HCSS Security

Far-Right Trends in South Eastern Europe: The Influences of Russia, Croatia, Serbia and Albania

Dr. Arlinda Rrustemi[1]

Introduction

In the last few years, violent extremist trends have been researched in South-Eastern Europe (SEE) incorporating Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia from the various perspectives of risks, links to organized crime, community resilience, and drivers for disengagement and resilience (British Council 2019); (Perry 2019);(Petrović and Stakić 2018); (CeSID and USAID 2016); (Bakic 2013); (QKSS); (Analytica.); (Selimi and Stojkovski 2016). It is striking though that most of the research focuses on religious violent extremism, mainly Islamic, rather than far-right and/or ethno-national violent extremism. So far, in-depth analysis of the phenomena has been limited (Kelly 2019). Some interviewees confirm the former points that the international community focuses more on religious radicalization and external influencers in the region. Meanwhile, they also point out that local contexts show challenges deriving from local elites who use nationalism and religion for their own purposes and are sometimes assisted by mother states or external actors (Several Anonymous Interviews, International Officials and Local Officials, 2017- 2019, Western Balkans). This paper explores previously under-researched trends in SEE's far right movements. It attempts to answer the following questions: which countries are most affected by the far-right? What are the main drivers? How does this impact the discussions on the EU and NATO membership?

This paper uses violent extremism as the framework as it is a less biased and globally accepted term used by the United Nations member states. Even though the term is used mainly for the non-state actors, the research uncovers that the line between state and non-state actors throughout the SEE is blurred. It also employs the far-right and extreme right interchangeably, referring to a network of individuals and groups that define themselves as superior over other individuals and groups that are considered inferior on grounds of race, ethnicity, culture and religion. While in Europe groups of white supremacists, neo-Nazis and fascists are considered as part of the far right and are usually outside the political structures, in the SEE region the ideology is endorsed by the political structures with illiberal tendencies that utilize ethnicity and religion for political gain. This in turn is enhanced further by external influences, such as Russia and the mother states in SEE (Albania and Serbia). This paper argues that there is a rise of the far right in the region which deserves greater attention since the region is experiencing a turning point in ideological orientation between the West and the East (Rrustemi et al. 2019). Consequently, there are potential risks associated with an unstable SEE region that may have potential spillover effects to the rest of Europe, bringing with it consequences for the EU and NATO. Broadly speaking, the Republic of Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia seem highly affected by far-right trends which pose security risks for the region and Europe. North Macedonia seems to be more stable, whereas Montenegro and Albania are the least affected countries.

The methodology of the report employs a qualitative approach, using in depth life story interviews from the SEE region. More than 300 interviews which address themes on both religious and far-right violent extremism are employed to derive the findings below. Moreover, governmental statements, international organization's reports, academic articles as well as newspaper articles and social media are used to substantiate the findings. Thus, through utilizing this method, this report uncovers both the institutional and individual dynamics, with the former derived through open source data and interviews, whereas the latter only through the life story interviews.

The paper also employs grounded theory as a theoretical lens that guides the process of data analysis, mainly the interviews. The first process of the interview coding "entails reviewing transcripts and/or field notes and giving labels to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance and/or that appear to be particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied" (Bell, Bryman, and Harley 2018, 542). Coding assists on developing theoretical concepts and categories which may result in "an emergent theory" (Charmaz 2006, 46). This systematic analysis provides evidence-based research to inform policymakers, aiming to create societal impact through actionable policy recommendations.

Serbia: Highly Affected

There are both external and internal factors that impact far-right extremism in Serbia. The external factors primarily revolve around Russia by: their support of far right organizations in Serbia; using culture and humanitarian reasons as a cover for intelligence purposes; linking with foreign fighters in eastern Ukraine and political elites in Serbia; using disinformation campaign to sow mistrust towards the EU and NATO; and lastly portraying the Muslim communities in the region as terrorists in order to counter the Western influence. Internal factors equally increase the threat of far-right extremism to Serbia too, although the topic is treated as a taboo within Serbian society. Relevant internal factors include: the lack of dealing with the past; reciprocal radicalization due to economic and political inequalities; the different treatment of foreign fighters traveling to Ukraine and Syria; and the secessionist aspirations from the northern region of Vojvodina and the Presevo Valley in the south. The section concludes with an analysis of how Serbia's far right discourse and movements are impacting global far-right extremism by inspiring attackers (i.e. New Zealand attacker).

External Factors

Countries such as Russia are crucial in instigating the rise of far-right extremism within Serbia as they promote it through supporting organizations linked to far-right extremism. Russia broadly targets the areas inhabited by Slavic citizens such as Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and the northern area of Kosovo. Also, Russians are popular among Serbs (Chrzová et

al. 2019). This stems from the historic ties with Slavic populations and the religious proximity with the Orthodox population. Russia uses culture and religion as soft power tools, and/or allegedly for hybrid warfare. Thus, Russia is considered to be "undoubtedly […] the key external player influencing the religious, cultural, and academic spheres of the Western Balkans countries" (Galeotti 2018). It is also "more active and assertive in its attempt to present itself as a protector of traditional values and an alternative to Western dominance" (Prague Security Studies Institute 2019a).

So called 'patriotic' organizations and paramilitary organizations are supported by Russia, operating not only in the SEE region but also in Europe and extending to Oceania and Asia. An example of a patriotic organization established and/or sponsored by Russia is the Night Wolves. Founded in Russia it is a motorcycle gang with branches in Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Latvia, Germany, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Belarus, Romania and Germany (Pronk 2018). The organization's reach is global, also being active in Australia and the Philippines, albeit to a lesser extent (Romriell 2003). The Night Wolves' leadership is very close to Putin (Parfitt 2015b)(Parfitt 2015a), and the Russian Orthodox Church (Radio Free Europe 2015). A paramilitary organization which Russia supports is the Serbian / Balkan Cossacks Army (Radio Free Europe, 2016), and provides financial support to "military-patriotic solidarity" training camps for individuals as young as 14 in Serbia (Balkan Insight 2018) as well as facilitating exchanges and trainings in Russia (Balkan Insight 2017). Concerns have been raised also regarding the humanitarian response center in Niš for its allegedly dual-purpose: intelligence hub and humanitarian (Galeotti 2018). Next year, a nuclear technology and innovation research center will also be established (Tanjug News 2019).

The political elite in Serbia and foreign fighters in Ukraine are linked with the Russian government as well. Paramilitary groups have "connections to the Russian government" whose actions are coordinated via proxies with the membership consisting of disenfranchised fringe elements (Stronski and Himes 2019). These groups target the political elites in the region to increase an anti-EU and anti-NATO sentiment (ibid). Russia may as well attempt to increase the inter-ethnic tensions in the region to counter the effect of Europe. Their role is strong as seen from the example of the foreign fighters/mercenaries that joined the Russian side of the war. In fact, the Serbian fighters in Ukraine are believed to serve in combat and counterintelligence missions for pro-Russia paramilitary units (Zivanovic 2018). Due to pan-Slavism, 300 "foreign fighters" joined the war in Eastern Ukraine in an attempt to return the favor to the Russian "brothers" for their help during the Kosovo war (Metodieva 2019).

Russia's disinformation campaign is highly efficient and cost-effective in the SEE region. The Russia disinformation database has identified 79 debunked news linked to Serbia, Russia, US and EU during 2019 (EU vs Disinfo n.d.). For example, one article outlines how a group of states are working against Serbia (EU vs Disinfo n.d.). Indeed,

it has "the most effective influence on the local media" (Prague Security Studies Institute 2019b). They mainly promote "Russian-friendly news stories or anti-Western narratives" (Stronski and Himes 2019) with sixty websites in the region spreading "the idea of ethnically pure nation states, neo-Nazism, violent homophobia and other radical right-wing policies". They are directed by extremists who are "even more radical than those who split up the former Yugoslavia" (Metodieva 2019), spearheaded by the key perpetrators of Sputnik, RT and Russian state newspaper Russian Gazette (Rossiyskaya Gazeta) (Kremlin Watch 2019; AALEP 2017). One hundred and ten registered non-governmental entities are likely connected to the Russian lobby in Serbia (Kremlin Watch 2017). Similar arguments in this regard have been found as well among local communities which fear the role of Russia, viewing it as a de-stabilizer. Interviews in the region uncover a common perception that Russia is using hybrid warfare, as illustrated by an interviewee who said that "Russia is using the West against the West" (Anonymous Interview, IO Official, Spring 2019, North Macedonia). The aim of these efforts is to create confusion among the West in order to paralyze decision making and, by extension, to discredit democracy as a governance system. Moreover, other interviewees call for the disinformation campaign to be countered, as illustrated by one interviewee: "we need to expose them, conduct debates, discuss openly. We need to break the taboo" (Anonymous Interview, Political Official, Spring 2018, North Macedonia).

In addition, Russia is seeking to portray Muslim communities in the region as terrorists in order to counter Western influence, while increasing its security influence through religious ties and politicians. Russia is "seeking to develop its role in the region as a counter terrorism partner" (Galeotti 2018). The Russian and Serbian Deputy Foreign Ministers "played up Europe's 'refusal' to acknowledge Belgrade's 'legitimate concerns' about terrorism from Kosovo and Muslims from the Middle East" (ibid). However the numbers of foreign fighters from Bosnia, Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo traveling to Syria and returning are not alarming in comparison with the foreign fighters from the Middle Eastern region (about 1000 from the SEE region and 110 returnees) (Shtuni 2019). This strategy creates space for Russia to use Orthodox Christian solidarity (Galeotti 2018) to present itself as an alternative to the West for the Slavic populations in the region (Galeotti 2018). Thus, Russia uses religious and cultural influence through the Orthodox Church in Serbia (Conley and Melino 2019). Since Serbian politicians have close ties with the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC), it presents a powerful tool for Russia to maintain influence within the country. Far-right violent extremism is also treated as a taboo topic for the state of Serbia. An interviewee said that: "it is a public secret here that Serbs went to fight in Ukraine. NGO's and journalists researching it are intimidated. No one from the governmental officials wants to speak about it" (Anonymous Interview, NGO Official, Fall 2017, Serbia). The international community has shown less willingness to expose this topic as it may have harmed relations with the current government (Fieldwork Notes, International Official, Fall

2017, Serbia). While some Serbian citizens point out that travel to Ukraine was normalized and that Serbian citizens travel "to earn money and to fight. What else to do since they have no jobs" (Anonymous Interview, Community Observer, Fall 2018, Serbia), whilst others argue that Serbians travel to Ukraine to return the favor to their Slavic brothers for assistance they received during the Kosovo war (Metodieva 2019).

Corresponding with the Serbian government's failure to distance itself from the country's belligerent past (Babić 2015, 75) and with nationalistic narratives engraved in state policy (Breslin and Ignjatijevic 2017), far-right violent extremism in Serbia has been relegated to an issue of "secondary concern" by the governmental structures (ibid, 1). This implicit tolerance of ethno-nationalism has enabled right-wing organizations to freely exploit an extensive recruiting base of poorly educated and unemployed working-class youth (Bakic 2013). While their socio-economic situation may explain the Serbian youth's desire for political action, their vulnerability to ethno-nationalistic narratives can best be explained by their upbringing. Socialized in the backdrop of the Yugoslav wars and Western sanctions (Babić 2015), many young Serbs have formed strong political opinions against the West, NATO, and Western democratic values (Beslin and Ignjatijevic 2017).

Internal Factors

One hundred estimated Serbian 'foreign fighters' joined the second largest contingent of foreign combatants for the separatist cause of Crimea in East Ukraine (Beslin and Ignjatijevic 2017, 2). Other sources estimate 300 foreign fighters originated from Serbia (Metodieva 2019). While the current President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, claimed that 99% of the Serb foreign fighters in Ukraine were mercenaries (Rujevic 2014), others have reasoned that these individuals are motivated by a sense of nationalist *solidarity* with the Russian Orthodox Christians and by a persistent hostility towards NATO (E.W.B. Archives 2017) – of which Ukraine is perceived to be a proxy member. The NGOs, on the other hand, argue that Serbia is attempting to label foreign fighters legally as mercenaries since the political repercussions are softer, such as not threatening the existing alliance with the West (Fieldwork Notes, Local NGO Representatives, 2017-19, Serbia). The close connection between Serbia and Russia, demonstrated above through security, cultural and political links, cannot be ignored and, therefore, the so-called mercenaries can be viewed as foreign fighters with a political purpose.

Research into how economic and political factors impact the emergence and spreading of far right extremism in Serbia remains modest (Petrović 2018). Originating from state policies, feelings of discrimination and isolation are prevalent for minorities in Serbia, namely felt within the Muslim community. Some of the drivers of religious VE are political corruption, unequal and unfair distribution, an increased inequality and a sense of injustice. Even though these sentiments are not purported as arguments for the growth of far right VE, the *economic and political discrimination* is viewed as their

main driver. The presence of both types of VE, religious and far right, can also be reinforced when combined with socio-economic push factors. The latter causes especially young citizens to become deprived of societal fluidity, rendering them vulnerable to extremism as an alternative option.

Despite amended legislation, which criminalized traveling to third countries in order to engage in armed conflicts (Reuters 2014), the actual prosecution of Serb foreign fighters in Ukraine has remained modest (Beslin and Ignjatijevic 2017, 3). More specifically, only three out of twenty-four were sentenced with the lowest penalty being six months of home detention while the maximum penalty being between two-three years of probation (ibid). Nevertheless, the danger, posed by far-right 'foreign fighters' is no less severe than that of their jihadist counterparts, demonstrated by the failed coup during the 2016 elections in Montenegro. Out of the twenty Serbian and Montenegrin plotters, the Serbs had previously been engaged in fighting for Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine (Borger, MacDowall, and Walker 2016).

Serbia faces also other internal challenges, such as secessionist aspirations from the northern region of Vojvodina (Zivanovic 2019b) and the Presevo Valley in the south (France 24 2018). The so-called Mlada (Young) Vojvodina, a group in Novi Sad, placed graffiti around the city, such as 'Vojvodina = Catalonia' and Vojvodina "will soon be a Republic!". The independence movement calling to part from Serbia mirrors the name of the Young Bosnia movement, which attempted to oust the Austro-Hungarian Empire from the SEE region, shooting dead Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, consequently sparking World War I (Zivanovic 2019b). Their aspiration is to become independent like the Republic of Kosovo. On the other hand, one of the poorest regions of Serbia, Presevo, had an armed conflict in 2001 between the Albanian guerrilla and the Serbian forces demanding to join Kosovo. A land swap plan exists supporting border changes between Kosovo and Serbia, meaning the Presevo Valley would fall into Kosovo and, conversely, northern Kosovo would fall into Serbia. This, in turn, would presumably secure Serbian membership to the EU for Serbia whilst open negotiations for Kosovo to join the United Nations. Demands of Serbia to provide employment for the citizens of Presevo Valley (mainly Albanian inhabited), a border crossing and Albanian schoolbooks have all been ignored. This in turn increases nationalistic aspirations (France 24 2018). Supporters of the territory swap argue that it can end the stalemate dispute, while opponents argue that this will only deepen the social divisions and may create spillover effects to other movements, such as resulting in the break-up of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Delauney 2018). These secessionist challenges are a priority for the state of Serbia to deal with, however, it remains to be seen whether Serbia will choose a peaceful or violent path when dealing with these secessionist movements. Illiberalism, the rising role of China, Russia, Gulf countries and governmental control of information increases the likelihood of resorting to violence (Rrustemi et al. 2019).

In additional, the far-right movement in Serbia is influencing the far-right extremism worldwide. Serbian nationalism inspired the New Zealand attacker in Christchurch, 2019. The full manifesto consisting of seventy-four pages included references to different countries, including Serbia ("The Great Replacement," n.d.). The New Zealand attacker cites the involvement of NATO and the US in the SEE region as siding with Muslims, while killing white Christians. He specifically criticized the US involvement in Kosovo which allegedly decreased US power. While the manifesto did not directly reference Radovan Karadzic, a war criminal, he played a song honoring Karadzic before opening fire (Zivanovic 2019a). The song lyrics follow: "God is a Serb and he will protect us". The song was used as propaganda by the Bosnian Serb soldiers led by Karadzic, warning "Turks" (Bosnian Muslims) that the Serbs were arriving at their houses. The song is anti-Muslim and was actively used for ethnic cleaning against Muslims. Moreover, pictures depicted weaponry used in the shooting with the names of anti-Ottoman Empire fighters, such as the Montenegrin military leader Marko Miljanov Popovic and Novak Vujosevic. Most importantly, this resulted in a spillover effect where an Albanian has been arrested for planning an attack in a synagogue in the United States in response to the New Zealand attacker (JTA and Oster 2019). This indicates that Serbian nationalism has a global reach as it has contributed to the New Zealand attackers' ideas that marks the most recent far-right attack in the world.

Kosovo: Highly Affected

The Republic of Kosovo is also affected by far-right extremism through foreign influences, propagated mainly by Russia and Serbia. Though Russia emerges as the greater offender, both countries exploit Serbian identity in Kosovo. The Kremlin sometimes achieves this by working in tandem with - and exercising its influence over - Belgrade, but also makes use of direct channels. Russian direct channels include religious influences, nationalist venues, media, NGOs, etc. Russia also pursues the "radicalization" of Albanians to prompt knee-jerk reactions among Kosovar Serbs, thus strengthening Serb identity in the country. The aforementioned efforts stoke far-right sentiments, and thus serve the ultimate purpose of keeping Kosovo out of the EU. Though this does not constitute a direct form of "external influence", it does significantly reduce the EU's ability to manifest positive change in Kosovo. The politicization of terror ultimately serves to paint the EU as a hypocritical organization, thus reducing its appeal. It may also render Kosovar Serbs and Albanians more susceptible to external influences because it promotes adherence to ethnic rather than EU (supranational) identity. The likely outcome of this process is the empowerment of far-right extremism due to the strengthening of Serbian and Albanian national identities, whereby competition between which has been reflected in political discourse.

Starting with exploitation of religious identities, Russia attempts to leverage its relations with the Serbian Orthodox Church to influence Kosovo Serbs. Several Serbian

churches have been reconstructed in Kosovo, including "an Iversk chapel containing the name of Vladimir Putin" (Telegraph RS 2017). In the northern part of the country, Russia provided $2 million dollars to restore four historical UNESCO Orthodox buildings in 2010 (Kosovar Centre for Security Studies 2017). The Russian Orthodox Church has additionally built 300 houses to accommodate around 1500 Serbs that intend on returning (Prague Security Studies Institute 2019a). These efforts allow Russia to exercise influence mainly in the northern area of Kosovo. The creation of physical infrastructure within the religious sphere of influence may serve the purpose of supporting far right policies and destabilize Kosovo in the long term.

Russia also contributes in spreading nationalist extremism through utilizing political elites in the northern area of Kosovo. The aim of this initiative is to aggravate tensions between Albanian and Serbian communities in the region (Prague Security Studies Institute 2018). Interviews indicate that Russia is spreading violent extremism in both communities via Russian agents, further attempting to destabilize the country via proxies.

In fact, the Serbian elite in Belgrade that is influenced by Russia maintains an anti-Kosovo discourse, in contrary to some individuals within the Serbian minority in Kosovo. The interviewees experienced threats and intimidations due to providing support to Kosovo authorities (Anonymous Interviews, Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Kosovo). The assassination of Oliver Ivanovic, a moderate Serbian politician, is viewed by the Serbian community as deriving from a clash with Belgrade, which is guided by Russia. A recent voice recording was leaked to the press arguing that Ivanovic was killed under Vucic's order because Ivanovic refused to join Lista Srpska, a movement which is directly instrumentalized by Belgrade and Russia (Insajderi 2019). Serbia can thus be understood as a key element of Russian efforts at undermining the stability of Kosovo. Serbian identities are exploited to strengthen far-right rhetoric, hinder the integration of Kosovo Serbs into the everyday social, political and economic life in Kosovo, and undermine the liberal state of the Republic of Kosovo more generally.

Furthermore, there is a politicization of terrorism by Russia and Serbia in order to keep Kosovo outside the EU and NATO. There is a perception that the European Union is restricting Kosovo from visa liberalization because Serbia portrays Kosovo as an Islamic and a terrorist threat. In total, three hundred foreign fighters have travelled from Kosovo to Syria, with one hundred and ten having returned (Bytyci 2019). Some Kosovo local citizens view Serbia's role as destructive, positing that the EU's support for Serbia is contributing to the region's continued instability. The politicization of terrorism may serve to keep Kosovo out of the EU umbrella, thus strengthening attempts made by Serbia's far right to prevent Kosovo from engaging with the EU accession processes. To illustrate this point, an interviewee says: "Why does North Macedonia (NM) and Albania have visa liberalization? Why does NM not suffer this injustice regarding visa liberalization? Why do they [EU] leave Kosovo in this state? Now extremism from

religious radicalization is found as a justification for the delay. But individuals from Serbia as well left for the Ukrainian war zone" (Anonymous Interview, NGO Official, Fall 2018, Kosovo).

Russia has also participated in the politicization of terror to prevent Kosovo's engagement with the EU accession process. In 2017, the Russian and Serbian Deputy Foreign Ministers "played up Europe's 'refusal' to acknowledge Belgrade's 'legitimate concerns' about terrorism from Kosovo and Muslims from the Middle East" (Galeotti 2018). This highlights the instrumentalization of religious violent extremism by Russia for political purposes to exclude Kosovo from the supranational institutions such as the EU or NATO. It also underscores the reinforcing effects of religious violent extremism discourse that is employed by the government officials in order to maintain, if not increase, the far-right sentiments among the Serbian population.

There are also claims that Russia's presence in the northern area of Kosovo has increased. This has manifested in its support for disinformation campaigns, the "cult" of Putin, and Russian support to organized crime groups and "humanitarian organizations". Political graffiti murals of Putin are present in Serbian inhabited areas in Kosovo. A recent police raid on organized crime-ring by authorities representing the Republic of Kosovo in the Serbian inhabited area of northern Mitrovica was hampered by a UNMIK official with Russian nationality, which attempted to block a bridge to delay the raid (Begisholli 2019). He was arrested and soon released due to immunity privileges. Interviews also reveal that several Russian humanitarian organizations are present and Russian officials, which are directed via Belgrade/Moscow, are feared by some local Serbs (Anonymous Interviews, Fall/Spring, 2018/2019, Kosovo). In addition, the disinformation database shows more than 39 debunked links on Kosovo as recently as the end of 2019. For example, one article propagated links with terrorists, White Helmets and Kosovo (EU vs Disinfo n.d.). These events show the Russian presence to hamper Kosovo's process of multi-ethnic statebuilding, potentially exacerbating far-right trends.

Affirmations such as viewing the other 'Albanians' as backwards and Serbians as 'superior' have also been confirmed by the recent nationalist rhetoric observed in the speech of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabic, categorizing the Albanian elite as savages who have "literally come out of the woods" as "terrorists" (Radio Free Europe 2019b). The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Behgjet Pacolli, called these political remarks racist and labelled them "disgusting and unacceptable". Moreover, President Hashim Thaci argued that this is "nothing new" and constitutes "further evidence of the pathological hatred of the current Serbian regime toward the citizens of Kosovo". Moreover, he criticized the European Union for "not condemning this racist and anti-European behavior of Serbia" (Zejneli 2019). The far-right rhetoric endorsed by the political elite of Serbia raises further risks for the stability of Kosovo and the region. Strikingly, Serbia is the country which has progressed the furthest with EU membership

negotiations out of the SEE region. This type of hatred discourse mirrors the 90's wars which indicates that further attention must be paid to Kosovo and Serbia.

Serbian and Russian efforts at demonizing the Albanian community have also contributed to the strengthening of far-right Albanian identities in Kosovo. The reinvigoration of this rhetoric may result in (among others) the regrouping of the former KLA, though former KLA members remain fragmented. Religious foreign fighters expressed willingness to fight against Serbia if the situation escalates. Serbian and Russian influences have thus increased the potential for conflict by exacerbating far-right tendencies within Kosovo (Fieldwork Notes and Interviews, 2017-2019, Kosovo).

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Highly Affected

Russia is influencing BiH by supporting far-right groups through paramilitary groups, as the ones that are present in Serbia which are mobile; military influences (intelligence sharing, arms trade, etc.);support for far-right civil society; financial ties to the political elite; and even direct meddling in elections. Moreover, Russia, through their Serbian representative Milorad Dodik, is trying to portray Muslims as fundamentalists. Similarly, Croatia is using the same rhetoric with the aim to undermine the BiH's territorial sovereignty and weaken democracy. This results in calls for independence by Bosnian Muslims, polarization of the society, as well as reciprocal radicalization.

Russia is directly influencing BiH through military tools in supporting the far-right. Paramilitary groups and their connections to the Russian government strengthen the anti-EU and NATO sentiment (Stronski and Himes 2019) to exclude BiH from supranational institutions. Russia's actions are coordinated by proxies (ibid). Russia also increases its ability to exercise influence over BiH by increasing its dependence on the Kremlin militarily. In Republika Srpska (RS) of BiH, the Russian military influence derives from supplying weapons, and from the creation of shared training centers. The countries also entered into an agreement in 2016 to partner on intelligence collection, counterterrorism, cybercrime and police training. The RS police have also been increasingly militarized, with 2,500 automatic rifles having been bought from Serbia and plans being drawn up to procure helicopter-mounted Igla 1-V anti-air missiles from Russia in the near future (Stronski and Himes 2019). Interview data also points to the presence of organizations that facilitate the far-right in RS in BiH. The *Serbian Honor* - an organization that is headquartered in Nis whilst also operating in Serbia and RS in BiH, describes itself as "a patriotic organization, which is Slavic and orthodox, willing and ready to help their people". The Serbian Honor and the Veterans of RS - both far-right organizations - receive financial support from Russia. These organizations may have facilitated the recruitment of locals to private military companies and paramilitaries for the pro-Russian front in Ukraine and Syria (Mironova and Zawadewicz 2018). Therefore, Russia invests in militaristic elements of BiH society and

politics, but also benefits from it. The forging of military partnerships increases authorities' dependence on the Kremlin. Russia also actively supports far-right organizations, with the overt intent of utilizing them to bolster paramilitary groups active in Ukraine.

The appropriation of the far right extends beyond the local citizens, since Russia also influences the political elite in BiH, specifically Milorad Dodik. For instance, in 2018, Russia paid $41,000 to the Night Wolves for a Western Balkans tour to show Russia's support for Milorad Dodik (Higgins 2018). Moreover, Dodik utilizes the state visits between Russia and Dodik to highlight "historically good ties between Russians and Serbs to boost his ratings" (Kovacevic 2018). Critics have called these interventions a "brazen interference in the election process in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Prague Security Studies Institute 2018). Milorad Dodik is known to be one of the biggest proponents of Russia in BiH. Most likely in return for Russia's support so far, Dodik is stalling the NATO membership process currently (Mujanovic 2019), thus, challenges arising from local ethno-nationalists or extremists, such as Dodik as well Covic, are considered as 'dangerous' (SAFF 2018).

Russia uses indirect tools such as disinformation and portrayal of Muslims as terrorists to exert influence in BiH through Milorad Dodik. Croatia is presumed to support BiH's far right for domestic purposes. The disinformation database shows around 20 debunked links regarding BiH. For example, one article draws parallels between Srebrenica's massacre while warning about it regarding Donbass, if Ukraine would enter with troops (EU vs Disinfo n.d.). In addition, the Serb and Croat politicians have weaponized the far-right movement to weaken BiH's democracy. Serbia and Croatia also attempt to portray Muslims as Islamic fundamentalists by portraying themselves as countries which protect their Christians brothers from Islamic fundamentalism. There is a resurgence of Islamophobia by the Serbian and Croatian politicians which, back in the 90's, massacred thousands of Bosniak Muslims (Bayrakli and Hafez 2018). Serbia and Croatia (elected Serb member of the BiH presidency, Milorad Dodik and Bosnian Croat and Croatian political establishment) through media have also depicted BiH as a 'radical Muslim haven' in order to undermine BiH's territorial sovereignty. The rhetoric has also been used to score political points. Dodik has accused Bosniak politicians of wanting to change the country's ethnic composition by planning to give 150,000 Muslim migrants citizenship, warning that such an effort would amount to the creation of an Islamic State. Dodik also regularly advocates for the Serb-dominated RS entity of BiH to break away and join Serbia. High amounts of financial resources have been spent on lobbying for RS in Washington as well. The political scientist, Jasmin Mujanovic, argues that "Serb nationalists like Dodik and [Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica] Dacic are trying to ensure that Bosnia remains a permanently dysfunctional state, and one which they will never have to actually compete in free and fair elections" (Gadzo 2019). The far-right rhetoric used by Serbian and Croatian elites is high. For example, Dodik accuses the conservative Bosniak SDA party that their 'policies and

actions during and since the 1990s war have turned BiH into a sanctuary for jihadists' in a lobbying document in 2018 to Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General (ibid). Back in 2010, Dodik requested a peaceful division of BiH arguing that it is not a viable country, criticizing the foreigners for imposing the current multi-ethnic BiH in a statement in Banja Luka (Vecernji 2010). Far-right groups receive significant support from the Serbian population. According to a local researcher, "everyone supports the agenda of Milorad Dodik and everyone speaks publicly about it" (Anonymous Interview, Researcher, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2019). Given the militarization of the country and the rise of the far-right supported by foreign influences as well as the weak state, Dodik's far-right motivations need to be treated very seriously.

In a similar vein, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic of the nationalist Croatian HDZ party - whilst meeting with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin in Jerusalem - expressed his view that BiH has come under control of militant Islam, even going so far as to argue that said movement is setting the political agenda. Kitarovic also stipulated that some are "very violent and break into people's homes", thus deepening narratives advocating for a separate Croat entity in BiH (Gadzo 2019). Regardless, this caused conflicts in the country, as Zeljko Komsic, the Croat member of Bosnia's tripartite presidency, alluded that Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic pursues propaganda activities at the expense of BiH (Radio Free Europe 2019a). Indeed, she said in the past that Islamic religious radicalization renders BiH a regional security threat due to the number of returnees (Spaic 2017).

There are negative externalities associated with the far-right political discourse utilized by the Serbians and Croatians. BiH's society has become increasingly polarized. The Bosniak Muslims regret not requesting independence and strengthening themselves. An interviewee, a member of the political elite, illustrated the point that "Albanians won. They have three states now: Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia, whereas we have nothing" (Anonymous Interview, Political Official, Kosovo, 2016). He further explained that Bosniaks should learn from Albanians and that their struggle for the independent state should be re-awakened. Indeed, in BiH have been some incidents between 1996 and 2017, in which an estimated 13 Bosniak returnees were killed and 20 were injured in hate crimes in RS. In addition, Bosnia is experiencing a rapid change in demographics, with more than 25,000 refugees from Syria, Pakistan, Algeria and elsewhere travelling through the country to head to the EU countries (Bayrakli and Hafez 2018).

Thus, the far-right in BiH is mainly affected by ethno-national movements, and a new anti-Western rhetoric (Azinović and Jusić 2015). These are integral, mutually reinforcing elements of far-right playbooks. The malignant foreign influences such as Russia and Croatia attempt to undermine the democracy in BiH. Croatia uses far-right discourse for domestic purposes. Russia's main aim is to disrupt and even prevent the accession of BiH into both NATO and the EU. Most importantly, the weak state also

may foster 'cumulative extremism' or 'reciprocal radicalization', in which these radical movements feed off one another as seen in the case of all ethnic groups in BiH, resulting in a higher potential to destabilize the country, especially due to its recent militarization. This has been observed in Kosovo and Serbia, pointing towards the presence of a trend of reciprocal radicalization multi-ethnic SEE states.

North Macedonia: Moderately Affected

Far right movements have been active in North Macedonia, especially before the change of the government. These have been heavily influenced by Russia. For instance, the Night Wolves - a far right organization based across several countries in SEE and also Ukraine - partook in the Parliament Coup of 2017 (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019). The latter has been financed by Russia as described earlier.

Interview data collected in North Macedonia indicates that there is a widespread belief that Russia facilitated the radicalization of Albanians through political parties, sports clubs and religious institutions. Russia is also attempting to sow divisions within the country. According to several interviewees, Russia is engaging in "creating patriotic organizations to promote ethnic segregation, anti-Albanian spirit" (Anonymous Interviews, Journalists, NGO Officials, Fall 2017, North Macedonia). The promotion of ethnic segregation is being achieved through the Vatreshna Makedonska Revolyutsionna Organizatsiya (VMRO), a political party whose roots are found in a national liberation movement against Ottoman occupation. Even though the VMRO's power has waned as a result of the 2016 parliamentary election, it remains the second largest party in the country. Another pro-Russian party, United for Macedonia, advocates for North Macedonia's accession into the Eurasian Economic Union - a Russia-aligned regional organization which rivals the EU. The party's leader, Janko Bachev, "boasted of having undergone training with leading political technologists in Moscow intended to help his party win power in Macedonia" (Prague Security Studies Institute, 2018).

Russia has also made use of business connections to disincentivize Northern Macedonia's ascension into the EU/NATO. Interview data indicates that Russian businessmen are involved in strengthening distrust and anti-EU/NATO sentiments. A clear example presents in Sergei Samsonenko and Ivan Savidis, which provided financial support to soccer and handball teams such as *Vardar*. *Vardar* later mobilized groups to protest North Macedonia's name change. Russian oligarch Ivan Savidis provided around $350,000 in funding to social media campaigns aiming to decrease turnout for the name change referendum (Stronski and Himes 2019). In addition to utilizing financial tools to control messaging through media channels such as Nova TV, Russia has also sought to shift public perceptions through the funding of grass-roots youth movements. To give one example, Komiti - an organization which facilitates youth activities - has Russia as its primary investor. Youth activities are often used to

change individuals' beliefs to lean towards Russia (Anonymous Interviews, Researcher, Spring 2019, North Macedonia). Moreover, an interviewee illustrates common perceptions in NM that the Russian influence aims to create confusion through the nationalist propaganda or hooliganism, but "some of the ties are difficult to prove" (Anonymous Interviews, Journalists, NGO Officials, Fall 2017-2019, North Macedonia).

Russia's goal in influencing NM through supporting far right identity is to exclude NM from the EU/NATO membership. Russia's engagement in SEE is geared towards "influencing European security issues" (Stronski 2019). This explains not only the country's support for far-right groups which "exacerbate political and social fissures" (Stronski 2019), but also its use of media to stack perceptions "against the EU and NATO" (Anonymous Interview, Religious Officials/NGO Officials, Spring 2018/2019, North Macedonia). Reaffirming this point, the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that "attempts, which are actively supported by EU and NATO leaders, are being made to make Macedonians accept the 'Albanian platform' designed in Tirana", labelling them as "gross external interference" (Galeotti 2018). Reports that several priests joined demonstrations against the referendum further speak to an effort on Russia's part to weaponize far-right identity against the EU and NATO through the leveraging of religious infrastructure (Fieldwork Notes and Anonymous Interviews, Spring 2018, North Macedonia).

External influencers that support far-right extremism use and exacerbate existing socio-economic factors for their own strategic purposes, while attempting to deepen the ethno-nationalist divide. In the socio-political domain, a further divide and source of dissatisfaction and inter-ethnic bickering can be observed at the state and local levels. The Ohrid Framework Agreement tried to resolve some of the issues, predominantly with regards to local governance, equal representation, education and the use of languages. Municipalities with predominantly minority populations could use their own language as the primary language, in addition to the Macedonian language. Moreover, efforts were made to ensure that at least one third of representatives in different governmental, judicial and other bodies originate from minority groups ("Ohrid Framework Agreement | OSCE" 2001). Though the Framework Agreement arguably succeeded in granting rights to certain minority groups, it also led to further fragmentation, further ethnic division, and the establishment of ethnically segregated municipalities, villages and settlements. Inter-ethnic relations remain fragile.

An example of the inter-ethnic divide, fueled by ethno-nationalist tendencies, can be observed in the North Macedonian Parliament. The political landscape has been shaken by the wiretapping scandals of 2015 (Al Jazeera 2015), in which the functionaries and members of the then governing party, VMRO DPMNE (Berendt 2015), had been wiretapped and implicated in different corruption practices and scandals. This prompted a series of protests, namely the Colorful Revolution, as well as parliamentary elections, in which the then opposition party of SDSM won forty nine of the seats in

parliament, and VMRO won fifty one seats out of one hundred and twenty (ibid). SDSM secured the government coalition. This, in addition to the election of Talat Xhaferi as the Speaker of Parliament (Calamur 2017), prompted protests which eventually lead to the Parliament being stormed on the 27th of April 2017 (BBC News 2017). Xhaferi has been a controversial figure in Macedonian politics, and first garnered the dissatisfaction of the (ethnic Macedonian) public when he was appointed as the Minister of Defence in 2013 by the former Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski (Dimovski 2013b). Prior to entering politics as a member of the DUI political party, Xhaferi was first a member of the state armed forces, and then became involved in the NLA as a Commander (Dimovski 2013a). During the Parliament storming, elected MP Zijadin Sela was attacked and almost killed by the mob (Marusic 2018). Another inter-ethnic political division was prompted with the Law on Languages of 2018 (Akademik 2018) where the President at the time, Gjorge Ivanov (Deutsche Welle 2019), refused to promulgate the law for 10 months (Voice of America 2019). A similar ethnic divide can also be identified in North Macedonian historic symbolism (i.e. monuments, statues), which seems to have written ethnic-**Albanians "entirely out of the country's past"** (Ellis 2015). Instead the local authorities have erected a statue of Tsar Dusan the Might, who was known for the subjugation of Albanians, as well as mounting two giant crosses on Ottoman landmarks (Islamic) in Bitola and Prilep – **a move that Al Jazeera claimed to be "aimed at provoking Muslims"** (Muhic 2013).

Therefore, the reinforcing effects from both types of violent extremism, religious and far-right, are present in NM as a result of there being a strong intersection of ethnic identity and religious affiliation in the country (Farnam 2001). The Macedonian Albanians have contributed to the war in Syria with estimates varying from just twelve to one hundred foreign fighters (Shtuni 2015) to assist their Muslim brothers in Syria, to create a Caliphate, to undermine the United States and imperialism (Fieldwork Notes, 2017-2019, North Macedonia). Ethnonationalist and religious tendencies have overlapped in the past through, for example, the activities of the National Liberation Army (NLA). Interview data indicates that the NLA is ready to unite and protect **Macedonia's ethnic Albanians if necessary (Fieldwork Notes, 2017**-2019, North Macedonia). The ethnic Macedonian population has increased the momentum of the ethno-nationalist wave, depicted by an increase in the rise of right wing groups (Telma 2018). The combination of religious and far right extremist tendencies can feed into one-another, with the result being greater instability in NM.

As previously mentioned, ethnic-tensions and violent incidents persist in NM. Since 2012, four major events, which the Macedonian authorities have categorized as terrorist attacks, have occurred. These include the 2012 Smilkovci Lake Killings or the 2014 attacks, in which unknown perpetrators fired two rocket-propelled grenade rounds at **the Prime Minister's Office** (UNHCR 2016). The most recent event was the 2015 Kumanovo Clashes, which resulted in 22 deaths and led to the arrest of a total of 30 individuals - 18 Kosovar , 1 Albanian and 11 Macedonians of Albanian ethnicity (BBC

2015). In a statement after the incident, the NLA claimed responsibility for the "attack" and swore to continue its "fight for the freedom and national dignity" of ethnic-Albanians (Tumanovska and Coalson 2015). Despite these ethno-nationalistic justifications, it has been theorized that this cell of fighters may have been linked to "jihadi groups in Bosnia," (ibid) thus underlining the aforementioned intersection of ethnicity and religion in of the Albanian group (Albanian ethnic identity and Islamic belief).

Negating the NLA's claim of conducting the "attack", North Macedonian authorities established that the clashes were the result of a planned counter-terrorism operation against the group, which had allegedly infiltrated NM via Kosovo (Lynch 2015) and used Kumanovo as a base of operations (ibid). NM's then Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski stated that the cell of NLA fighters was preparing to perpetrate terrorist attacks with weapons and ammunition that they had previously seized during a raid on a border police station in Gošince (UNHCR 2016). However, as the clashes were directly preceded by widespread demonstrations calling for the resignation of PM Gruevski and his staff, the counter-terrorism operation has been interpreted by some as a diversion away from domestic turmoil (Tumanovska and Coalson 2015) .

The inter-ethnic/religious divide may be exploited by foreign influencers. Though the recent change in government and the country's signature of the NATO Protocol indicates a promising change towards stability and peace, yet some caveats apply. As outlined above, the country requires continued monitoring. The high number of individuals that have been exposed to far-right movements, foreign influence from Russia, and the reinforcing effects of both types of violent extremism (far right and religious) are likely to pose challenges going forward with the membership of the EU.

Montenegro: Least Affected

Russia has profoundly influenced Montenegro in the past and has still some presence in the country through far-right groups and religious institutions. The country has sponsors and employs the Night Wolves - a motorcycle gang with branches in predominantly Slavic countries, including Montenegro (Pronk, 2018). Russia also exercises influence through the Orthodox Church. Momcilo Krikovapic, a representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church, attended a swearing ceremony for Balkan Cossacs Army in the Montenegrin seaside town of Kotor. This has resulted in the Army being labelled a Russia-friendly organization, as Krikovapic serves as a direct line to Russian Orthodox Church (Radio Free Europe, 2016). The attempts of the Kremlin to influence the foreign policies of Montenegro through the Serbian Orthodox Church were particularly prevalent during the 2006 push for Montenegrin independence and during the run-up to the country's accession to NATO in 2016. During these periods, Patriarch Kirill attempted to incite domestic oppression against the aforementioned policies. These efforts are endemic of Russia's broader goal of re-

uniting the Slavic world (Conley and Melion 2019). Thus, Russia uses the Serbian Orthodox Church to support "pro-Russian political parties and anti-EU and NATO voices" and is believed to be financing extremists (Prague Security Studies Institute 2019a).

Montenegrin and Serbian officials have furthermore alleged that The *Night Wolves* were involved in the attempted assassination of Montenegrin Prime Minister Duško Marković, proving the depth of Russia's destructive role throughout the region (Stronski an Himes 2019). An indictment for the coup has been prepared against fourteen individuals (two Russians, nine Serbs and three Montenegrins), of whom four, including the two Russians, were tried in absentia. The two Russians are accused of masterminding the coup (Kramer and Orovic 2019). Some of the defendants were additionally reported as having fought for the Russian-back separatists in eastern Ukraine (Ristic 2017).

Russia also has a track record of using cyber-attacks against Montenegrin government institutions. These attacks occurred in 2016 and 2017 with "the United States claims tied to Russia's military intelligence service, the GRU. The attacks occurred alongside a robust Russian-driven anti-NATO propaganda campaign in the country, as well as the 2016 coup plot" aiming to overthrow President Đukanović (Radio Free Europe, 2016). The aim was to place the Democratic Front, a pro-Russian party, in power which would reject the NATO membership (ibid).

These examples serve to highlight Russia's willingness to exercise influence over Montenegro's domestic affairs through not only the exploitation of far-right tendencies and religious identities, but also through cyberattacks and covert operations. Though Russia's role in Montenegro decreased as a result of the failed coup, far-right elements within its society remain aligned with Russia and with anti-NATO discourses more generally.

Albania: Least Affected

The case of Albania shows that far-right tendencies are supported by Greece but also by Albania as a mother state towards Kosovo that can cause instability across the region. History and disagreements with Greece feed far-right movements in both countries, which have spillover effects across its borders. Far-right politicians in Albania have advocated for the recreation of a "greater Albania," something which risks starting off a regional conflict with both Serbia and Greece. Thus, there are far-right (historic) tendencies throughout SEE, which tie in with prejudices and which mean that any effort at re-establishing a greater Albania are likely to "feed" far right tendencies throughout the region.

According to a 2011 census, Albania is home to a significant Greek minority which comprises 24,242 people or 0.9% of the population (Instat 2012). These are concentrated

in the Southern area of Albania, close to the Greek border. The region is subject to frequent calls for border changes as a result of historically grounded disagreements between the two countries. Despite both countries being NATO member states, Greece deployed military troops on Albanian border in 2015 as a warning and in response to a statement requesting maritime border changes in the Ionian Sea. The border change discourse is used by the Albanian political elites as well. Prime Minister Edi Rama pointed out in a TV show: "what is it that we are discussing with Greece today?" extending his argument that Kosovo should be allowed to change the border as well if Albania and Greece are doing so (Doçi 2015). Tensions between Greece and Albania persist. Stavros Gjinos, an alleged paramilitary soldier of a Greek Army legion and a member of the Golden Dawn, was shot dead by Albanian police in Gjirokastra in the south of Albania. Gijnos was taking down the Albanian flag and putting up the Vorio Epir flag in commemoration of a 1914-1944 massacre. The Vorio Epir flag is associated with a territory that was known part of the Epire region that nowadays falls within Albania's borders and is home to a Greek minority. Gijnos is believed to have worked for the reunion of North Macedonia and Albania with Greece, and has used the flag three or four times (Shqiptarja 2018). Moreover, the Vorio Epeir leader in Thessaloniki reiterated nationalistic calls against Albanians.

As a mother country of ethnic Albanians in the region, Albania exports Albanian ethno-national sentiments to Kosovo, the Presevo Valley, North Macedonia and so on. PM Edi Rama argued in favor of Greater Albania when discussing the Kosovo/Serbia dispute, stating that "for me, Kosovo is part of Albania. The rest are issues of Ramush Haradinaj" (Exit 2019). In response, the former Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, raised concerns regarding Edi Rama's speech, urging Albania not to insert itself into Kosovo's domestic politics. PM Rama nonetheless reiterated his point several times, arguing in favor of "the necessity of the full opening of the Kosovo-Albanian border and creation of an Albanian area without borders, under the Euro-Atlantic umbrella" (Zëri 2018). Rama foresees the unification of the Presevo Valley with Albania as well.

The country is also attempting to open the Cham's minority issue in Greece, but the Greeks rejected the discussion: "everyone would like to enrich their national interests (but) we will never accept the existence of a Cham issue" (Associated Press 2018). The Golden Dawn MP Elias Kasidiaris argued that Albanians are attempting to create a Greater Albania, citing the initiative as a reason that the integration to the European Union should be stopped (Lapsi 2018). A football match in 2014 between Albania and Serbia, which saw a drone flying the Albanian flag, serves as an effective case study of the high level of polarization and hatred that persist in SEE society. The incident prompted Serbian fans to shout, "kill Albanians", even though Albanians have not warred with Serbia. This indicates that Albania is seen as a mother state by not only Albanians, but by SEE society as a whole (Rrustemi 2014). It also implies that, if the Greater Albania were to be built, it would have spillover effects. Such a development

could feasibly prompt the emergence of a Greater Serbia, with the likely result being the instigation of conflict.

Given Albania's strong alignment with Western principles of democracy, they are not as exposed to the political influence of Russia as their neighboring countries. This notwithstanding, it has been reported that the democratic party Lulzim Basha may have accepted donations from Russia to fund its election campaign, yet remains an isolated case so far. In line with NATO's principle of collective action, Albania expelled two Russian diplomats in response to Russia's use of a nerve agent against a former exiled spy in the United Kingdom (Reuters 2018). Thus, Russian influence is low in Albania relative to other states.

Conclusions

This research shows that the far right in SEE bases its platform on existing ethnic, cultural, and religious fault lines within society. It also finds that the region's far right makes use of a wide range of instruments to exploit these fault lines for political gain. In most cases, the willful exploitation of ethnic, cultural, and religious divides in the region takes the form of the demonization of the "other," with the result being a deepening in regional polarization. Far right movements in SEE have also been subject to exploitation by external actors. This research observes external actors, and Russia and Serbia most notably, as supporting far right movements with the goal of preventing SEE countries' accession into the EU and/or NATO. This has had several negative side effects, with the most tangible one being that external financing of far-right groups has resulted in individuals travelling to Ukraine. An uptick in the volume of hate speech by political elites, combined with the re-emergence of old hatreds and disputes, means that the far right's resurgence in SEE may pose risks to the region's long term stability, if preventive actions are not taken.

The resurgence of the SEE's far right has resulted in the heightening of regional tensions. The result has been violence (i.e. killing of Olivier Ivanoviq, inspiration of the New Zealand attacker), demonstrations (i.e. Serbia), and an increase in societal polarization. The aforementioned societal polarization is rooted in social, political, ethno-political, and religious identity. It can also be attributed to a considerable degree of mistrust in both political and religious institutions, which are mainly seen to be unresponsive, ineffective and biased (Morina et al. 2019). Thus, corruption seems to exacerbate the far right trends as well.

In terms of countries in the SEE region, Serbia plays a central role in exporting ethno-nationalist ideologies throughout the region. Kosovo is caught between the renewed nationalist rhetoric complemented with hate speech deriving from Serbia and Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is caught between the nationalist rhetoric complemented with hate speech deriving from Croatia and Serbia, with the potential to increase the

Bosnian Muslim nationalism as well. In Serbia, far-right extremism is gaining support as seen in the number of foreign fighters that traveled to East Ukraine, complemented with the presence of propaganda in the media, reciprocal radicalization, the role of Russia through disinformation campaigns and hybrid threats, and the presence of organizations promoting the far-right and its links to global far-right extremism. Russia is working together with Serbia to strengthen the far-right sentiments in the region. Russia has been observed as seeking to portray Muslim communities in the region as terrorists in order to counter Western influences. Russia has also been observed as increasing its security influence within the region through religious ties with the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is presumed to exert influence over some Serbian politicians. Serbian far right extremism has global reach; the Christchurch shooter used symbols and songs from the 90's war. Serbia's efforts are likely driven in part by internal secessionist voices, which are questioning Belgrade's authority. It remains to be seen whether Serbia will choose a peaceful or violent path in dealing with internal secessionist movements. Illiberalism, the rising role of China, Russia and governmental control of information increases the likelihood of resort to violence. This warrants a cautious engagement from the EU and NATO on accession process as it may lead to receiving a potential trojan horse inside the western alliances.

The situation in Kosovo highlights the instrumentalization of religious violent extremism by Russia for political purposes in an attempt to exclude the country from ascending into supranational institutions, such as the EU or NATO. The case study also underscores the reinforcing effects of religious violent extremism on far-right violent extremism by strengthening both the Albanian and Serbian national identity. Affirmations such as viewing the other Albanians as 'backwards' and Serbians as 'superior' have also been confirmed by nationalist rhetoric observed in a recent speech delivered by the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabic (Radio Free Europe 2019b). This type of hateful discourse mirrors the 90's wars, indicating that further attention should be paid to Kosovo and Serbia. In addition, Russian foreign influences contribute to destabilization of the country as well. Russia uses religious identities to sow divisions between Albanians and Serbs. It also contributes to spreading nationalist extremism through utilizing political elites in the northern area of Kosovo and supports disinformation campaigns, the creation of the "cult" of Putin, organized crime groups and "humanitarian organizations". This warrants further attention as the increased far right sentiments may lead to the destabilization of Kosovo and of the wider region. Moreover, these developments are also likely to stall the country's democratic progress on state building processes as well as its accession to the EU.

BiH is also highly affected by far-right trends. These are supported by external countries such as Russia and Croatia, but also internally by the political elites, such as the RS representative, Milorad Dodik. Russia is influencing BiH by supporting far right groups through mobile Serbian paramilitary groups, military influences (intelligence sharing, arms trade, etc.), support for far-right civil society, financial ties to the political elite,

and even direct meddling in elections. Through Milorad Dodik, the Serbian representative, Russia is furthermore taking steps to portray Muslims as fundamentalists. Croatia is using the same rhetoric with the aim of undermining BiH's territorial sovereignty and weakening its democracy. This has resulted in calls for independence by Bosnian Muslims, polarization of the society, and reciprocal radicalization. This warrants further attention to the country which may become further dysfunctional which present internal and regional threats but also European threats. The processes of NATO and the EU as well are stalled by internal and external far right influencers, therefore the likelihood to enforce reforms without a change of political elites (Milorad Dodik) may be difficult.

NM is moderately affected as a result of promising governmental changes and the country's signature of the NATO Protocol. This notwithstanding, the presence of old structures leaves the door open to a slip back. The inter-ethnic/religious divide may be exploited by foreign influencers. The high amount of individuals that have been exposed to far right movements, foreign influence from Russia, and the reinforcing effects of both types of violent extremism (far right and religious) are likely to pose challenges to its ability to ascend to EU membership going forward. The country therefore requires continued monitoring.

Montenegro and Albania are also moderately affected. The Montenegro case study serves to showcase Russian exploitation of far-right groups, religious figures, cyber-attacks and covert operations. Despite the change of government, monitoring must continue. Albania on the other hand serves as an exporter of ethno-nationalism as a mother state. The country has been also impacted and is slightly influenced by Greek political rhetoric, but also exports ethno-nationalistic rhetoric across the region in areas where Albanian minorities live, calling for the establishment of a Greater Albania. This also opens discussions for potential Greater Serbia, increasing the chance that a conflict will ignite.

External influencers seem to play a key role in the SEE region, instigating ethno-national VE. Russia is predominantly involved in countries such as Serbia, northern area of Kosovo and in RS in BiH. They were also involved in NM and Montenegro. Russia functions in the region through financing and training paramilitary and patriotic organizations, meddling in the political affairs of these countries, using disinformation, co-opting political elites, conducting covert operations, and using religion as a tool to support far right processes. It aims to create instability through "cultivation of far-right groups and authoritarian-style politicians" (Stronski and Himes 2019). Russia has also built religious infrastructure and hindered the processes of a multi-ethnic state building in Kosovo. The Albanian organizations that have been linked with far-right violent extremism seem to be locally driven, however, the Serbian and Macedonian groups seem to have transnational links with Russia. Croatia is also contributing to the rise of the far right, though its efforts appear to be focused in BiH.

The country has reopened debates regarding the war and portrayed the country as a terrorist, ultimately supporting the rhetoric of individuals who aim for the Croat inhabited areas to join Croatia. Greece uses its maritime dispute with Albania for their domestic purposes, but it is of a miniscule significance in comparison with the other external influencers in the SEE region, such as Russia and Croatia.

This also signals a geopolitical war between the EU and Russia taking place in the SEE region. The rise of far-right trends may indicate these countries' shift towards further insecurity and alignment with Russia. This reaffirms that Russia is succeeding at **undermining democracy's legitimacy as a system of governance i.e. in BiH, Kosovo and Serbia**. Therefore, it is critical to repair the harm that has been done in the SEE region and open the EU negotiations for membership, not only due to Russia increasing far right but also the increased illiberalism in the region, but also because of the high amount of other foreign influences in the SEE region.

Inter-regional powers, such as Serbia and Albania, also contribute to the instigation of far-right sentiments in the region. Albania and Serbia are mother states to the Serbian and Albanian minorities inhabiting the region. Albania appropriates its status as a mother state in, for instance, Kosovo, where it has lobbied for reunion with Albania, with the Presevo Valley involved in the processes of reunification, if Serbia redraws the border with Kosovo. Albania is also involved in NM regarding the issues of Albanian minority. Serbia on the other hand, uses the minorities in northern Kosovo through Lista Srpska as well as through Milorad Dodik in BiH. Lastly, among the Bosnian Muslim community in BiH, questions regarding their potential statehood have been raised, and hopes to create their own entities are present among the Bosnian elites.

The radical right's attitude against immigration and Islamization feeds in the context of the SEE region, leading to cases of extremism. The pre-war rhetoric focused against Islamization, which is being utilized nowadays signals the importance to prevent these types of hate speech from being normalized in political rhetoric. Weak state and peace building in the region, coupled with historical context, means that the region warrants more attention. External and inter-regional influencers on far right VE may hinder and/or potentially reverse the process of state and peacebuilding, including the EU and NATO accession processes, if preventive action is not taken.

Actionable Policy Recommendations

Actionable policy recommendations are crucial to counter the concerning far right trends in the SEE region. Returning to the debate of stability versus democracy is important. Some argue that stability is more important than democracy, whereas others that democracy is more important than stability. The main argument is that maintaining stability at the cost of democracy may backfire. The SEE region provides a strong case study for this notion, as the observed degree of religious radicalization and

increases in far right VE have coincided with the weakening of institutions, societal polarization, and influences from external and inter-regional countries. Therefore, the general recommendation is to focus on two main themes; namely: *strengthening democracy with legitimacy* and *strengthening societal resilience.*

With regards to strengthening democracy with legitimacy, it is crucial to strengthen the rule of law by supporting non-corrupt individuals that have innovative solutions for improving the rule of law, persecuting far right extremists, and promoting economic equality by investing further in rural areas in order to regain legitimacy. Due to the **prioritization of stability over democracy, the international community's credibility** remains low, meaning that a sustained effort to promote credible democracy and show that there is a turning point in policy, not only to elites but also the population, is necessary. Coupling the condemnation of far-right trends with legitimate calls for democracy constitutes a strategy which is likely to win the international community support among the local population. In concrete terms, public statements of Ambassadors followed by actions may potentially increase the legitimacy of the international community. In this case, Croatia**'s, Albania's and Serbia's condemnation of the use of far right discourse is crucial along with countering Russia's influence and** calling for persecution of the far right extremists would assist in alleviating current trends.

Moving on to strengthening societal resilience, it is important to note that a whole of government/society approach is important in order to achieve integrated solutions. It is equally important to note that preventative actions need to be locally tailored. In addition, public awareness campaigns are crucial to *challenge the propaganda* and counter the far right. These campaigns can be targeted at the general public as well as at radical groups. In instances where they are targeted at radical groups, they should be geared towards explaining the negative impact of violence through counter, alternative and resilient narratives through a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. Regarding complementary activities, workshops with various themes can be held to engage the elderly and the youth on issues of civic activism that may also raise their hopes for democracy. These workshops could be conducted in youth centers, **NGO's, schools, etc. They assist in breaking the taboos in the SEE region and promoting** critical thinking at the community level.

There are some specific case tailored recommendations, which are crucial, such as having a neutral international country such as Switzerland take the lead on renewing the belief on democracy. Within the context of Serbia attempting to join the EU, Serbia condemning far right would provide a signal that they are attempting to deal with the Serbian right-wing extremism. Because the likelihood of such an event occurring is low, public campaigns by NGOs calling on the country to move away from right wing extremism constitute crucial tools for exerting distance from the phenomenon and signaling to the population that violence is not accepted. Moreover, the prosecution of

right-wing extremism can be increased by calls for prosecution by human rights organizations and the international community. International human rights organizations such as AI, HRW need to take the lead on this, as well as impartial states, i.e.. Switzerland, as they have not been involved in the 90's war. This would also signal to Bosnians and Serbians that shifting towards inclusive states is of utmost importance for successful EU accession. In turn, this may decrease the appeal to potential local secessionist and right-wing extremism locally and globally. Lastly, Serbia's separation from Russian influence must be proven before it enters the EU, as otherwise a Trojan Horse may be allowed inside the Western alliance.

Regarding Kosovo, it is crucial to resolve the border dispute between Serbia and Kosovo. Such a resolution would not only alleviate local tensions by reducing the chance of a conflict; it would also serve to clamp down on the Albanian nationalism propagated by Edi Rama by removing the main issue from the agenda that could be used from him and from Serbia. This would also reduce the likelihood of Kosovo Albanians resorting to the use of force. Humanitarian organizations and far right-wing organizations linked to Russia should furthermore be screened and removed in the Serbian inhabited territories if links are found to the states that are infringing on the national security of Kosovo. Providing visa liberalization may reinforce the EU's role vis-a-vis Russia, thus countering far right trends and strengthening the process of state and peace building.

Albania must be pressured by the international community to stop using ethno-national language and cease its attempts to use Albanian minorities throughout the region in calls for Greater Albania. This must be conditioned with EU aid. The opening of negotiations between the EU and Albania is furthermore crucial to countering Russia's geopolitical influence in the region.

In BiH, similar recommendations as in Kosovo to counter the Russian influence infringing national security would not work due to the lack of political willingness to prosecute the far right. This is because Milorad Dodik represents Serbian and Russian interests and is thus likely to block such processes. Therefore, in this case, the international community must strongly condemn right wing extremism publicly, strengthen the legal system and prosecution of extremists, push to dismantle groups, promote the multicultural state, and fill the lack of local political willingness to push these processes forward. Investing in civil society and youth is crucial in order to engineer a change of political elites with a multi-ethnic and democratic orientations. This is essential for the general recommendations to be effective.

Montenegro and NM (due to the intersection of ethno-nationalistic and religious radicalization), must be monitored for any changes regarding far right and the revival of the Russian influence.

Bibliography

Akademik. 2018. "Што Предвидува Законот За Употреба На Јазиците Донесен Од Собранието На Република Македонија." Академик. January 11, 2018. https://akademik.mk/shto-predviduva-zakonot-za-upotreba-na-jazitsite-donesen-od-sobranieto-na-republika-makedonija/.

Al Jazeera. 2015. "Macedonia's Wiretapping Scandal." 2015. https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2015/05/macedonia-wiretapping-scandal-150517124924027.html.

Analytica. n.d. "Mothers Schools Project." Analytica. Accessed October 15, 2019. https://www.analyticamk.org/en/programs/foreign-and-security-policy/631-mothers-schools-project.

Associated Press. 2018. "EU Enlargement Chief Denies Wanting New Greece-Albanian Borders." The National Herald (blog). July 14, 2018. https://www.thenationalherald.com/207369/eu-enlargement-chief-denies-wanting-new-greece-albanian-borders/.

Azinović, Vlado, and Muhamed Jusić. 2015. "The Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters' Bosnian Contingent." Atlantic Initiative, 2015. http://atlanticinitiative.org/images/THE_LURE_OF_THE_SYRIAN_WAR_THE_FOREIGN_FIGHTERS_BOSNIAN_CONTINGENT/The_Lure_of_the_Syrian_War_-_The_Foreign_Fighters_Bosnian_Contingent.pdf.

Babić, Marko. 2015. "Defining Political Extremism in the Balkans. The Case of Serbia." INTERDISCIPLINARY POLITICAL AND CULTURAL JOURNAL 17 (1): 73–90.

Bakic, Jovo. 2013. "Right-Wing Extremism in Serbia." Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/09659.pdf.

Bayrakli, Enes, and Farid Hafez. 2018. "European Islamophobia Report." http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/EIR_2018.pdf.

BBC. 2015. "Macedonia Charges 30 after Clashes." BBC News, May 11, 2015, sec. Europe. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32695909.

BBC News. 2017. "Macedonia Parliament Stormed by Protesters in Skopje - BBC News." 2017. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39738865.

Begisholli, Blerta. 2019. "Arrested Russian UNMIK Staffer Leaves Kosovo for Serbia." Balkan Insight (blog). May 30, 2019. https://balkaninsight.com/2019/05/30/arrested-russian-unmik-staffer-leaves-kosovo-for-serbia/.

Bell, Emma, Alan Bryman, and Bill Harley. 2018. Business Research Methods. Oxford University Press.

Berendt, Joanna. 2015. "Macedonia Government Is Blamed for Wiretapping Scandal." The New York Times, June 21, 2015, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/world/europe/macedonia-government-is-blamed-for-wiretapping-scandal.html.

Beslin, Jelena, and Marija Ignjatijevic. 2017. "Balkan Foreign Fighters: From Syria to Ukraine." 20. Brief Issue. EUISS. https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2020%20Balkan%20foreign%20fighters.pdf.

Borger, Julian, Andrew MacDowall, and Shaun Walker. 2016. "Serbia Deports Russians Suspected of Plotting Montenegro Coup." The Guardian, November 11, 2016, sec. World news. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/11/serbia-deports-russians-suspected-of-plotting-montenegro-coup.

Breslin, Jelena, and Marija Ignjatijevic. 2017. "Balkan Foreign Fighters: From Syria to Ukraine." EUISS. 2017.

https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2020%20Balkan%20foreign%20fighters.pdf.

British Council. 2019. "Western Balkans Extremism Research Forum | British Council." 2019. https://www.britishcouncil.ba/en/programmes/education-society/western-balkans-extremism-research-forum.

Bytyci, Faton. 2019. "Kosovo Brings Back Fighters, Families of Jihadists from Syria." Reuters, April 20, 2019. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kosovo-syria-idUSKCN1RW003.

Calamur, Krishnadev. 2017. "What's Going On in Macedonia?" The Atlantic, April 27, 2017. https://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2017/04/whats-going-in-macedonia/524622/.

CeSID, and USAID. 2016. "Survey of the Drivers of Youth Radicalism and Violent Extremism in Serbia." https://www.undp.org/content/dam/serbia/Publications%20and%20reports/English/Resilience/UNDP_SRB_drivers%20of%20youth%20radicalism%20and%20violent%20extremism.pdf.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. "Constructing Grounded Theory." SAGE Publications Ltd. 2006. https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/constructing-grounded-theory/book235960.

Chrzová, Barbora, Anja Grabovac, Martin Hála, and Jan Lalić. 2019. "Western Balkans at the Crossroads: Assessing Influences of Non-Western External Actors," 96.

Delauney, Guy. 2018. "Land Swap Could Bridge Divide for Serbia and Kosovo." BBC News, September 6, 2018, sec. Europe. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45423835.

Deutsche Welle. 2019. "Иванов не прифаќа да биде фуснота во Законот за јазици | DW | 15.01.2019." DW.COM. 2019. https://www.dw.com/mk/%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2-%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%84%D0%B0%D1%9C%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D0%B1%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B5-%D1%84%D1%83%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D1%98%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8/a-47088275.

Dimovski, Sase. 2013a. "Talat Xhaferi: Macedonia's Controversial Defence Chief." Balkan Insight (blog). February 22, 2013. https://balkaninsight.com/2013/02/22/new-macedonian-defence-minister-opens-old-wounds/.

———. 2013b. "Macedonian Defence Minister Has Criminal Record." Balkan Insight (blog). March 7, 2013. https://balkaninsight.com/2013/03/07/macedonian-defence-minister-has-criminal-record/.

Doçi, Adriatik. 2015. "Greqia Nis Përgatitjet Për Luftë, Vendos Ushtrinë Në Kufirin Me Shqipërinë, Ministri Grek i Mbrojtjes Mesazh Force Edi Ramës." Agjencia e Lajmeve SOT NEWS. June 9, 2015. https://sot.com.al/politike/greqia-nis-p%C3%ABrgatitjet-p%C3%ABr-luft%C3%AB-vendos-ushtrin%C3%AB-n%C3%AB-kufirin-me-shqip%C3%ABrin%C3%AB-ministri-grek-i.

Ellis, Glenn. 2015. "Macedonia: Behind the Facade." Al Jazeera. March 18, 2015. http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2015/03/macedonia-facade-150318135440964.html.

EU vs Disinfo. n.d. "Disinformation Cases." EU vs DISINFORMATION (blog). Accessed February 11, 2020a. https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/.

———. n.d. "There Is Proof of a Formation of a Pact against Serbia." EU vs DISINFORMATION (blog). Accessed February 13, 2020b. https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/there-is-proof-of-a-formation-of-a-pact-against-serbia/.

E.W.B. Archives, E. W. B. 2017. "Serb Fighters in Ukraine – Orthodox Solidarity or Financial Interests?" European Western Balkans (blog). April 13, 2017.

https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/04/13/serb-fighters-in-ukraine-orthodox-solidarity-or-financial-interests/.

Exit. 2019. "PM Edi Rama: Kosovo Is Part of Albania, Kosovo-Serbia Border Will Be Discussed." Exit - Explaining Albania (blog). February 15, 2019. https://exit.al/en/2019/02/15/pm-edi-rama-kosovo-is-part-of-albania-kosovo-serbia-border-will-be-discussed/.

Farnam, Arie. 2001. "In Macedonia, Religion a Weapon." Christian Science Monitor, September 19, 2001. https://www.csmonitor.com/2001/0919/p6s1-woeu.html.

France 24. 2018. "Life's Too Harsh in Presevo to Worry about Serb-Kosovo Border." France 24. September 24, 2018. https://www.france24.com/en/20180924-lifes-harsh-presevo-worry-about-serb-kosovo-border.

Gadzo, Mersiha. 2019. "'Large Increase in Anti-Bosnian, Anti-Muslim Bigotry': Report." 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/increase-anti-bosnian-anti-muslim-bigotry-report-190923053105055.html.

Galeotti, Mark. 2018. Do the Western Balkans Face a Coming Russian Storm? https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/do_the_western_balkans_face_a_coming__russian_storm.

Instat. 2012. "Publications of Population and Housing C...." 2012. http://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/censuses/census-of-population-and-housing/publikimet/2011/publications-of-population-and-housing-census-2011/.

JTA, and Marcy Oster. 2019. "Albanian National Arrested in U.S. for Plot to Join ISIS, Attack Montana Synagogue." Haaretz, April 7, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/albanian-national-arrested-in-u-s-for-plot-to-join-isis-attack-synagogue-1.7090943.

Kelly, Luke. 2019. "Overview of Research on Far Right Extremism in the Western Balkans." K4D. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d309f7aed915d2fe9ea6aec/620_Western_Balkans_far_Right.pdf.

Kramer, Andrew E., and Joseph Orovic. 2019. "Two Suspected Russian Agents Among 14 Convicted in Montenegro Coup Plot." The New York Times, May 9, 2019, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/09/world/europe/montenegro-coup-plot-gru.html.

Lapsi. 2018. "'Agimi i Artë' Shpërthen Kundër Shqipërisë, Sulmon Eleni Foureira Dhe Futbollistët Shqiptarë – Lapsi.Al." 2018. https://lapsi.al/2018/05/11/agimi-i-arte-shperthen-kunder-shqiperise-sulmon-eleni-foureira-dhe-futbollistet-shqiptare/.

Lynch, Dennis. 2015. "Macedonia Terror Operation: Police Fighting Street-To-Street With 'Foreign' Group." International Business Times. May 9, 2015. http://www.ibtimes.com/macedonia-terror-operation-police-fighting-street-street-foreign-group-1915510.

Marusic, Sinisa Jakov. 2018. "Macedonia MP Recalls Savage Beating in Parliament." Balkan Insight (blog). February 19, 2018. https://balkaninsight.com/2018/02/19/macedonia-mp-testifies-against-his-alleged-attackers-02-19-2018/.

Morina, Engjellushe, Beatrix Austin, Tim Jan Roetman, and Véronique Dudouet. 2019. "Community Perspectives on Preventing Violent Extremism." Research Report. https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Other_Resources/WB_PVE/CTR_PVE_WesternBalkans_Research_Report.pdf.

Muhic, Ferid. 2013. "Muslims of Macedonia: Identity Challenges and an Uncertain Future." Al Jazeera. October 8, 2013. http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2013/10/20131088412517496.html.

"Ohrid Framework Agreement | OSCE." 2001. 2001. https://www.osce.org/skopje/100622.

Parfitt, Tom. 2015a. "Crimea, One Year on: The Night Wolves Howl for Putin," March 17, 2015, sec. World. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11478456/Crimea-one-year-on-the-Night-Wolves-howl-for-Putin.html.

———. 2015b. "Putin's Outrider: 'The Surgeon' Vows to Quell Anti-Kremlin Dissent," March 24, 2015, sec. World. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11492898/Putins-outrider-The-Surgeon-vows-to-quell-anti-Kremlin-dissent.html.

Perry, Valery, ed. 2019. Extremism and Violent Extremism in Serbia: 21st Century Manifestations of an Historical Challenge. ibidem Press.

Petrović, Predrag. 2018. "The Problem of Islamist Extremism in Serbia: What Are the Drivers and How to Adress Them." https://wb-iisg.com/wp-content/uploads/bp-attachments/6427/policy_brief_serbia.pdf.

Petrović, Predrag, and Isidora Stakić. 2018. "Extremism Research Forum - Serbia Report." https://www.britishcouncil.rs/sites/default/files/erf_report_serbia_2018.pdf.

Prague Security Studies Institute. 2019a. "Briefing Paper IV: External Influence in the Cultural and Religious Sphere." Balkan Crossroads. 2019. https://www.balkancrossroads.com/bp-iv-culture-religion.

———. 2019b. "Briefing Paper V: External Influence in Media and Elections." Balkan Crossroads. 2019. https://www.balkancrossroads.com/briefing-papers.

Pronk, Danny. 2018. "RUSSIAN POLITICAL WARFARE," 4.

QKSS. n.d. "Raportet." QKSS. Accessed October 15, 2019. http://www.qkss.org/sq/Raportet.

Radio Free Europe. 2019a. "Croatian President Denies 'Militant Islam' Insult Of Bosnia." RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. 2019. https://www.rferl.org/a/croatian-president-denies-militant-islam-insult-of-bosnia/30087557.html.

———. 2019b. Brnabić o "Ljudima Iz Šume." https://www.facebook.com/RSE.Balkan/videos/377118026483374/.

Reuters. 2014. "Serbia Backs Jail Terms for Serbs Fighting in Foreign Conflicts." Reuters, October 10, 2014. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-serbia-conflicts-idUSKCN0HZ1JB20141010.

Ristic, Marija. 2017. "Facebook Reveals Serbian Fighters' Role in Ukraine War." Balkan Insight (blog). December 27, 2017. https://balkaninsight.com/2017/12/27/facebook-reveals-serbian-fighters-role-in-ukraine-war-12-25-2017/.

Romriell, Lucas. 2003. Cycle World Magazine.

Rrustemi, Arlinda. 2014. "Should Serbia vs Albania Have Gone Ahead in the First Place?" OpenDemocracy. 2014. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/should-serbia-vs-albania-have-gone-ahead-in-first-place/.

Rrustemi, Arlinda, Rob de Wijk, Conor Dunlop, Jovana Perovska, and Lirije Palushi. 2019. "Geopolitical Influences of External Powers in the Western Balkans | HCSS." The Hague: HCSS. https://hcss.nl/report/geopolitical-influences-external-powers-western-balkans.

Rujevic, Nemanja. 2014. "Serbian Mercenaries Fighting in Eastern Ukraine." Deutsche Welle, August 14, 2014. http://www.dw.com/en/serbian-mercenaries-fighting-in-eastern-ukraine/a-17855479.

Selimi, Kaltrina, and Filip Stojkovski. 2016. "Assessment of Macedonia's Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism: View from Civil Society." Analyticamk. 2016. http://www.analyticamk.org/images/Files/extremism-en-updated-FINAL-web_ceb98.pdf.

Shqiptarja. 2018. "Vrasja në Gjirokastër, historiani Arben Llalla: Ushtari grek provokoi, e njoh prej 6 vitesh, ja e vërteta - Shqiptarja.com." 2018. https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/vrasja-

ne-gjirokaster-historiani-arben-llalla-ushtari-grek-provokoi-e-njoh-prej-6-vitesh-ja-e-verteta.

Shtuni, Adrian. 2015. "Ethnic Albanian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria." CTC Sentinel. https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/CTCSentinel-Vol8Issue49.pdf.

———. 2019. "Western Balkans Foreign Fighters and Homegrown Jihadis: Trends and Implications." Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. August 8, 2019. https://ctc.usma.edu/western-balkans-foreign-fighters-homegrown-jihadis-trends-implications/.

Spaic, Igor. 2017. "Bosnia War Victims Slam Croatia President's Terror Claims." Balkan Insight (blog). September 7, 2017. https://balkaninsight.com/2017/09/07/bosnia-war-victims-slam-croatia-president-s-terror-claims-09-07-2017/.

Tanjug News. 2019. "TANJUG | Serbia, Russia to Start Building Nuclear Research Centre next Year." 2019. http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=474442.

Telma. 2018. "МПЦ Останува Против Промената На Името На Црквата и На Државата | Телма." 2018. https://telma.com.mk/mpts-ostanuva-protiv-promenata-na-imeto-na-tsrkvata/.

"The Great Replacement." n.d. https://www.ilfoglio.it/userUpload/The_Great_Replacementconvertito.pdf.

Tumanovska, Marija, and Robert Coalson. 2015. "Government's Claims About Macedonia Terrorist Group Met Skeptically." RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. May 12, 2015. https://www.rferl.org/a/macedonia-government-claims-of-terrorist-group-met-with-skepticism/27010370.html.

UNHCR. 2016. "Refworld | Country Reports on Terrorism 2015 - Macedonia." Refworld. 2016. https://www.refworld.org/docid/57518da8b.html.

Vecernji. 2010. "Dodik Claims It Is Time to Talk about Peaceful Division of BiH - Www.Vecernji.Ba." 2010. https://www.vecernji.ba/dodik-tvrda-da-je-doslo-vrijeme-za-razgovor-o-mirnoj-podjeli-bih-114737/komentari?page=7.

Voice of America. 2019. "Law on Languages in Official Gazette with One Signature, Fierce Accusations Government - Opposition." BOA. 2019. https://mk.voanews.com/a/voa-macedonian-law-of-languages-macedonia-reactions/4744106.html.

Zejneli, Amra. 2019. "Incensed By 'Racist' Comments, Kosovo Says It Is Banning Serbian PM." RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. 2019. https://www.rferl.org/a/incensed-by-racist-comments-kosovo-says-it-is-banning-serbian-pm/29972432.html.

Zëri. 2018. "Edi Rama Dhe Ramush Haradinaj Përplasen Për Korrigjimin e Kufirit." Zëri. November 26, 2018. http://zeri.info/aktuale/227297/edi-rama-dhe-ramush-haradinaj-perplasen-per-korrigjimin-e-kufirit/.

Zivanovic, Maja. 2018. "Donbass Brothers: How Serbian Fighters Were Deployed in Ukraine." Balkan Insight (blog). December 13, 2018. https://balkaninsight.com/2018/12/13/donbass-brothers-how-serbian-fighters-were-deployed-in-ukraine-12-12-2018/.

———. 2019a. "New Zealand Mosque Gunman 'Inspired by Balkan Nationalists.'" Balkan Insight (blog). March 15, 2019. https://balkaninsight.com/2019/03/15/new-zealand-mosque-gunman-inspired-by-balkan-nationalists/.

———. 2019b. "Kosovo Gone, Serbia Faces 'Separatist' Tensions Elsewhere." Balkan Insight (blog). July 26, 2019. https://balkaninsight.com/2019/07/26/kosovo-gone-serbia-faces-separatist-tensions-elsewhere/.