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# RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM VS. MULTICULTURALISM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

M u h i d i n M u l a l i ć  
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## Introduction

This paper begins with a survey of historical, cultural and civilization dynamics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since ancient times, Bosnia has been at the crossroads of different cultures, civilizations, religions and traditions, which inevitably affected the creation of a unique Bosnian multicultural model. Pilarska<sup>1</sup> is right in asserting that “such tradition joints the elements of the Christian and Muslim culture, creating a specific content-related and cultural borderland stemming from the Greek-Byzantine (Orthodox), Western-European (Catholic and Ottoman (Islamic) provenance”<sup>2</sup>. Many critics often question this model and multicultural discontinuity. However, common socio-cultural characteristics have never disappeared because in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina after a bloody war, multiculturalism ensures the continuation of peace, equal opportunities and mutual tolerance, civil rights and multi-ethnic coexistence. Actually, in the past two decades, multiculturalism contributed a lot to peace-building and state-building. Multiculturalism and interfaith dialogue can be regarded the avenues towards successful tackling of extremism and terrorism. In this regard, besides the state and state institutions, the religious communities have contributed a lot towards peace and coexistence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Content analysis of leading newspapers clearly illustrates that all religions stand together in the face of extremism and terrorism.

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<sup>1</sup> Justyna Pilarska, “Bosnian multiconfessionalism as a foundation for intercultural dialogue,” *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2017): 24-33.

<sup>2</sup> Pilarska, “Bosnian multiconfessionalism,” 28.

In the age of globalization and in the world of diversity it has become an imperative to foster and preserve tolerance, understanding and co-existence in multicultural and multi-ethnic societies as an alternative to Huntington's civilizational clash.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, the inclusive Bosnian multicultural model could position a country as a very unique state-model, which other multicultural and multiethnic countries worldwide could follow. This is in particular true for the EU member-states that presently cope with the challenges related to minorities, religion, culture, language and ethnicity.

### Historical Paradigm of Bosnian Multiculturalism

Socio-political and cultural patterns of one society, including an idea of multiculturalism, have always been subject to change and modification. Therefore, from the medieval times multiculturalism in its essence was the hallmark of the Bosnian state. Medieval multiculturalism integrated various Christian confessions and ethnicities; the Ottoman *millet* system was the foundation of religious tolerance and coexistence among Orthodox Christians, Jews, Catholics and Muslims; Bosnia and Herzegovina was a model for former Yugoslavian national, ethnic and religious coexistence. What is common to all these historical periods? Multiculturalism as a model, which integrated socio-political and cultural patterns, prevented the destruction of the Bosnian state and the society. Therefore,

the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina indicates that ethnic distinctive bonds have been flourishing throughout centuries while common national identification and a sense of interconnected relationship between diverse groups of people had always been strongly felt. Actually, the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina points to cultural inclusion and cross-culture, not exclusive cultural isolation. That is why nowadays as throughout the past, although belonging to different groups of people, many distinguished Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks have accepted a common and shared Bosnian national identity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *Bosnia the Good: Tolerance and Tradition* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), 88-90.

<sup>4</sup> Muhidin Mulalić, "Socio-Cultural Diversity of Bosnia and Herzegovina," in *Islam in Southeast Europe: Past Reflections and Future Prospects*, ed. Mesut Idriz and Osman Bakar, 55-67 (Bru-

Nowadays, Bosnia and Herzegovina is often presented as a state where Serbs, Bosnjaks and Croats live in peace with each other. The above explained historical understanding of multiculturalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina gives us right to believe that in spite of different nationalistic, extremist and secession challenges Bosnian state and the society will prevail. As during the 1990s, in today's Bosnia and Herzegovina multiculturalism is in collision with the forces of disintegration, separation and the creation of divided and utterly separated societies, something that is in essence foreign to *Being of Bosnia*. Bosnia has always been different as it is at the crossroads of cultures, religions, ethnicities and civilizations and because of its multiculturalism has been vulnerable before those who attempted to take exclusively 'forbidden fruit.' Bosnian multiculturalism kept the society together throughout the history and today's multiculturalism will inevitably breed democratic and liberal values that will pave the way for the future of the Bosnian state and the society. On the contrary,

...whenever an exclusive socio-cultural model was presented as an alternative, requesting transformation and assimilation of the existing socio-cultural models, the country experienced conflicts and wars. Therefore, the historical continuity of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a state has been characterized by an inclusive socio-cultural model, a model that embraces diversity. Actually, Mahmutčehajić in his work *Bosnia the Good: Tolerance and Tradition* used the tradition as a basis of tolerance, understanding and coexistence.<sup>5</sup>

Bosnia and Herzegovina as such was exposed to different influences during the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian periods. These influences were assimilated into the already existing multicultural model that facilitated flourishing of the Bosnian Church. The Bosnian Church shaped distinctive religious and cultural identity of the citizens; therefore, multicultural model as such began with the Bosnian Church.<sup>6</sup> Pilarska is right in asserting that "Bosnia-Herzegovina as a certain kind of a transitional zone between the Balkans and the Mediterranean, setting

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nei Darussalam: UDB Press, 2014), 63-64.

<sup>5</sup> Mulalić, "Socio-Cultural Diversity," 55.

<sup>6</sup> Mahmutčehajić, *Bosnia the Good*, 31-33; Mitja Velikonja, *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Austin TX: Texas University Press, 2003), 19; Noel Malcom, *Bosnia: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 27-42.

the transitional area to the Catholic world of the mainland Europe at the northern frontiers.<sup>7</sup> Bosnian multicultural model also integrated the religion of Islam and the Ottoman heritage. Multicultural model was enriched by Sultan Mehmed II who granted freedom, safety and security to the Bosnian Franciscans.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Bosnian society during the Ottoman times was denoted as a multicultural because of coexistence of Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians; even European exiled and excommunicated heretics and the Shepardi Jews found Bosnia as their sanctuary. Then, from demographic point of view, different censuses from 1910, 1991 and 2013 affirm religious diversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia's administrative, socio-cultural and economic structures were directly shaped by the Ottoman presence.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, in affirmative and constructive ways the

Ottomans brought the religion of Islam to Bosnia and with it new cultural and spiritual opportunities. New civilization brought along a higher living standard and urban, architectural, administrative, economic and commercial development. The people of Bosnia, considering benefits provided by the new worldview, had integrated themselves without rejecting their past heritage of Western civilization.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, Austro-Hungarian Empire through its modernization and westernization processes brought Bosnia and Herzegovina closer to the West. Socio-political, economic, administrative, infrastructural and educational changes and developments had significant impact on lifestyle of the people and their gradual turning the West.

Bosnian famous conception of universal neighbourhood relations (*komsiluk*) as a sociological and anthropological concept assimilated different religions whereby all of them began focusing on neighbourliness and coexistence within the Bosnian society. Countering alleged

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<sup>7</sup> Pilarska, "Bosnian multiconfessionalism," 27.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Donia and John Fine Jr., *Bosnia and Herzegovina, A Tradition Betrayed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 64-65; Ignacije Gavran, *Fellow-Travellers of Bosnian History: Seven Centuries of Bosnian Franciscans* (Sarajevo: Svjetlo riječi, 2001), 63-69.

<sup>9</sup> Hamid Algar, "Some Notes on the Naqshbandī Tariqat in Bosnia," *Die Welt des Islams* 13(3/4) (1971): 168-203.

<sup>10</sup> Mulalić, "Socio-Cultural Diversity," 56.

animosity and hate among the Slavic tribes, this explains why even during the war and after, orthodoxy and exclusive separation of different ethnic groups has not prevailed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Komsiluk* is often used by Bosnjaks, Croats and Serbs for explaining the centuries old relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to this notion, a neighbour is beyond religious exclusive identification.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Doubt stated that “*Komsiluk* is not just passive tolerance but active goodwill toward neighbours from different ethnic communities”.<sup>12</sup> For example, intermarriages in Bosnia have been very popular, especially before the war. Intermarriage as such was a hallmark of the Bosnian multicultural society. Often, intermarriages were used to strengthen not only multicultural model but at the same time Yugoslavian concept of brotherhood and unity.<sup>13</sup> Another good example of multicultural model in Bosnia and Herzegovina is Sarajevo and its demography, arts, architecture, religions, cultures and traditions. With such characteristics Sarajevo is truly a multicultural model city.

During Austro-Hungarian period, modern, secular and liberal dimensions of multiculturalism paved the way to Bosnian multicultural model. Thus, multiculturalism was enriched and strengthened. It is significant to articulate that multiculturalism began to be viewed and equated with modernization, development and democratization. Bosnia under Austro-Hungarian rule began with rapid political and socio-cultural transformation and modernization of the country in terms of governance, law, economy, social structure, urbanization and cultural transformations.<sup>14</sup> Bosnian multiculturalism was recognized by the communists who accepted the reality of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions. In 1943, the *Anti-Fascist Council of People's Liberation of BiH* (ZAVNOBiH) reaffirmed the statehood of Bosnia-Herzegovina

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<sup>11</sup> Mevlida Serdarević and Ajnija Omanić, *Bosnjacka kultura ponasanja [Bosnjak cultural behaviour]* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 2000), 189-192.

<sup>12</sup> Keith Doubt, *Through the Window: Kinship and Elopement in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2014), 133.

<sup>13</sup> Dušan Janjić and Paul Shoup, eds., *Bosna i Hercegovina između rata i mira [Bosnia and Herzegovina between war and peace]* (Belgrade: Dom Omladine, 1992), 32-33.

<sup>14</sup> See Fikret Karčić, *The Bosniaks and the Challenges of Modernity* (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1999).

and strengthened the bond between Bosnia-Herzegovina's peoples such as Serbs, Croats and Muslims.<sup>15</sup>

This short survey clearly indicates that Bosnia-Herzegovina is an embodiment of both Western and Eastern heritages, religions and cultures, which position this small European country as very unique and exemplary.<sup>16</sup> In today's turbulent world, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from a geo-cultural and civilization perspective, is vital for global, cultural and security balance. Christianity, Judaism and Islam, as three major world religions make the distinctive physical and spiritual feature of Bosnia and Herzegovina and they guarantee a necessary religious balance. Bosnia-Herzegovina as a multicultural and multinational state functions as a bridge between the two exclusively ethno-states of Serbia and Croatia and from the global perspective Bosnia and Herzegovina, to use Izetbegovic's terms, is between East and West.<sup>17</sup> Therefore,

being a multicultural state, Bosnia-Herzegovina has always flourished as a part of a greater whole, i.e., the Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire and Yugoslavia. Therefore, the future of this small country lies in joining the EU, a family of nations that uphold diversity. Upholding liberal values, cosmopolitan multiculturalism, the tradition and diverse socio-cultural values derived from Bosnia's past and present would in turn uphold and strengthen the EU road towards achieving the goal of creating a family of nations.<sup>18</sup>

Velikonja states that

despite destruction, liquidation, and persecution, this country is still inhabited by members of different nations and religious communities. The solution will not be found in a religious moral campaign, national exclusion, political radicalism, "final solutions" of all sorts, national or religious conversion, or by ignoring or overstating the significance of the religious factor... I think — optimistically, someone would surely argue — that a multinational and

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<sup>15</sup> Omer Ibrahimagić, *Constitutional Development of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: The Congress of Bosnian Intellectuals, 1998), 95.

<sup>16</sup> Mahmutčehajić, *Bosnia the Good*, 54-64.

<sup>17</sup> Muhidin Mulalić, "Multiculturalism and EU enlargement: the case of Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina," in *The Islamic World and the West*, ed. Christoph Marcinkowski (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2009), 119-120.

<sup>18</sup> Mulalić, "Socio-Cultural Diversity," 65.

multireligious Bosnia-Herzegovina is possible because of its predominately tolerant and plural history.<sup>19</sup>

### Tackling Extremism and Terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the late 1980s, Serbian Orientalists wrote numerous works so as to present the Serbs as defenders of the Christianity against the religion of Islam.<sup>20</sup> These works were purposefully written to cover main Serbian strategic objectives and an attempt to create Greater Serbia. Fortunately, misinterpretation of history and attempts to present Muslims in former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Kosovo as fundamentalists, extremists and radicals had failed. On the contrary, at the end of the 1990s wars, mainly the Serbs were accused and sentenced for committed crimes and atrocities. However, after September 11 and with the beginnings of the war against terrorism, Serbian Orientalism experienced significant revival. Serbian intellectuals and policy-makers often make reinterpretation of the Bosnian war, putting into perspective the war itself with September 11 and global terrorism. They have been purposefully rewriting the history as to counter Serbian aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srebrenica genocide, committed crimes and sentenced Serbian politicians and generals in the Hague. Therefore, Serbian intellectuals and policy-makers are not sincere in fighting against terrorism and extremism, having one objective to minimize genocide and ethnic cleansing that they had committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, in such a complex country as Bosnia and Herzegovina is, the Serbs and lately even the Croats use demonization of the Bosnjaks and their depiction as extremists and radicals as a tool to achieve their political and national objectives. The continuous articulation, claiming that that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a terrorist state and as such a threat to Serbia, Croatia, Europe and the world has been the strategic attempt to gain the international support for their political interests and to weaken the position of those who have been struggling

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<sup>19</sup> Velikonja, *Religious Separation*, 294.

<sup>20</sup> Norman Cigar, „Serbia's Orientalists and Islam: Making Genocide Intellectually Respectable,” *The Islamic Quarterly* 38 (1994) 3: 147-170.

to preserve Bosnia and Herzegovina as a multicultural state, a home to different religions, cultures, traditions, nationalities and ethnicities. Moreover, global geopolitical and geostrategic power struggle of the great powers shapes the views, perceptions and strategies of tackling extremism and terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A very unique historical position of Bosnia and Herzegovina, nestled between East and West, in some way explains different influences and socio-political inclinations of this country. Bosnian destiny was often decided in Istanbul, Wien, Paris, Washington, Moscow and Brussels. The great powers have treated Bosnia as a laboratory for their political and cultural experiments. This was especially the case with the beginnings of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina when the local population was expecting more from the West.<sup>21</sup>

The above short historical glance at the relationship between Bosnian present realities, socio-political and security developments and terrorism was primarily written with an aim to put in the perspective the present-day discourses on how Bosnia and Herzegovina tackles and deals with terrorism and extremism. The first part of this paper clearly indicates that Bosnia and Herzegovina has been fostering multiculturalism throughout the centuries, naturally, the establishment of Bosnia is against any kind of extremism. Secondly, Bosnia and Herzegovina as the state made significant efforts so as to tackle extremism and terrorism in the same way as other countries do throughout the world. Strategic objectives are clearly stated in the *Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Preventing and Fighting Terrorism* regarding global terrorist threats in compliance with the Anti-Terrorist and Anti-ISIL Coalition. Certainly, Bosnia and Herzegovina developed strategies, policies and activities

established under the Global UN Anti-Terrorist Strategy, the European Union's Strategy for Combating Terrorism and Combating Radicalization and Recruitment for Terrorism, as well as other relevant international instruments, taking into account the most recent, such as the Conclusions and Recommendations on Combating Violent Extremism, the White House Summit (February 2015), Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit

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<sup>21</sup> See Adam LeBor, *A Heart Turned East: Among the Muslims of Europe and America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

(Riga, January 2015), Joint Statement of Belgrade (April 2015), Joint Statement of St. Polten (May 2015), and a number of other documents.<sup>22</sup>

Thirdly, religious communities also made significant contributions to prevent and curb religious extremism and terrorism.

Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the *Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Preventing and Fighting Terrorism (2015-2020)*<sup>23</sup> in order to strengthen national capacities in managing and tackling terrorism at home and to meet international commitments and responsibilities. As early as in 2001, Bosnia and Herzegovina became an active member of the *Antiterrorist Coalition* and two more strategic plans were adopted to curb terrorism and terrorist-related phenomena at the time of intensifying global security challenges and threats. The newly adopted *Strategy (2015-2020)* clearly defines foreign terrorist fighters, violent extremism, hate speech, the promotion of terrorism and a call to join paramilitary forces. The *Strategy (2015-2020)* clearly defined the following goals:

“1. Prevention of hate crimes, radicalization and terrorism in all its manifestations; 2. Critical infrastructure protection; 3. Improved procedures in investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and related crimes; 4. Response / reaction to possible terrorist attack and aftermath recovery.”<sup>24</sup> (p. 7).

Bosnia and Herzegovina also made significant changes in the legislation and the Criminal Code as to prevent and fight terrorism. More importantly, foreign terrorist fighting law was passed in July 2014, preventing Bosnian citizens to participate in any paramilitary organizations.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers, “Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina for preventing and combating terrorism: 2015-2020,” Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015, accessed August 15, 2017, [http://msb.gov.ba/PDF/STRATEGIJA\\_ZA\\_BORBU\\_PROTIV\\_TERORIZMA\\_ENG.pdf](http://msb.gov.ba/PDF/STRATEGIJA_ZA_BORBU_PROTIV_TERORIZMA_ENG.pdf), 4.

<sup>23</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers, “Strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina for preventing and combating terrorism: 2015-2020,” Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015, accessed August 15, 2017, [http://msb.gov.ba/PDF/STRATEGIJA\\_ZA\\_BORBU\\_PROTIV\\_TERORIZMA\\_ENG.pdf](http://msb.gov.ba/PDF/STRATEGIJA_ZA_BORBU_PROTIV_TERORIZMA_ENG.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers, “Strategy (2015-2020),” 7.

<sup>25</sup> Vlado Azinović and Muhamed Jusić, “The Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters’ Bosnian Contingent,” The Atlantic Initiative, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015, accessed August 10, 2017, [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](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), 23.

In addition, law enforcement agencies became very active in finding legal solutions for the following: spreading of hate and violence, incitement to terrorism and extremism, recruitment of terrorists, spreading of radical ideology, establishing a special watch list of potential terrorists, social media and internet monitoring for hate speech and terrorism and cooperation with all international organizations on terrorism.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the *European Commission Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina*<sup>27</sup> and the recent *State Department Report*<sup>28</sup> articulated positive criminal sanctioning of terrorist fighters, joining the terrorist organizations and publically encouraging terrorism. These reports show that the Bosnian authorities and institutions have taken up a serious fight against terrorism.

Apart from the state and state institutions, religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have contributed a lot towards interreligious dialogue. Islamic, Orthodox, Catholic and Jews religious communities and their leading theologians and intellectuals always refer to a genuine religious diversity and coexistence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the sake of illustration, it is important to mention a few authors and their works: Luka Markovic, *Polemika ili dijalog s Islamom [Polemics or a Dialogue with Islam]*, Mato Zovkic, *Medjureligijski dijalog iz katolicke perspektive u Bosnia i Hercegovini [Interreligious Dialogue from Catholic Perspective in Bosnia and Herzegovina]*, Resid Hafizovic, *Muslimani u dijalogu s drugima i sa samim sobom [Muslims in a Dialogue with Others and Themselves]*, Adnan Silajdzic, *Islam u otkricu krcanske Evrope: Povijest medjureligijskog dijaloga [Islam in Discovery of Christian Europe: A history of Interreligious Dialogue]*, Milan Vukomanovic, *Religions in the Balkans: The new Basis for Dialogue*, Aleksandar Djakovac, *Pravoslavlje i druge religije [Orthodox Christianity and Other Religions]*.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers, "Strategy (2015-2020)," 14-23.

<sup>27</sup> European Commission, "Bosnia and Herzegovina 2016 Report," Brussels, November 9, 2016, [http://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/20161109\\_report\\_bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina.pdf](http://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/20161109_report_bosnia_and_herzegovina.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> United States Department of State Publication Bureau of Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Washington D.C.: July 28, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/272488.pdf>, 106-108.

<sup>29</sup> See Luka Markovic, *Polemika ili dijalog s Islamom* (Sarajevo: Svijetlo riječi, 1995); Mato Zovkic, *Medjureligijski dijalog iz katolicke perspektive u Bosnia i Hercegovini* (Sarajevo: Vrhbo-

The Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina is very active in establishing interreligious dialogue and preventing any form of extremism and terrorism. In 2011, for the sake of the promotion of tackling extremism and terrorism issues, the Islamic Community in partnership with Konrad Adenauer organized a conference and published the proceedings entitled *Islamic Scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.<sup>30</sup> The following year, the Islamic Community founded the *Center for Dialogue Vesatija* (CDV) as to promote moderate dimensions of Islam and to foster tolerance and understanding. In 2013, in partnership with the Islamic Faculty of Pedagogy and the Center for Dialogue Vesatija, an international conference was organized with the title *Umjerenost kao metod institucionalnog djelovanja obrazovnih ustanova regije [Moderation as an Institutional Functioning of Islamic Religious Institutions in the Region]*. In 2014, Islamic newspaper called *Preporod* and the *Center for Dialogue Vesatija* launched a forum as to promote interreligious dialogue and moderation. Most importantly, on December 4, 2015, the leading Bosnian politicians, religious representatives, academics and businessmen gave joint declaration on open rejection of extremism and terrorism. A year later, in 2016, the Islamic Community made an initiative to close parallel religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2016, the Islamic Community organized a series of seminars for religious leaders entitled *Religious Call, Religious Radicalism and Violent Extremism*. All religious education institutions foster religious tolerance and understanding.<sup>31</sup> Then, the media that are under the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina articulate the problems of radicalism, terrorism, and extremism and dissociated themselves from the same.

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sanska katolička teologija, 1998); Resid Hafizovic, *Muslimani u dijalogu s drugima i sa samim sobom* (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 2002); Adnan Silajdzic, *Islam u otkricu krscanske Evrope: Povijest medjureligijskog dijaloga* (Sarajevo: Fakultet islamskih nauka, 2003); Milan Vukomanovic, *Religious Dialogue in the Balkans: The Drama of Understanding* (Belgrade: Belgrade Open School, 2005)

<sup>30</sup> Enes Karić, Fikret Karčić, Dževad Hodžić, Mustafa Spahić, Ahmet Alibašić, Muhamed Jusić, Ekrem Tucaković, *Islamska scena u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Sarajevo: Udruženje islamske zajednice u BiH and Fondacija Konrad Adenauer, 2011), accessed on August 11, 2017, [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_29771-1522-1-30.pdf?11121913564](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_29771-1522-1-30.pdf?11121913564).

<sup>31</sup> Muhamed Jusić, ed., *Ideologija tekfira i nasilni ekstremizam [An Ideology of Takfir and Violent Extremism]* (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 2017), accessed August 10, 2017, [http://cdv.ba/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Ideologija-tekfira-i-nasilni-ekstremizam\\_Analiza.pdf](http://cdv.ba/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Ideologija-tekfira-i-nasilni-ekstremizam_Analiza.pdf), 8-12.

For instance, in the period from December 2015 until the present day, the *Islamic Newspaper Preporod* published fifty articles, columns and opinions that condemn terrorism and radicalism as such, while at the same time radio channel of Islamic Community *Radio BIR* published more than fifty-two news, shows and radio programs or reprinted stories on their channel. Therefore, the Islamic Community effectively uses hundreds of its mosques, faculties, institutes, religious schools, endowments, newspapers and journals to promote home-grown and traditional dimensions of Islam.

The main religious leaders signed the famous “*Statement of Shared Moral Commitment*” on 9 June, 1997, which inevitably led to the formal establishment of the Inter-religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Inter-religious Council set key objectives aimed at religious freedom and legal status of religious communities, media, education, gender and youth. Since 1999, the Inter-religious Council, in cooperation with state institutions and international organizations, contributed to drafting of a new law on religious freedom and legal status of religious communities and churches in Bosnia and Herzegovina as to confirm to European standards on freedom of religion. As a result, in 2003 the law on “*Freedom of Religion and the Legal Status of Religious Communities and Churches*” was adopted. This law enabled the Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina to keep the main register of all churches and religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Inter-religious Council organized a number of round tables, seminars and conferences in order to promote religious freedom among religious communities and churches, political parties, government representatives, NGOs, intellectuals and the youth.

The Inter-religious Council targets the youth through different education, social and academic activities and trainings. Its Youth Working Group organized a series of inter-religious conflict resolution trainings in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Brcko and Bihac. These trainings and seminars provided a platform for the young to engage in dialogue, peace and conflict transformation regardless of their religion, ethnicity or language. Some of these trainings and seminars include: “Hope for a Better Future: Transforming Attitudes and Building Community;” “Open

Our Hearts;” “Day of Solidarity with Children without Parental Care,” “All Together;” and many others.

The Inter-religious Council is organizing meetings of young theologians. Since 2006, numerous theology students exchange visits were organized, where the Muslims visited the Orthodox and the Catholic students and vice versa. In additions, numerous seminars, meetings and debates were organized on different subjects such as dialogue between believers and atheists, bioethics, conflict resolution, anti-drug campaign, curbing violence and extremism and others. Inter-religious Council has been very active in media, which contributed towards producing a number of programs aimed at tolerance and peace. Some of these programs include: “*Susret [Meeting of Persons]*” and “*Culture of Religions*”; Finally, Inter-religious Council established the Women Working Group, which started to focus on social problems, education, poverty, women’s rights and fostering cultural and religious heritage. This group successfully published a book entitled *Religious Customs of Muslims, Orthodox Serbs, Catholics and Jews in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.<sup>32</sup>

### Content Analysis of Religious Extremism and Multiculturalism in Daily Newspapers

September 11 and the terrorist attacks directed the world media attention to the religions and religious issues. Since 9/11, the role of religious communities in promoting peace, cooperation and coexistence on one side and the use, abuse and misuse of religion on other became one of the most discussed topics in the international media. Similar topics also made headline stories in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, there is the rationale for studying the content of Bosnian media headlines and news on religions and religion-related phenomena.

The content analysis of the daily-newspapers was based on the frequency of appearance of the ten terms related to the religious communities, multiculturalism and extremism. The research included articles from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 till June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017, covering four major

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<sup>32</sup> Interreligious Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina, accessed August 11, 2017, <http://www.mrv.ba>.

Daily Newspapers	Period (January-June 2017)										Total
	Religion	Multiculturalism	Tolerance	Extremism	Terrorism	Interfaith dialogue	Islam	Orthodox-Christianity	Roman-Catholicism	Judaism	
<i>Dnevni avaz</i>	17	0	25	4	13	0	109	11	9	5	193
	0.70%	0%	1.03%	0.16%	0.53%	0	4.51%	0.45%	0.37%	0.20%	7.99%
<i>Oslobodjenje</i>	46	0	27	2	13	1	125	53	26	28	321
	2.02%	0%	1.19%	0.08%	0.57%	0.04%	5.51%	2.33%	1.14%	1.23%	14.19%
<i>Nezavisne novine</i>	7	0	19	2	4	0	27	29	1	0	89
	0.75%	0%	2.03%	0.21%	0.42%	0%	2.89%	3.11%	0.10%	0%	9.54%
<i>Dnevni list</i>	8	0	15	1	10	0	41	23	14	2	114
	1.02%	0%	1.93%	0.12%	1.28%	0%	5.27%	2.96%	1.80%	0.25%	14.67%

Table 1: Number of articles frequency and percentage.

daily newspapers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely the *Dnevni avaz*, the *Dnevni list*, the *Nezavisne novine* and the *Oslobođenje newspapers*. During this time period, the above mentioned newspapers published 6.390 articles, among which the *Dnevni avaz* with 2.413 articles in the newspaper with highest number of published articles, after which comes *Oslobođenje* with 2.268 articles, then the *Nezavisne novine* with 932 articles and the *Dnevni list* with 777 published articles. Unlike before 9/11, the above data clearly indicated that religious-related topics are significantly represented in daily newspapers.

The frequency of the published articles using the key terms targeted in this study represents how the media deal with the religious topics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The selected news clearly indicated the public perceptions and the context of such topics. Thus, Table 1 shows the results of the frequency of appearance of the key terms in daily newspapers in the period of six months in comparison to the overall number of articles they published.

717 totally published articles in the period of six months deal with one or more studied terms among which the highest number deals with Islam or Muslims (42 %) while the multiculturalism received no attention with none of the published articles on this topic. An extremely low number of news on multiculturalism clearly shows that there is no interest in its promotion. On the contrary, Bosnian nationalists 'promote' Bosnia and Herzegovina as "a deeply divided society," "ethnic democracy" and an "Ethnopolis" where different ethnic groups, due to strong nationalistic rhetoric and 'ethnopolitics', live isolated from each other.<sup>33</sup> The second most frequent topic is Orthodox-Christians, while the term tolerance is placed third with 86 or 12 % of the totally published articles. It is interesting that the *Oslobođenje* newspapers published the highest number of articles on Orthodox-Christians 53 or 45.68 % out of 116 articles. Also, it is noticeable that the *Oslobođenje* newspaper published most of the articles with these topics 44.76 % out of 717 or 321 published articles, while the *Nezavisne novine* published the fewest number of articles, 89 on them or 12.41 %. Therefore, the

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<sup>33</sup> Asim Mujkić, *Mi građani etnopolisa* (Sarajevo: Sahinpasic, 2007).

Daily Newspapers	Period (January-June 2017)										Total
	Religion	Multiculturalism	Tolerance	Extremism	Terrorism	Interfaith dialogue	Islam	Orthodox-Christianity	Roman-Catholicism	Judaism	
<i>Dnevni Avaz</i>	17	0	25	4	13	0	109	11	9	5	193
	21,79%	0%	29,06%	44,44%	32,5%	0%	36,09%	9,48%	18%	14,28%	26,91%
<i>Oslobodjenje</i>	46	0	27	2	13	1	125	53	26	28	321
	58,97%	0%	31,39%	22,22%	32,5%	100%	41,39%	45,68%	52%	80%	44,76%
<i>Nezavisne novine</i>	7	0	19	2	4	0	27	29	1	0	89
	8,97%	0%	22,09%	22,22%	10%	0%	8,94%	25%	2%	0%	12,41%
<i>Dnevni list</i>	8	0	15	1	10	0	41	23	14	2	114
	10,25%	0%	17,44%	11,11%	25%	0%	13,57%	19,82%	28%	5,71%	15,89%
TOTAL	78	0	86	9	40	1	302	116	50	35	717
	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Table 2: Number of articles frequency and percentage in comparison to total number of articles on the studied topics.

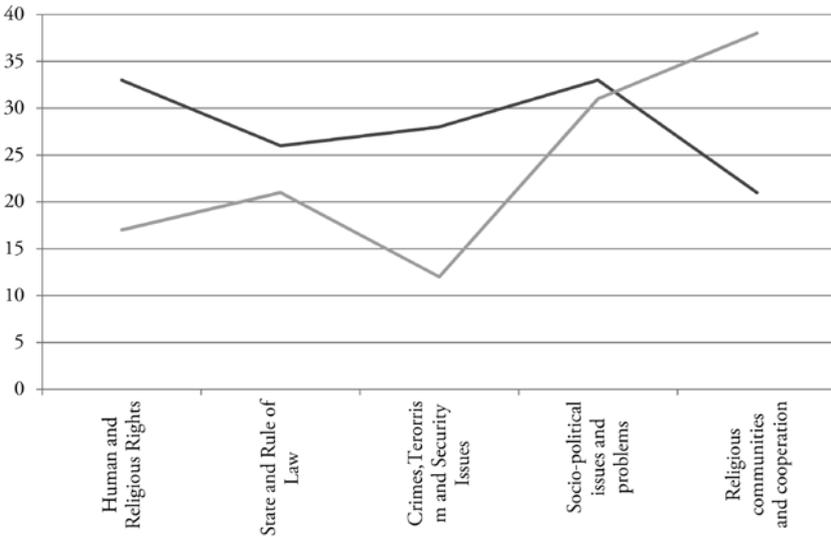
data clearly indicates that all four daily newspapers promote tolerance and understanding.

As shown in Table 3, most of the daily newspapers have negative views on terrorism, extremism and violence in general; however, some as the *Dnevni list* newspaper portray and contextualize certain religious groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina negatively in the context of radicalism and terrorism. Thus, it is obvious that media, especially based on its primary roles to inform and educate, needs to approach certain topics and issues carefully and elaborate more on them in order to further educate the masses. Furthermore, the entire media industry should return to ethical and moral standards of the journalist profession and go beyond daily sensationalism in the news.

Besides the content analysis of media portraying of religion and religious issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this paper analysed public statements of two religious leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely: Husejn ef. Kavazovic, Grand Mufti of Islamic Community and the Archbishop Vinko Puljic, Roman-Catholic Church. For the purpose of the study, 20 randomly selected public statements consisting of approximately 3,500 words for each one of them were selected. Based on the computer-assisted analysis for the word and category frequency most frequent words were analysed. They were classified as follows: Human and Religious Rights; State and Rule of Law; Crimes, Terrorisms and Security Issues; Socio-Political Issues and Problems; and Religious Communities and Cooperation.

Newspaper	Positive article tone	Negative article tone
<i>Dnevni avaz</i>	For a decade 27 terrorists were sentenced on 135 years of jail (06.02.2017) The most severe condemnation of terrorism (05.06.2017)	Bosnian Misconceptions and Ideals (24.06.2017) – On Bosnian Muslims and their politicians
<i>Dnevni list</i>	Franjo Topic: Catholic Church is for united and integral Bosnia and Herzegovina (09.02.2017) Mile Lasic: And Serb Republic is my country/land (10.01.2017) The coexistence example: Bishop Grigorije made iftar for Mostar Mufti (10.06.2017)	Holy father, you are surrounded with hypocrites in Vatican as well (27.02.2017) – Commentary of Pope Francis message that it is better to be atheist than hypocrite Bosnia is a state of PTSD, radicalism is our destiny and my letter to Kolinda was not sexist (09.01.2017) Saudi Arabia and Turkey are financing Salafes in BiH (08.4.2017) The Flags of ISIL in Croatian Village (27.5.2017)
<i>Nezavisne novine</i>	Children need practice, not religious education (04.04.2017) Let us rejoice to life and each other (15.4.2017) – on coexistence in Mostar Violent extremism problem of all in Bosnia (13.3.2017) Arnaudija mosque will complete the Banjaluka picture/postcard (23.4.2017)	BiH is the only one that haven't participated at meeting related to destruction of Islamic state (03.02.2017) "Jihadists get fake identities in BiH" (16.6.2017)
<i>Oslobodenje</i>	The killing of innocent people is crime and unforgivable sin (29.04.2017) – On Islam and terrorism Islam and terror don't go together (22.04.2017) Hagada- Symbol of unity and humanity	The religious communities and political leaders have common goal. (03.04.2017) – on relationships between church and secular state in BiH Extremism of Muslim brotherhood and Bosnia and Herzegovina (07.01.2017)

Table 3: Selected titles of article according to the tone of publishing.



Legend:

- Vinko Puljić, Archbishop, Roman-Catholic Church
- Husejn ef. Kavazović, Grand Mufti, Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Table 4: Content Analysis of the Religious leaders’ speeches

Table 4 clearly indicates that both religious leaders did not put much emphasis on the state, the rule of law, crime, terrorism and security issues, perhaps considering them matters of the state. However, both religious leaders similarly stressed the importance of human and religious rights and religious cooperation. Both religious leaders highlighted socio-political issues and problems since Bosnia and Herzegovina has to divert its attention from daily politics to better education, healthcare, state institutions services and overall better quality of life. This is especially the case because of a significant decline in birth rates and depopulation of the country as many young people, professionals and experts have decided to migrate to Europe.

## Conclusion

In today's world of globalization where the lines between East and West, between "us" and "them," and between the Christian and the Muslim are too often a source of conflict, warfare and terrorism, the need to engage in dialogue – with other religions, cultures, and peoples – is even more urgent than ever before to reach peaceful coexistence. Both Christianity and Islam have the resources to support inter-religious dialogue and notions of pluralism and tolerance that respond to the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although the Islamic Community has been very active in tackling extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the traditional local believers who adhere to the virtues of peaceful coexistence in the plural societies and Islam within the European context gave no space to new religious forms that are foreign to the social and cultural environment to take ground in their communities. Sometimes, even European intellectuals, diplomats and policy-makers express an autochthonic, traditional and centuries-old practices of Islamic religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina; therefore, such religion obviously has its place within Europe. The religion of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina is often as a part of cultural and civilization heritage within secular and liberal state.

In spite of past and present socio-political predicaments, Bosnia-Herzegovina as a microcosmic multicultural model represents an increasingly interconnected and diverse world. Bosnian multicultural paradigm defies the perspective of Huntington's clash of civilizations. Therefore, the multicultural paradigm is not only central to the rebuilding and transition of Bosnia-Herzegovina but of the world as a whole. Bosnia-Herzegovina throughout history has managed to incorporate ethnic, religious and cultural diversities and has projected a distinctive multicultural state identity. Certain instances of disputes and conflicts, as clearly elaborated in the paper, have often been sparked by outside influences. Such influences have been in particular politically and economically motivated by regional states such as Serbia and Croatia. Being a multicultural state, Bosnia-Herzegovina has always flourished as a part of a greater whole. Therefore, the future of this small country lies in joining the EU, a family of nations that uphold diversity. Uphol-

ding liberal values, cosmopolitan multiculturalism, the tradition and diverse socio-cultural values derived from Bosnia's past and would in turn uphold and strengthen the EU road towards achieving the goal of creating a family of nations.

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