susceptible to radicalization in the first place. Careful post-incarceration assessment and assistance must take place so that the individuals can restart their lives and reintegrate back to society, which unfortunately hasn’t taken place.

5.7. Disengagement and Marginalization

Although commended in the international legal arena, Bosnian and Kosovar prosecutors found many obstacles to conducting their investigations once the foreign fighters had been apprehended upon their return home and were prosecuted. One reason is that the majority of returning foreign fighters came back without much of anything, some even without their IDs.⁵⁷⁹ Their return home was very different than their enthusiastic departure. Of the observed sample that made it home, the majority came back voluntarily or as a consequence of their disillusionment with the cause, their role in it, or the potential of ISIS to succeed as an independent state. One recruit stated that he was appalled by the use of violence against civilians.⁵⁸⁰ Even though one can cynically suggest that their official behavior and statements to law enforcement and prosecution might have been warranted and conditioned by the hope of receiving reduced punishment or a lesser prison sentence, one can also conclude that their responses were overwhelmingly permeated with disappointment for having joined the cause. In one interview case, a recruit specifically requested if we could talk about anything else other than the time he had spent in Syria as a foreign fighter; he was clearly still in shock over what he had seen.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with Reshat Millaku, Prosecutor’s Office, June 2018.

⁵⁸⁰ Interview with FF3, April 2016.

⁵⁸¹ Interview with FF2, FF1 and FF3, March 2016, June 2016, and April 2018, respectively.

When it came to proving crimes related to foreign fighter activity, prosecutors often claimed that “they have a stick, but need carrots” when it came to their inability to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that an individual at trial had gone to Syria to join rebel groups, bore arms, or actively participated in combat.⁵⁸² Hence, the prosecution often offered plea bargains in exchange for information or confessions. After they had served mostly brief sentences in prison, they were released without having to attend any disengagement or reintegration programs.⁵⁸³ Basic needs, such as a place to live and a job, or any vocational training that would allow them to acquire the first two, were not offered nor secured.

This exemplification of weak governance and general inexperience in dealing with returning fighters posed a major challenge for the legal authorities, who are underequipped in resources and infrastructure to handle the influx of returning fighters. A few authorities reflected on particular instances in which this was the case:

We were at the airport waiting for him. He was in terrible state, scared... He had no bags, nothing, only a temporary travel document. I knew he had to appear before the court tomorrow. He had no other clothes. My colleague and I collected money and bought him boots, a jacket, and other clothing. He had nothing. We are not equipped to receive those people.⁵⁸⁴

We were supposed to have a disengagement program start in Prizren, according to our National CVE/CT Strategy. But it has not started yet, although the Strategy is to be renewed soon. There are too many incompetent people in this field. We are lacking experts. Also, there is a lot of opportunism here. Everyone would like to be a part of it, but to do nothing.⁵⁸⁵

In addition, I disclosed in the Methodology chapter that, soon after initiating my field work, two families from Bosnia had actively pleaded with me to help them find and bring back their family members, whom they believed are still alive back in the territory formerly controlled

⁵⁸² Personal conversation with Vlado Azinovic, June 2018.

⁵⁸³ The majority of sentences for Bosnian or Kosovar foreign fighters were between one and three years. This comment was not made to measure nor to judge what is the appropriate length of time they should have served but what is relatively comparable to one’s lifetime.

⁵⁸⁴ Interview with Mirsad Crnovrsanin, Prosecutor’s Office, March 2018.

⁵⁸⁵ Interview with Fatos Makolli, June 2018.

by ISIS. In speaking with these families, it became evident that they lacked access to institutions and that, in fact, the institutions would have no adequate answers for them.

In the case of one mother, she was only trying to save the surviving members of her family who remained in Syria. She was very adamant about helping her daughter-in-law, whom her son had married upon his arrival in ISIS territory and whom she had never met. In 2014, after the fall of Mosul to ISIS, foreign fighters seized Yazidi towns and villages in Sinjar, in northern Iraq, where about 500,000 members of the religious minority lived.⁵⁸⁶ As a consequence, more than 6,000 Yazidi women and girls were enslaved and forced into marriages. Although she knew her daughter-in-law was a Yazidi, in our interview, she did not acknowledge the possibility that her daughter-in-law was a prize for her son's participation in the siege. Aside from her native Kurmanji, her Yazidi daughter-in-law spoke some Arabic and English, and they were in active communication when I spoke to her. Asked about the actual communications tool they used, she explained that they were messaging over Signal, an encrypted chat application, although law enforcement was aware of this particular communication tool and were tracking it. She clarified further:

She bore two children with my son. The Ministry suggested that they are not my son's. As for the older one, I needed only one picture to be convinced that he is my grandson! He looks just like my S when he was that age. The spitting image! The second one is just a baby and, even if it wasn't my son's, he would have taken care of her. He married her to take care of her. They are entitled to Bosnian citizenship, and I will get them home and safe. My son is gone, but his family is alive and I will do everything I can to bring them back to safety. What else can I do?⁵⁸⁷

The decision to stay in touch with some of the family members during the course of the years spanning my research was, in part, not only due to my understanding of the importance of the relationship-building process but also as part of a moral duty to aid families who are still searching for information regarding those who had departed or to help their family members, as was the case above. My access to institutions allowed me to serve as a bridge between the

⁵⁸⁶ Sofia Barbarani, "Living in the Shadows: Yazidi Women Tell of ISIS Hell," *The National*, June 22, 2018, <https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/living-in-the-shadows-yazidi-women-tell-of-isis-hell-1.742771>, (accessed July 24, 2018).

⁵⁸⁷ Interview with JJ, April 2018.

“common people” and these institutions, whose direct link between them has long been broken. This is illustrated by the fact that a few even more proactive individuals, who actively pursued answers, were not able to get them. In addition to the community’s stigmatization, these families were facing real-time administrative setbacks, combined with government’s general inaptitude, incompetency, and clear lack of accountability.⁵⁸⁸ A disenchanted relative, AD, points to this pervasive institutional unaccountability when it came to seeking answers:

When she told me she had escaped from a house designated for widows and children, I immediately wrote to all institutions of which I could think. From the Embassy in Amman to the one in Istanbul, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Security and the Interior, SIPA, OSA, everyone I knew. Only afterwards did I realize that nobody can help me. They kept referring me from one contact to another. So I turned to the other ways.⁵⁸⁹

When it comes to the families of the fallen foreign fighters, I observed two follow-on occurrences. The first is that suspected recruiters still kept in touch with some of them, in some instances even trying to help them out by taking advantage of the fragile state of their families and their increasing marginalization and stigmatization in their communities. They would simply pay them social visits and engage them in simple conversation, but were soon shunned by the families. Secondly, in two other cases, parents had admittedly “became better believers after [their sons] had died.”⁵⁹⁰ In their own words, “better” meant more devoted and practicing believers. Although this can be interpreted as a coping mechanisms to overcome the trauma of a lost child, none of them blamed extreme religiosity for their sons’ departure and eventual death. Instead, they found solace and comfort in the fact that their children had died for “a just cause.”⁵⁹¹ In one specific case of solace being provided over long-distance phone calls, a mother turned to the Holy Book in an effort to comfort her son, whose imminent death was approaching. She recited to him from the Qur’an specific verses that incite courage and encourage believers on their path. She reflects further on this time with her son:

⁵⁸⁸ Any assessment of the country’s notoriously dense bureaucratic system should begin with a thorough understanding of the Dayton Peace Accords, which was among the terms and conditions of the cease fire and is contained the country’s Constitution. For more information, see the BiH Constitution. “Dayton Peace Accords.” U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/or/dayton>, (accessed April 25, 2018).

⁵⁸⁹ Interview with AD, June 2018.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview with BH and GD, March 2018 and April 2018, respectively.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

When they surrounded Mosul, he was scared a bit. It was all over. I also knew it. At that time, I stopped inviting him to come back, to come home [...]. I knew he was not coming back to me. Everyone was against them. Instead, I started encouraging him, consoling him in difficult times, when all he was surrounded by was fear, explosions, and death. We recited to each other different *ayats*⁵⁹² about courage and about standing firm in his faith, for he was going to *Jannah*.⁵⁹³ I knew it. These material things around us, they didn't matter. My son was going to *Jannah*.⁵⁹⁴

As we differentiated the process of recruitment for foreign fighters from Western Europe and the Balkans at the beginning and elaborated in detail why the unit of analysis is tailored to a specific geographic scope, another observation is in order when speaking about marginalization. Local radical voices that had propagated a radical ideology have often utilized the concept of “Otherness,” which they used as a means to alienate Muslim communities in the region, an internal split they had been facilitating from the 1990s to now. To illustrate, we can look to the themes proliferated by the local preachers who often cite particular verses in the *Qur'an* where the Prophet Muhammad prophesizes about the times when Muslims will have to defend Islam from other Muslims who seem more lenient and who do not adhere to the one and true Islam.⁵⁹⁵ This rhetoric then becomes the foundation for marginalization in the Muslim communities and an effective tool with which to incite internal divisions and mistrust.

Undoubtedly, the social pressure and subsequent marginalization and stigmatization of the returnees and their families is incredibly high. The most recent research shows that the majority of the population of both Bosnia and Kosovo are not in favor of ISIS or any other radical forces, and are even more opposed to their own citizens being active agents of such groups.⁵⁹⁶ Therefore, it must be extremely difficult to reintegrate and dwell in such tight knit communities in both countries and to additionally cause stigma for the families for having a former ISIS veteran in the household. As I had related in the Methodology chapter in a couple of sections, I had noticed incidences of *social desirability bias*, an interviewee's tendency to

⁵⁹² The *Qur'an* is divided into *surahs* (chapters), which are further divided into *ayat* (verses).

⁵⁹³ Heaven.

⁵⁹⁴ Interview with OF, April 2018.

⁵⁹⁵ Paraphrased from an interview with Sead Turcalo, May 2018.

⁵⁹⁶ For example, see the IRI poll on attitudes towards ISIS: “Poll: Bosnians United in Opposing IS; Divided on U.S., EU and Russia.” International Republican Institute, April 2017, <http://www.iri.org/resource/poll-bosnians-united-opposing-divided-us-eu-and-russia>, (accessed September 2017).

overstate or understate some responses in terms of what he or she deems socially acceptable answers might be.⁵⁹⁷

As previously mentioned, one foreign fighter specifically mentioned his “de-radicalization efforts” when asked what it is that he would like to do as a free man. One may be puzzled by his insistence and think that he is hardly the qualified type to carry out “de-radicalization” efforts, but then again, who else could take on such a process? Given the institutional unaccountability and weak social capital that forms the fabric of the Bosnian and Kosovar societies, who is truly qualified to lead and contribute to that pursuit?

Which brings us to a related discussion – the role of de-radicalization and other CVE/PVE programs. Foremost, it should be acknowledged that, like other concerned practitioners and experts, it is especially hard to establish what de-radicalization really means in these circumstances. Therefore, I will instead use the verb “disengagement” in the same context. Secondly, as was the case with peace-building, developing effective local programming is contingent on local ownership of the process, without which there can hardly be any success. This speaks volumes about the ineffectiveness of large international institutions that attempt to bring general solutions to specific local problems. The Director of the Anti-Terrorism Unit of the Kosovar Police, Fatos Makolli, spoke candidly about this:

The people who are working on the issue are not from here. They do not understand the local context and the mentality. They are bringing solutions from Finland, Denmark... and trying to make them work here. They are under pressure to spend money and, by that token, the only thing they know is something that had worked somewhere else. For example, in order for the so-called referral mechanism to work, you need to have some other functioning mechanisms, such as a functioning polity, so that your referral mechanism can work. The only mechanisms working here are corruption and organized crime. The internationals have money and they need to spend it.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁷ My interview with FF2 was, for example, saturated with social desirability bias.

⁵⁹⁸ Personal conversation with Vlado Azinovic, June 2018.

Worryingly enough, local experts have begun receiving panicked telephone calls by the internationals to help them implement regional programs designed in Brussels.⁵⁹⁹ All the while, returnees and their families were in dire need of the basics. Without entering the debate of whether providing food, clothing, and the basics of living to returnees is, in fact, “rewarding their terrorist activity,” as some experts claim, or whether taking “preventative measures and enforcing the state’s care for its citizens” is necessary, it is evident from experts’ warnings that, if not acknowledged and especially if neglected, returnees who are war veterans will always pose a threat. At the minimum, local stigmatization and marginalization can further push them away from embracing and reintegrating into the communities to which they have returned. In light of the feeble disengagement attempts by local authorities and institutions, it is estimated that international CVE/PVE efforts in both Bosnia and Kosovo amounted to about 50 million Euros allocated just in 2017.^{600,601} There is not yet a database or review of these efforts and the exact statistics are still not available. One must ponder, if the local constituents are incapable of instituting preventative and disengagement efforts while they are in the best position to do so in terms of knowledge, shouldn’t international bodies invest in the growth of the socioeconomic prosperity, insist on political stability and social capital in these countries instead? Only through efforts that strengthen post-war civil institutions, government agencies, and society could the countries be in a position to address the root causes of the foreign fighter problem or extremism

⁵⁹⁹ One of the illustrative examples is when the representative of an international organization called an expert to help him implement a program in the high schools of a specific Bosnian Canton. The answer was negative, as the local governments do not allow the implementation of programs in high schools. The reason for this is to shelter students from the often confusing and inappropriate convergence of programs or, in some cases, the lack of governance and guidelines that would regulate who, in fact, can work with high school students beyond the teaching staff. A local anecdotal joke often heard during my fieldwork was that “foreigners like to experiment in the Balkans, so if something works – it works. The damage is already done, so why not try for an X approach.”

⁶⁰⁰ One out of at least 20 programs implemented by the international community in the region, the ‘WBCT Initiative’ totaled 20 million euros and the EU is preparing to allocate more funds for de-radicalization purposes. Interview with Richard Wood, EU, March 2018, and Holger Englemann and Filip de Ceuninck in April 2018. In addition, the Bosnian Office of the International Organization for Migration, received \$16 million for CVE/PVE programs in the country. At the same time, USAID Bosnia is also “piloting new approaches to engage youth in community initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina to mitigate external pressures that lead to violent extremism. The project supplements security and law-enforcement agency activities through psychosocial support and flexible small grants.” USAID is also conducting research on CVE activities in the countries. Interview with Emina Cosic. Other donors, including Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom, have agreed to co-fund this activity. For more information, see: USAID, “The Development Response to Violent Extremism,” https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAE884.pdf, (accessed August 2016). The OSCE is also involved although its approach is multilayered and it works with wide range of stakeholders from young people to media practitioners: Interview with Selma Zekovic and Jasna Hodzic.

⁶⁰¹ The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) has been at the forefront of initiatives to prevent violent extremism through promoting human development. They are conceived and developed by affected communities and include activities for raising awareness of violent extremism, mobilizing action against it, and creating positive alternatives. In its first two years, the fund has distributed about \$25 million to support local initiatives that build community resilience against violent extremism in Kosovo, among others.

in general. Quite likely, improved circumstances would trickle down to communities in the form of greater opportunities and prosperity, deterring susceptible individuals from seeking opportunities elsewhere or looking for protection from systematic grievances in sinister places.

6. CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Riccardo Serri, head of the Political, Economic and EU Integration Section of the EU Office in Kosovo, speaking about violent extremism at a conference organized by the Kosovo Center for Security Studies (KCSS) in June 2018, said: “It is an issue in the EU, but maybe even more of an issue here in the Western Balkans.” This statement begs the questions of how violent extremism is measured and why would it be more of an issue in the Western Balkans than in the EU.⁶⁰² To give Mr. Serri the benefit of the doubt, one can claim that countries in the Western Balkans simply lack the capacity to deal with the issue, an argument that I will revisit shortly, that cross border coordination could be better, and that the issue of Bosnian and Serbian non-recognition of Kosovar statehood hinders their institutional cooperation. Some EU officials went as far as to alarmingly portray Bosnia as a place where there is a “mushrooming of Wahhabi villages alongside the Bosnia-Croatia border.”⁶⁰³ Influential international media did their fair share of marking Kosovo looking like a “fertile ground for ISIS.”⁶⁰⁴ Simply put, these statements are not supported by any reports from local and international security and police agencies. The number of terrorist incident in the Western Balkans is lower by far than in the EU, so the assertion that violent extremism is a bigger issue than rampant corruption, nepotism and organized crime, and their nexus with domestic politics, remains a puzzle. Some experts suggest that the international community finds it easier to tackle violent extremism and report a success story back to headquarters rather than pursue criminal issues that lead directly to politicians.⁶⁰⁵ And this is despite the fact that the EU often consults with law enforcement and legal experts, and can even adopt best practices from their counterparts in the Western Balkans.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰² The “Further support to Kosovo Institutions in the fight against organized crime, corruption, and violent extremism” conference, supported by the EU in Pristina. The June 2018 event was the first known to the author that tied violent extremism to the perspective of other security threats in the country and did not treat it as an isolated issue and highlight it as the only threat.

⁶⁰³ MEP Marijana Petir, The European Parliament, The Security and Defense Subcommittee and the Foreign Affairs Committee, March 22, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZONNQsAT2k>, (accessed June 2018).

⁶⁰⁴ See Carlotta Gall, “How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS.” The New York Times, The New York Times, 21 May 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/world/europe/how-the-saudis-turned-kosovo-into-fertile-ground-for-isis.html, (accessed June 2016).

⁶⁰⁵ Interview with Garentina Kraja, adviser to the former President of Kosovo and KCSS fellow, as well as Vesa and Rudina.

⁶⁰⁶ As confirmed in an interview with an EU official in May 2016.

The issue of countering violent extremism (CVE) is overwhelming officials in both countries, so much that there is a certain degree of fatigue related to the number of conferences, roundtables, and seminars to which local officials are invited and expected to attend. Some even complain that there is no time to do their job, given the number of events they must attend.⁶⁰⁷ At the same time, the EU maintains that, at the operational level, local law enforcement agencies are doing a great job given the resources and circumstance with which they operate. However, they also agree that, at the executive level, the situation is catastrophically bad.⁶⁰⁸ In an interview, Lulzim Fushtica, Kosovo's national CVE coordinator, stated that, "we should address more than just violent extremism, given that the issues of organized crime and corruption rank above the issue of violent extremism."⁶⁰⁹ In sum, this can be interpreted as the need for contextualizing the issue and returning to dealing with the big picture of all soft and hard security threats permeating the region. This is the current state of play. To bring the issue of foreign fighters back into the discussion, I shall revisit the reasons why studying them was necessary in the first place.

This dissertation is the result of a profound need for evidence-based research, contextualization, theoretical underpinning and further implications and recommendations in order to avoid the future securitization and politicization of the issue at a time when these two countries are aspiring to join the EU and NATO. Without claiming that this dissertation provides answers to all of the above needs, in the paragraphs that follow I will summarize my findings and re-visit the main research question: "What were the processes and circumstances leading up to the departure of foreign fighters from Bosnia and Kosovo?" and "What were the key mechanisms and actors that enabled, mobilized, facilitated, and finally organized the departure?" To summarize my findings in regard to the research question, I will split the answers as follows: the micro-motivation, the networks, and the macro-context. The paragraphs below will synthesize the findings. The final paragraph will consist of recommendations for further research.

⁶⁰⁷ Almost all institutional representatives raised the issue of the overwhelming number of conferences for the same people to talk over the same issues.

⁶⁰⁸ Interview with Richard Wood, May 2018.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with Lulzim Fushtica, June 2018.

My research found that the motivations for Bosnian and Kosovar recruits can be indeed split into three distinct categories: Instrumentality, Solidarity, and Ideology.⁶¹⁰ To expand: “Instrumentality refers to movement participation as an attempt to influence the social and political environment; identity (solidarity) refers to movement participation as a manifestation of identification with a group; and ideology refers to movement participation as a search for meaning and an expression of one’s views.”⁶¹¹ When it comes to motivations, there are many and they differ. This is in line with major findings from leading local experts. While I have frequently professed at the beginning of this dissertation that identity study is beyond its scope, my research suggests that, in respect to the Kosovo contingent, the fault lines between what constitutes a Kosovar, a strongly enforced secular paradigm inherited from the concept of *Albanianism*, and the religious groups, which felt ostracized and marginalized, created a vacuum that some willing parties keenly exploited. It appears as if they carefully provided space for precisely those who sought spiritual and religious expression and claimed they couldn’t find them in a new, identity-building society. Extreme voices filled that fissure. In the post-war environments, religiosity and piety were heightened but appear neither to have had the forum to be realized nor the public support to incorporate them into new identity-building processes. In combination with a sense of solidarity with other Muslims in Syria and Iraq, who also are oppressed and prevented from being true to themselves, this situation provided both a powerful motivation and effective tool for recruiters. It is precisely with the concept of solidarity that the first part of the triggering mechanism was formulated – resentment formation by Peterson.⁶¹² Resentment in both cases was twofold: resentment toward what they saw being done to civilians in Syria and Iraq and gross human right violations, combined with resentment towards the local “impure community” and their own countries as a whole.

In more than half of the sample from Bosnia, foreign fighters actively displayed content they found online that depicted the rape, torture, and killing of civilians to convince their families of their noble cause. Their families were often broken, and their incomes very limited

⁶¹⁰ Here I am using Della Porta’s typology from Donatella della Porta, *Clandestine Political Violence*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

⁶¹¹ Bert Klandermans, “The demand and supply of participation: Social psychological correlates of participation in social movements,” <https://research.vu.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/1843998/149794.pdf>, (accessed June, 2018).

⁶¹² Rodger Petersen, *Resistance and rebellion, lessons from Easter Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

and irregular. I observed that they were typically socio-economic underperformers even in poor countries like Bosnia and Kosovo; most lived with one parent on a single or irregular paycheck. Those from rural areas lived in very run-down housing conditions. But as much as socio-economics incentives mattered, it is the conclusion of this work that it was not greed which led these young people to make their decisions. For the Kosovo contingent, a narrative of “heroic rescuers” that resembled Kosovo’s struggle for independence also played a part. In three cases, this “heroic motivation,” combined with solidarity, became the main motivation. The role of “heroism” in Kosovo, was played by “repaying the debt” in Bosnia. This referred to the duty to help in turn those who had helped during Bosnia’s war. In addition, it is now well understood that there was no single profile of a foreign fighter and there was no single motivation that led to his or her decision to leave. Although there were cases of individuals who were not well versed in religious interpretations or simply lacked the cognitive skills to understand the nuances of Islam, a reductionist and simplified ideology served as a glue to bind the new identity. Finally, all recruits felt certain ‘pleasure in agency’ and their decision to leave was their own, facilitated by the larger networks.

When it comes to the networks that sustained the recruitment and the parallel processes and mechanisms of brokerage that operated during those three years of departure (or, more accurately, prior to those years), we should recall what was the basic concept for both. As per Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow: “Mechanisms are a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in an identical or closely similar way over a variety of situations. [...] Processes are regular combinations and sequences of mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements [...], the processes themselves are often empirically invisible as such; you don’t see evolution happening.”⁶¹³ What is more, the mechanism of brokerage – “the joining of two or more previously less connected social sites through the intervention of third parties – constitutes a political mechanism of extremely general scope”⁶¹⁴ – seems to be the most carefully thought out process of facilitation and recruitment in the case of foreign fighters from the Balkans.

⁶¹³ Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, Oxford University Press; 2 edition, September 15, 2015, p. 29.

⁶¹⁴ Charles Tilly, “The Mechanism of Political Processes,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2001, 4:21–41.

Here I offered a semi-novel concept – *inexpensive prospect*. In the case of the Bosnian contingent, a majority of the sample which consisted of predominantly young men, it was quite evident that the process of resentment formation to ideological encapsulation and finally radicalization was sealed with an offered opportunity and prospect. It was inexpensive because it didn't cost much to the recruiter – the benefit was far greater than the cost. It was also a patronage opportunity because, through a power dynamic, it offered an authoritative view, presence, and guidance to young men, most of whom were missing a father figure. Finally, it was a prospect because it offered an opportunity for semi-employment. We need to make clear that the goal of the new concept is not to simplify the debate by bringing it back to socio-economic reasons, for it was not avarice that led these young men. It was rather a combination of a sense of usefulness and self-realization with the greater good and their place in a value system that they could respect, as opposed to a system that rejected them or which they rejected. The reason I believe it is a semi-novel concept is that it has already been partially recognized in many studies. However, here I offer a combination that precisely resulted in the brokered deal – departure. Had there not been a carefully guided, executed in detail process of a patronagebased, *inexpensive prospect*, which generated loyalty and inter-connection amongst the group members, even the most ideologically individual encapsulated would have had a hard time entering the network and simply leaving on their own accord. This, however is valid only for the Bosnian group. The Kosovo group is different in so far as their families already presented a tight-knit loyal patronage network and, given that one quarter of the contingent had some sort of family connections, required no need for a sustained mechanism to be artificially created and sustained. Admittedly, the Kosovo sample is much smaller than the Bosnian one, so it limits even further the conclusions that can be made.

Although some local experts have already hinted about a number of structural issues that aided the process of radicalization and recruitment and are affecting the societies, in the cases of foreign fighters, the blow and consequences of systematic failure are localized and reflected upon one's quality of life. I observed individual stories that included many indicators pointing to exactly that – a “marker event” that served as a trigger to the process of radicalization. This study has empirically proved that the triggering mechanism in the case of Bosnian and Kosovo recruits had been a personal encounter with corruption and system failure or a great calamity, or both. A

set of unfortunate circumstances, broken families, and a failing value system in postwar and transitioning countries have greatly aided the process of radicalization. One conclusion which resulted from my research and can serve as a counter-measure is that one single contact can affect whether the person goes the route of radicalism, organized crime, or prosperity. It is nearly impossible to predict this, as the context is dependent upon and often conditioned by a single encounter and even the region where one person resides.

Societies that are still defined as post-conflict and are permeated with organized crime, nepotism, corruption, divisive political discourse and an unresolved wartime past are in danger of producing vacuums that are then willingly exploited by malign forces. These malign influences clandestinely exist alongside of existing albeit weak state structures and, in many cases, may have longer-term success rates since they offer a simplified but reductionist value system matrix. In addition, among the problems of externally-regulated democracies are government institutions that often lack legitimacy and accountability. In cases in which the state is non-ethnically homogenous, threats posed by secessionist-minded minorities may be exacerbated. In turn, western administrators, in their efforts to increase the tertiary state's socialization toward western political norms and communities, also encourage partial or lack of compliance in the realm of 'conditionality,' which threatens to undermine future western democratization projects by lacking the legitimacy to implement programs that counter violent extremism or build peace for that matter, without having any record of success.

While much evidence may point to the role of poor socio-economic conditions, difficult family situations and low levels of education, ideological encapsulation, and others, it is the profound belief of this author and ultimate finding of this dissertation that it is a general systemic failure that drives these and similar agencies of individuals to leave these two and other countries in the region. Similarly, the brain drain phenomena that robs countries of the young and educated is also driven not only by the factors above but also by the systematic failure of the states to provide a value system to which individuals would want to belong and aspire. Externally driven democracies are limited in providing broad-based appeal for the young and disillusioned because they are nascent polities in the making, occupied with building infrastructure at the expense of social fabric. In this environment, parallel, underground networks can operate and maneuver

unchecked, carry out serious social engineering, and provide inexpensive prospects, as in the case of Bosnia, by giving meaning and purpose to the young while wrapping them in an ideology that is restrictive and isolates them from their biological families. At that point, families can only watch in horror as their children “get abducted”. Or, in the case of Kosovo, tightknit kinships are powerful recruiting forces that operate in the many empty pockets and layers of the process of building Europe’s youngest state. Divisions amongst the international community over the issue of the country’s recognition blur the lines between what is the effective approach and who has the credibility to tackle the issue of violent extremism in Kosovo. Lacking a seat in the UN but having its agencies operate under Mandate 1244 and not being part of Interpol and Europol, thus being outside of larger security frameworks, are further challenges for Kosovo.⁶¹⁵

My dissertation identifies many potential avenues for future research. Among the most obvious is continuing to create individual accounts of as many foreign fighters, their families, and their circumstances as possible. I also came across a number of possibilities for subset research. One concerns the particular role of women in the process of radicalization or disengagement, as well as their part in extreme groups and their outreach. Another is the role and destiny of children who have been lured into extreme groups. While this is a delicate subject, it must be taken on. As this research suggests, the role of the family proved to be crucial in several cases. What made them vary across the sample, what were their internal dynamics and roles, and what impact, if any, did veterans have amongst families are just a small portion of research subset questions that can be talked more effectively by the social sciences and humanities. In this respect, it should be acknowledged (and has been previously noted) that academia, as well as law enforcement and judicial bodies, would benefit greatly if there was a standardized way in which non-confidential details and documentation could be shared in order to advance both of their approaches – the latter clearly lacks academic vigor, methodology and theoretical underpinning, while the former misses intelligence data from first-responders. In addition to these, the question of finance remains underexplored. More can be done in studying the transparency of monetary and fiscal policies, as well as financial policing, especially in unconsolidated democracies. In addition, as there is simply no credible research that has found a direct correlation between

⁶¹⁵ Although Europol cooperates with Kosovo via EULEX, five EU member states still do not recognize Kosovo as an independent state.

online activities that later translated into offline actions, we must acknowledge that the science in fact doesn't know much about the real dynamic of online radicalization beyond browsing patterns, commenting, and sharing contents. It would be useful to develop parameters for and look more vigorously into the correlation, if one can be demonstrated. Finally, given the hundreds of millions of dollars invested in government and nongovernment efforts to tackle the challenge of violent extremism leading to violence, a comprehensive assessment of the utility and success of CVE programs should be conducted.⁶¹⁶ The issue of aid has already been discussed but assistance must be tailored to monitor the success or failure of this particular topic.

There is an attraction to investigating general political violence or, in particular, terrorism, that appeals equally to academia, practitioners, and media. As I and many others have already demonstrated, there has been an eager fascination to explore the foreign fighter phenomena and ascertain "truths," but this only contributed to misrepresentation and confusion in the public discourse. As Professor Vlado Azinovic noted, "media and political personalities may not declare the region a 'hotbed of ethno-nationalist violence' as readily and boldly as they proclaimed it was a hotbed of ISIS terrorism."⁶¹⁷ Similarly, it has long been demonstrated that the per capita studies that portrayed both Bosnia and Kosovo as 'Top Ten' suppliers of foreign fighters were simply incorrect.⁶¹⁸ What indeed made any departure possible and what enabled them are different matters, and these have been the leading questions of this study. My dissertation sheds additional light through a microscopic approach to a very specific contingent and makes certain assertions and claims as a result of my research. It is my honest hope that my research will only encourage further evidence-based research.

⁶¹⁶ There is reportedly forthcoming a USAID report that looks precisely at the effectiveness of CVE programs in the region. Source: Interview with Emina Cosic, May 2018.

⁶¹⁷ Vlado Azinovic, Regional report understanding violent extremism in the Western Balkan, British Council, June 2018, https://www.britishcouncil.rs/sites/default/files/erf_report_western_balkans_2018.pdf, (accessed August 2018), p. 5.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid. p. 6.

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List of Tables:

Table 1: Breakdown of Interviews

Table 2: Content Analysis within the Discourse Analytical Approach

Table 3: Chart for codifying and operationalizing the data

List of Figures and Illustrations:

Figure 1. The classical Social Movement agenda

Figure 2. Triggering mechanism by Petersen

Illustration 1: Interview sample

Illustration 2: Returning Foreign Fighters

Appendices

Appendix I

Interview List

	NAME	AFFILIATION	TIME AND PLACE	METHOD
1	Ana Vlahović	USA Embassy to Kosovo	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
2	Atifete Jahjaga	Former Kosovo President	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
3	Avdo Avdić	Journalist	March 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
4	Besa Ismaili	Faculty of Islamic Studies KS	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
5	Borislav Spasojević	IRI BiH Director	March 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
6	Dijanela Rajkić	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	March 2018, BiH, April 2018, BiH	phone call, notes
7	Edina Bećirević	Professor at the University of Sarajevo	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
8	Emina Ćosić	Expert	April 18, BiH	tête-à-tête
9	Fatos Makolli	Kosovo Police	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
10	Filip De Ceuninck	EU Delegation, expert	April 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
11	Florian Qehaja	Kosovo Center for Security Studies	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
12	Garentina Kraja	Expert	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
13	Halima Ibrić	Parent	May 2016, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
14	Hamdi Ibrahim	Judge KS	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
15	Holger Engelmann	EU Delegation in BiH	April 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
16	Ian Bancroft	EULEX	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes

17	Izudin Ahmetbegović	President of the local community Kučuk Kula	April 2016, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
18	Jasna Hodžić	OSCE	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
19	Kujtim Bytyqi	Kosovo Government	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
20	Lulzim Fushtica	CVE KS National Coordinator	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
21	Maja Gasal Vrazalica	BiH MP	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
22	Mario Janeček	Ministry of Security BiH	November 2015, BiH	e-mail
23	Milica Vučetić	Journalist	April 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête
24	Mirnes Kovač	Journalist	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
25	Mirsad Crnovršanin	BiH Prosecutor's Office	March 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
26	Mirsad Vilić	Directorate for Coordination of the Police Body of BiH	May 2016, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
27	Muhamed Jusić	BiH Islamic Community	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
28	Raffi Gregorian	Former Brcko District Supervisor and Principal Deputy High Representative; Currently Director for Multilateral Affairs Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State	August 2018, USA	tête-à-tête, notes
29	Ranko Debevec	BiH State Court President	April 18, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
30	Reshat Millaku	KS Prosecutor's Office	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
31	Richard Wood	EU Delegation in BiH	April 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
32	Rudine Jakupi	Kosovo Center for Security Studies	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
33	Samira Bilalić	Journalist	May 2016, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
34	Saša Magazinović	BiH MP	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes

35	Sead Turčalo	Professor at the University of Sarajevo	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
36	Selma Zeković	OSCE	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
37	Senad Šabović	OSCE	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
38	Skender Perteshi	Kosovo Center for Security Studies	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
39	Suad Hasanović	SIPA (State Investigation and Protection Agency)	June 2016, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
40	Tatjana Kosović	Judge BiH	March 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
41	Valery Perry	OSCE	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête
42	Vesa Kelmendi	Kosovo Center for Security Studies	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
43	Vincenzo Cardinale	EULEX	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
44	Visar Bivolaku	EU Delegation in KS	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
45	Vlado Azinović	Professor at the University of Sarajevo	April 2018, BiH, June 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
46	Zeljko Komšić	Former BiH Presidency member	May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête

Appendix II

Interview List - Chatham House Rules

	CODE	AFFILIATION	TIME AND PLACE	METHOD
1	FF 1	Foreign fighter	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
2	AK	Family	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
3	BK	Family	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
4	FK	Family	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête, notes
5	FF 2	Foreign fighter	March 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
6	FF 3	Foreign fighter	April 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
7	FF 4	Foreign fighter	June 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
8	MK	Family	April 2015, BiH, March 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
9	KM	Family	March 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
10	HU	Family	June 2016, BiH April, 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
11	OF	Family	April 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
12	IC	Family	March 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
13	TC	Family	June 2016, BiH, May 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
14	AD	Family	June 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
15	BH	Family	April 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
16	GD	Family	March 2018, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
17	CK	imam	June 2016, BiH	tête-à-tête, notes
18	SIPA 1	Police	May 2016, BiH	tête-à-tête
19	KP1	Police	June 2018, Kosovo	tête-à-tête
20	DD	EU	August 2018	phone call, notes

Appendix III

BiH Court verdicts against Foreign Fighters

	NAME	TYPE	COURT CASE #	DATE
1	Prosecutor v. N.M.	First- instance verdict	S1 2 K 022660 16 Ko	18.10.2016
2	Prosecutor v. A.DZ.	First- instance verdict	S1 2 K 022112 16 Ko	16.08.2016.
3	Prosecutor v. H.F.	First- instance verdict	S1 2 K 022139 16 K	04.07.2016.
4	Prosecutor v. M.E. and others	First- instance verdict	S 1 2 K 018991 15 K	31.10.2016.
5	Prosecutor v. K.M.	First- instance verdict	S 1 2 K 021119 16 K	11.07.2016.
6	Prosecutor v. H.E.	First- instance verdict	S1 2 K 021260 16 K	11.04.2015.
7	Prosecutor v. H.F.	First- instance verdict	S1 2 K 021145 16 K	21.03.2015.
8	Prosecutor v. Husein Erdic and others	Second-instance verdict	S1 2 K 018698 15 Kž 3	11.02.2016.
9	Prosecutor v. Safeta Brkica	Second-instance verdict	S1 2 K 019005 16 Kž	03. 10. 2016.
10	Prosecutor v. Bosnic Husein	Second-instance verdict	S1 2 K 017968 16 Kž 4	28. 03.2016.
11	Prosecutor v. Enes Mesic and others	Second-instance verdict	S1 2 K 018991 16 Kž 3	07.04.2017.
12	Prosecutor v. Senad Kostic	First- instance verdict	S1 2 K 020440 16 K	06.06.2016.
13	Prosecutor v. Osman Abdulaziz Kekic	Second-instance verdict	S1 2 K 021198 17 Kžk	22.11.2017.
14	Prosecutor v. Mehmed Tutmic	Second-instance verdict	S1 2 K 019881 17 Kž 3	11.05.2017.

Appendix IV

Kosovo Court verdicts against Foreign Fighters and other terror-related verdicts

	NAME	TYPE	COURT CASE #	DATE
1	Prosecutor v. Bedri Robaj and others.	First- instance verdict	PPS nr.123/2014	15.09.2016
2	Prosecutor v. Arian Alijaj and Artan Kadriu	First- instance verdict	PPS nr. 23/2016	27.10.2016
3	Prosecutor v. Ardian Gjuraj	First- instance verdict	PPS nr.58/2015	07.12.2016
4	Prosecutor v. Besnik Latifi and others	First- instance verdict	PPS nr.48/2015	04.12.2015.
5	Prosecutor v. Hasan Azari Bejandi.	First- instance verdict	PPS nr. 133/2014	25.07.2016
6	Prosecutor v. Irfan Haqifi and others	First- instance verdict	PPS nr. 111/2014	07.05.2015
7	Prosecutor v. Visar Ibishi	First- instance verdict	PPS nr. 56/2016	13.06.2016.
8	Prosecutor v. Shefqet Krasniqi	First-instance verdict	PPS nr.117/2014	27.02.2017.
9	Prosecutor v. Gazmend Haliti	Second-instance verdict	PPS nr. 11/2016	03. 10. 2016.
10	Prosecutor v. Armin Gjaferi	First-instance verdict	PPS nr. 111/14	07.11.2016.
11	Prosecutor v. Kujtim Bytyqi and others	First-instance verdict	PPS nr.25/2015	07.05.2015.
12	Prosecutor v. Ardian Mehmeti and others	First- instance verdict	PPS no. 94/2013	23.01.2015.