CONNEKT

COUNTRY PAPER
ON MESO-LEVEL DRIVERS

Drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism
in the light of community dynamics in MENA and the Balkans

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Sarina Bakić, Sanela Bašić, Anida Dudić, Muamer Hirkić, Damir Kapidžić

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Drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism in the light of community dynamics in MENA and the Balkans.
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Two schools under one roof

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Introduction

The phenomenon of "two schools under one roof" implies two separate schools (pupils, teachers, and technical staff) which use the same teaching space. This is a product of post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina (further read as BiH) and it reflects one of the major political divisions in the country, namely the divide between Bosniaks and Croats in areas with ethnically mixed populations. The concept of "two schools under one roof" was established as a temporary solution[1] in order to encourage the return of displaced people, and according to some estimates, there are 56 schools today in BiH labelled as "two schools under one roof"[2]. Often times there are separate entrances and physical obstacles for the separation of pupils. Schools use different 'national' curricula (Bosniak and Croatian), a mechanism for institutionalisation od educational and social divisions. In that way young individuals and social groups (defined by ethnic and religious identities) support and 'feed' ethnonationalist political ideas. The consequence that follows is continued negative portrayal of 'the Other', rooted deeply in nationalist political correctness, that is, mainstream cultural background, as well as the lack of sensitivity and understanding for anyone who is seen as 'the Other'. The above-stated speaks to a fact that the education system in BIH is based on ethnocentrism, exclusivity from dominant ethnic identities and their educational politics, which is an obstacle for multicultural education and intercultural learning (Trkulja, 2017). The research concerning this community represents an important attempt to clarify the link between radicalisation processes and the fragmented educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nonetheless, Work Package 5 of the CONNEKT project seeks to combine seven potential drivers of radicalisation (religion, economic deprivation, territorial inequalities, social digitalisation, political issues, educational, leisure and cultural opportunities, and transnational dynamics) with different sub-national community-level contexts – which provides an important basis and framework for the study of the "two schools under one roof" phenomenon. In that sense, this case study tests seven drivers and provides observational explanations for radicalisation processes and relevant drivers among the youth in school setting, while paying particular attention to the driver of political issues/ideas.

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[1] The concept "two schools under one roof" was born in the context of devastated education system of 1999 following the years after war destruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995).

[2] More information available on: https://ndcmostar.org/bs/dijalog-o-obrazovnim-politikama/, accessed on 01.02.2022

Research Methodology

RECAP OF RESULTS FROM MACRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS

The macro-level analysis on structural and institutional approaches towards drivers of radicalisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kapidžić et al., 2021) found different understandings of radicalisation among institutional actors. However, several factors were highlighted as relevant drivers of radicalisation, amongst other political ideas and ethno-political polarisation. They way that political divisions are institutionalised through governing institutions allows radical ideas to emerge and gain prominence. This includes radical narratives of exclusion, segregation and discrimination that can be identified in the education sector, and institutionalised through the "two schools under one roof".

MESO-LEVEL ANALYSIS ADDED VALUE

The added value of the meso analysis in this case study is to explore relevant drivers of radicalisation in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina's divided education system. Previous research (Kapidžić et al., 2021) has shown that drivers related to politics, such as ethnic nationalism, are very relevant in BiH and that they are prominently expressed in educational policies. In BiH there are numerous discriminatory practices in the educational system which are detrimental for young people, however the phenomenon of "two schools under one roof" stands as the most visible example of educational politics which are only further deepening the divisions. Thus, the education system is deploying segregation of children on the national basis (in the Republika Srpska teaching is conducted in Serbian language, while in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina there are independent national schools or classes with different national programs – Bosnian and Croatian).

Numerous reports indicate that the practice of "two schools under one roof" is a violation of international conventions as well as domestic laws. In these specific schools where children are being segregated based on their ethnicity, education system is instigating segregation and discrimination on which it rests. Ultimately, children are attending the school in which their constituent people hold dominance, where school environment, including teaching plan and program, are in favor of only one ethnic group. Such educational climate is not only clashing with all educational principles, but furthermore it becomes a training ground in which the world is built on binaries of 'us' versus 'them'. Considering that in these specific schools the political context of ethnic divisions is pronounced, it is significant to provide an estimate of possible drivers of radicalisation in young people.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives tied to this case study are to analyse the polarised and divisive conditions under which young people socialise, and to investigate the role of political ideas as a driver of radicalisation. As political ideas are integrated into the institutional structures of the schools, their built environment, and the separate curriculums, their role is to divide young people and restrict cross-socialisation. We aim to investigate to which extent this impacts youth dynamics and relations among separate groups of youth towards each other. Additionally, we emphasise the role of schools as communities where

youth build bonds with each other and learn to trust strangers belonging to their broader community. The conflicting aims of educational socialisation are further investigated.

DEFINITION OF MESO-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS AND IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL ONES

The research was conducted in two high schools labelled as "two schools under one roof" in Central Bosnia Canton. The reason behind conducting research particularly in this canton is that during the war period, this was an area of intensive fights which resulted in significant displacement of Bosniak and Croatian ethnic groups. After the war, this area remained polarised, which hindered social progress. Apart from social and economic deprivation in this area, "educational circumstances which are employed for the shaping and strengthening social divisions, intolerance and inequality" present a serious obstacle (UNICEF, ICTJ, 2015). The fact that discrimination and segregation in education are still deeply ingrained is demonstrated by OSCE data (2018) noting that in Central Bosnia Canton there are 18 cases of "two schools under one roof" which encompass 36 schools (20 central and 16 district schools). Moreover, apart from the existing segregated schools, in the past few years there were attempts of opening additional two new "two schools under one roof". Under the public pressure, protests of young people and resentment of international community, this attempt was eventually restrained.[3] Although it was decided by judicial proceedings that the manner in which "two schools under one roof" are being organised presents a violation of the prohibition on discrimination, the greatest number of segregated schools in BiH[4] territorially still belongs to this canton. Due to the abovementioned, we decided to conduct the research in two high schools in Central Bosnia Canton, which are labelled as "two schools under one roof". The schools in which the research was conducted were divided in a way that lessons in one school are being taught in Bosnian language, and in other in Croatian. The schools share common entrances, common premises (school yard and sport halls), as well as meeting halls. Pupils do not have common teachers nor common activities unless those are initiated by non-governmental organisations or similar actors.

SAMPLING CRITERIA AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Participants in the research were pupils of two high schools labelled as "two schools under one roof" on the area of Central Bosnia Canton. Prior to conducting research, a request of approval for data collection activities was sent to the cantonal Ministry of Education. Upon obtaining the approval, contacts were made with school principals, and agreements were made on how the research should be conducted. The research relied on qualitative methods including focus groups/ group discussions and in-depth interviews. The implementation of research activities consisted of two phases: (1) the first phase of research included two focus groups which amounted to five second and third graders of the school in which the lessons are conducted in Croatian and Bosnian languages. (2) The second phase

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[3] More on: https://balkaninsight.com/2017/06/20/bih-protest-u%C4%8Denika-protiv-etni%C4%8Dke-segregacije-u-%C5%A1kolama-06-20-2017/?lang=sr and https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/bhs/zone/Bosna-i-Hercegovina/Slucaj-dvije-skole-pod-jednim-krovom-u-Jajcu-180584, accessed on 01.02.2022

[4] Apart from Central Bosnia Canton, "two schools under one roof" are also located in Zenica-Doboj Canton, where there are two cases of "two schools under one roof" that include four schools on two locations. In Hercegovina-Neretva Canton there are eight instances of "two schools under one roof", with 16 schools on eight locations. More available in: OSCE (2018). Two schools under one roof *The most visible example of discrimination in the area of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina".*

of the research implied in-depth interviews with second and third graders of "two schools under one roof" (three interviews with pupils who are being taught in the Bosnian language and two pupils who are being taught in the Croatian language). The selection of pupils for focus groups and interviews was carried out by school principals and expert bodies. The research team identified criteria of age, balanced gender ratio, and diversity school grades in order to ensure a representative sample and communicated this to school authorities. All selection criteria were taken into account.. Focus groups and interviews were conducted by the members of the research team (professors at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo), with the consent of pupils (without disturbing the teaching process). Furthermore, the parents were informed about the research conducted. Focus groups and interviews were conducted according to the highest academic research standards, ethical principles of research which follow the guidelines of the European Union, with previously obtained consent from the Ethical Board for Research of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo. All data collected through focus groups and interviews was classified as confidential and as such is not available to third parties. Prior to the research itself, participants were informed that the obtained data will be used exclusively for research purposes without disclosing the identities of the participants. The participation in research was voluntary, and the respondents were able to withdraw from participation at any time without stating a reason.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

In the research, conducted through focus groups and five individual in-depth interviews, 15 respondents participated. The criteria for participation was the following: 1) participants need to be over 15 years, and 2) participants had varying school performance. In the school where classes are being taught in the Bosnian language, five participants were in a focus group (three male and two female respondents). Two respondents were 16 years old, two respondents were 17 years old and one respondent was 18 years old. Following the focus group, three respondents were selected (two male and one female) for in-depth interviews in order to better analyse the conditions in which young people socialise and develop resilience to adverse social phenomena. In the school where classes are being taught in the Croatian language, 5 participants were in a focus group (four male and one female). The age profiles of the participants were as follows: one respondent was 16 years old, three respondents were 17 years old and one respondent was 18 years old. After the focus group, two individual interviews were conducted with female respondents aged 16.[5]

CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATIONS

The selection of the participants in the research (focus groups and in-depth interview) was done by the principals of "two schools under one roof" with the consent of pupils and informed approval of parents. The school counsellor provided a more in-depth explanation of the goals and aims of the research to the school pupils. The date of the research was agreed in accordance with the school duties of the pupils, and the research was conducted by the members of CONNEKT team. Prior to conducting the

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[5] The interview participants were not a part of the focus group.

research, the participants were asked to provide consent for the audio recording of the conversation, indicating that the materials will be used only for scientific purposes. All of the abovementioned affected the high level of trust between participants and researchers, which resulted in quality feedback and knowledge exchange regarding the conditions in which young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina socialise and develop resilience to adverse social phenomena.

Meso Level Dynamics

DESCRIPTION

Educational, Leisure and Cultural opportunities

Certain actors of the political socialisation have more significant role for individuals than the others, however for young people family remains the most important actor of socialisation. Family, family relationships, distance/closeness of family members are significant factors influencing the attitudes and behaviors of young people. Authors (such as White, 2002, Crettiez, 2016 as cited in Torrekens and de le Vingne, 2020) say that the family can be a major actor in encouraging an individual to violent behaviors, and discontinuity and/or interruption of family socialisation can have a positive effect on violent behavior and can further lead to radicalisation. Our research has shown that the orientation of young people towards family in Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely high and family is an important part of identity.[6] Therefore, if family in some way nurtures adversity to other ethnic groups, this can lead to limited communication of young people and avoidance of meeting with members of other ethnic groups (Tzvetkova and Mancheva, 2019). This is corroborated by the statement of the student who attends classes in Bosnian language[7] that due to the great resistance and resentment of parents they do not participate in activities involving members of other (Croatian) nationality. This remains a serious obstacle in creating intercultural experiences among young people.

Apart from family, an important agent of socialisation for young people is also school. The majority of young people aside from school activities are also involved in some type of extracurricular activities which are of great importance for building collective identity. Although the participation in these groups encourages young people to be actively involved in improving the quality of life of students, but also society as a whole, they join only those groups whose members are of their ethnic group. In "two schools under one roof" there are no joint teaching or extracurricular activities that can be attended by students at both schools. Despite the fact that they share an outdoor space in the school, that is intended for students at both schools (so-called "between the space"), they do not establish mutual contact.

In an in-depth interview, a student who attends classes in the Bosnian language[8] stated that as part of the project activities, they invited students who attend classes in the Croatian language to socialise, but ultimately there was no cooperation from the other end. The research has shown that participants in the research are well integrated into society and feel socially included. However, education that rests on ethnocentrism affects all social spheres of young people: the groups they join and the activities they engage in are entrenched on deep ethnic divisions, which reduces the likelihood of meeting peers

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[6] Focus group 1, conducted in school where classes are taught in Bosnian language, 02.12.2021
Focus group 2, conducted in school where classes are taught in Croatian language, 03.12.2021

[7] Interview 3, conducted in school where classes are taught in Bosnian language, 02.12.2021

[8] Interview 1, conducted in school where classes are taught in Bosnian language, 02.12.2021

from another ethnic group. The above stated indicates that despite the fact that young people have a wide range of educational and cultural opportunities, the insistence on ethnic divisions is an obstacle to multicultural education and creates an artificial world of 'us' versus 'them'. This data is correlated with the results of previous research (such as Turjačanin et al., 2002; Puhalo, 2003; Turjačanin, 2004; Opačić et al., 2005; Puhalo, 2007; UNDP, 2007 and 2008, Puhalo, 2009; Šalaj, 2009, as cited in Puhalo, 2013) which state that there is an ethnic distance in Bosnia and Herzegovina: young people under the influence of social, political and cultural milieu 'construct' their social reality in which the values of only one ethnic group dominate. In such an environment, stereotypes and prejudices towards members of other ethnic groups are created, accompanied by (negative) attitudes, emotions and behavior.

Territorial inequality

In already existing literature, opinions are divided regarding whether mono-ethnic, or rather multi-ethnic environments are more prone to radicalisation. When questioning factors leading to radicalisation among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Oruč and Obradović (2020) have not found any statistically significant connection among the degree of radicalisation and the place of living – rural or urban. Also, in our research no data was found that would indicate that the driver of 'territorial inequality' plays an important role in the process of radicalisation of young people. Moreover, the data in Country paper on macro-level drivers[9] have shown that the driver of 'territorial inequality' in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not related to the rural-urban distinction, but rather with individual perceptions of marginalisation and injustice (Kapidžić et al., 2021). Perry (2016) states that young people in BiH, although they have no previous war experience, express dissatisfaction with the slow pace of change in society, where marginalisation, neglect and injustice are common. This is not even particularly due to actual deprivation, but rather subjective perception. In favor of this is the fact that students of "two schools under one roof"[10] subjectively believe that they daily experience some kind of injustice (in the family, school, and local community) and express concern about it. In the in-depth interview, a participant attending school in Croatian language[11] shared the experience that the school sports club of which she is a member did not receive financial support from a municipality dominated by members of the Croatian ethnic group because their coach does not live in the area. Thus, speaking of territorial inequalities, it is more appropriate here to speak of "inequalities that arise as a result of deep ethnic divisions" which create a subjective sense of injustice.

Economic deprivation

High unemployment rates, growing poverty, inadequate health and social protection, unequal opportunities in education are just some of the causes of high economic deprivation in the country. During the sessions, respondents in both focus groups showed a high level of awareness of the factors that contribute to the low quality of life in BiH. Speaking about economic deprivation, the participants detected the causes, which are primarily related to unemployment rates, irregularities in employment and corruption in society. In addition to economic deprivation, participants in focus groups and in-

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[9] More available at https://h2020connekt.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Bosnia_Herzegovina_CONNEKT_Macro_Drivers.pdf, accessed on 08.02.2022

[10] Focus group 1, conducted in school where classes are taught in Croatian language, 03.12.2021

[11] Interview 4, conducted in school where classes are taught in Croatian language, 03.12.2021

depth interviews spoke more about social deprivation, which results from non-recognition of basic civil rights. Numerous irregularities and denials of civil rights for students of "two schools under one roof" generate injustice that leads to disenfranchisement of individuals. Thus, one participant in the in-depth interview[12] stated that he was denied the necessary medical assistance only because one of his parents was a member of a certain political party. Due to these circumstances, he feels discriminated against and considers whether the political action of his parents in the future will be an obstacle to the full realisation of civil rights and needs. From the above example, we see a multi-layered link between factors that encourage economic and social deprivation, which causes a subjective sense of injustice, and can ultimately lead to discrimination, social exclusion, and marginalisation.

Social digitalisation

Online space is often cited as important in the process of radicalisation (Becirević et al., 2017). The DARE study (Dialogue on Radicalisation and Equality), which examined the role of the Internet and social media in self-radicalisation processes, states that young people can be victims of propaganda messages of radical organisations via participating in social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, YouTube, etc.) intend to build support outside the walls of their followers (Pathon et al., 2020). Given that the media influences and shapes attitudes and behaviors, previous research (such as Hasic et al., 2017) on this issue suggests that young people are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation in the age of accessible social media. Our interlocutors revealed that they are aware of the negative effects of the Internet on children and young people, and state that they often come across violent content (texts, games, photos, etc.) on social networks. Such content encourages anxiety and resentment among participants. Most of them claim that they do not understand the attractiveness of this online content and believe that they are sufficiently aware of the risks of potential involvement, so they often report violent content in order to remove it from social networks.

Religion

Although the analysis of the results obtained in all focus group sessions shows a prevailing lack of understanding of what extremism is, participants stated that the most common association is including individuals who are extreme in Islam.[13] When analyzing the reasons why research participants most often associate 'Islam' with 'extremism', most of them explain that they often come across 'Islamic extremists' in the media, where they are presented as people who harm others in the name of religion.[14] This data is not surprising, because some media sources employ the term 'Islamic extremism', rather clumsily, stereotypically or even deliberately describing extremist and theoretical events, and thus spreading misinformation by presenting 'Islam' – religion and 'Islamism' - political ideology as synonyms.

Although Islamism and Islam exist as two separate categories and are by no means synonymous (Dukic, 2020), in BIH media certain article headings such as following can be read: "*French TV reporters visit*

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[12] Interview 2, conducted in school where classes are taught in Bosnian language, 02.12.2021

[13] Focus group 1, conducted in school where lessons are taught in Bosnian language, 02.12.2021

[14] Interview 2, conducted in school where lessons are taught in Bosnian language, 02.12.2021

BiH, warn of radical Islam in central Europe"[15], "*Is Islam a religion of violence and are Muslims terrorists?*"[16] etc. Kapidžić et al. (2020:105) state that some media in Bosnia and Herzegovina are „strongly focused on violence and sensationalism and that their reporting destabilises relations and undermines divisions. Thus, their findings are not in the service of informing the public, but rather in the service of political elites, encouraging ethno-national polarisation. Thus, following the ethnic line, they focus on the radicalisation of other ethnic communities". In the fight against growing Islamophobia, numerous social media campaigns have emerged (such as the Twitter campaign "This is not Islam"[17]) to draw public attention to the fact that terrorism has no religion, and that the ideology of terrorists is pure hatred.

Analyzing whether every form of extremism leads to violence, research participants believe that extreme behavior does not necessarily lead to a form of violent behavior[18], but that harm to others can be done without violence. Respondents have very little or no first-hand experience with anyone who has been involved in initiatives aimed at promoting extreme ideologies. Examining whether religion can be a driver of violence, students from „two schools under one roof" believe that no religion encourages evil. However, in the last few years, through various negative events, they have realised that some individuals are committing violence in the name of religion.[19]

Political issues

Almost all participants are fully aware of the politicised social relations in the local environment and the disproportionate power relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in general affect both internal and intergroup attitudes and behaviors. Focus group participants are aware of a divided local political environment that employs negative rhetoric, an overemphasised narrative of division, and other means of social manipulation to fulfill political interests. The respondent in the focus group[20] had stated that some students are favored by teachers because of the political party to which their parents belong. We have previously stated that one student felt that his health services were denied due to the political activities of one parent. This states that in addition to ethnic divisions, there are deep divisions in the country according to political - interest spheres.

One of the most politicised issues is the issue of ethnic and (or) national affiliation. Earlier research (such as Cekrlija, 2006; Puhalo 2006) shows that ethnic identity is one of the primary identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the other hand, the data has shown that nationalism in the country is very pronounced among the largest number of citizens (Puhalo, 2013). Our research shows divided opinions of young people about the significance of ethnicity and ethnicity: students who attend classes in the Bosnian language feel a sense of belonging to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the focus group,

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[15] More available at: https://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/reporteri-francuske-tv-kuce-posjetili-su-bih-upozoravaju-na-radikalni-islam-u-sredistu-europe/, accessed on 07.02.2022

[16] More available at: https://www.pozivistine.com/da-li-je-islam-vjera-nasilja-i-da-li-su-muslimani-teroristi/, accessed on 07.02.2022

[17] More information available: https://www.klix.ba/lifestyle/kampanja-na-twitteru-ne-u-moje-ime-musliman-nikada-ne-moze-biti-terorista/151116007, accessed on 07.02.2022

[18] Focus group 2, conducted in school where lessons are taught in Croatian language, 03.12.2021

[19] Focus group 2, conducted in school where lessons are taught in Croatian language, 03.12.2021

[20] Focus group 1, conducted in school where lessons are taught in Croatian language, 03.12.2021

they stated that they respect ethnicity, but that belonging to the state is more important to them. They believe that the division into 'us' and 'them', and 'ours' and 'theirs' is an obstacle to unity and creation of a better state of equal opportunities. On the other hand, students attending classes in the Croatian language do not feel much of belonging to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and ethnicity is more important to them. They believe that the state has not given them enough support and that it is more important for them that the people to whom they belong accept and respect them.

Transnational dynamics

Students attending classes in the Bosnian language have no connection to schools and organisations in neighboring countries. Analyzing the causes of poor cooperation with schools from neighboring countries, the participants who attends classes in Bosnian are of the opinion that cooperation with Croatia or Serbia would cause unrest, especially as of lately with speculations about war being increasingly mentioned in the media.[21] On the other hand, for students attending the Croatian language curriculum, cooperation with schools and organisations in neighboring countries is of great importance. They believe that it is necessary to invest more effort in keeping up good relations with neighbors, especially with Croatia, which has a great influence on their socialisation. They also see the connection with Croatia in the commitment to attend classes exclusively in Croatian language.[22]

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN DRIVERS AND INTERACTIONS AMONG DRIVERS AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Given that previous research (such as Oruc and Obradovic, 2020) have shown that a number of factors in Bosnia and Herzegovina encourage radicalisation – including demographic, social, political, social, and economic reasons, leading to feelings of injustice, discrimination, social exclusion and marginalisation, no factor can be separated and simplified:
  - In the conducted research, the drivers of *"Territorial inequality"*, *"Economic deprivation"* and *"Social digitalisation"* did not prove to be significant.

For young people in BIH society, "individual perception of marginalisation, injustice and disenfranchisement" is a more important variable than "territorial inequality" and "economic deprivation" when it comes to radicalisation processes. Also, in the research, the driver of "social digitalisation" did not prove to be significant. Respondents are aware of the negative (violent) narratives present on the Internet but are not captivated by them and believe that they can resist such content. Findings Becirevic et al. (2017) show that the driver of "digitalisation" is insufficiently tested in the Bosnian context, which suggests that more extensive research is needed on the impact of social media in the process of radicalisation.
  - The drivers of *"Educational, Leisure and Cultural Opportunities"*, *"Religion"* and *"Transnational Dynamics"* proved to be significant in this research. The driver *"Political Issues"* proved to be very significant and cross cutting across all other identified drivers.

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[21] Interview 1, conducted in school where lessons are taught in Bosnian language, 02.12.2021

[22] Focus group **2**, conducted in school where lessons are taught in Croatian language, 03.12.2021

Deep ethnic divisions are fostered within the family *milieu*, and are further transmitted through education, cultural and leisure activities. The entire social life of young people is subordinated and entrenched in ethnic divisions. Positive steps in creating common content for students attending classes in Bosnian and students attending classes in Croatian are often stifled, and the integration of "two schools under one roof" is seen as an impossible solution. Deep ethnic divisions are further facilitated by the media, which often misuse the issue of religion through inadequate reporting in order to legitimise distorted opinions and worldviews (this is especially true of creating false narratives about Islam as the dominant factor of radicalisation).

The most influential drivers are political issues. The importance of ethnic and (or) national affiliation remains a political issue, which best reflects the deep divisions in BiH: while students who attend classes in Bosnian feel a high degree of state affiliation, students who attend classes in Croatian language prefer ethnicity. Our research has supported the results of previous research in Bosnia and Herzegovina (e.g. Hasić et al., 2017) which shows that in the absence of adequate institutional and social responses to the challenges facing BiH society, political manipulations often fill the gaps, leaving room for deviant political ideologies and their agents to shape the thoughts and actions of vulnerable individuals (especially young people).

SOCIAL CONTEXTS AND THE RELATION OF MACRO LEVEL DRIVERS TO THE RESULTS OF THE MESO LEVEL ANALYSIS

The drivers identified in macro-level research are very well replicated at the meso-level. Some that are considered as less relevant or "background" at the macro-level are not seen as important by youth, due to lack of exposure (*territorial inequality, economic deprivation*) or good practices (*social digitalisation*). The social context that defines the macro level is well translated to the community level in this regard. The more relevant macro-level drivers (*educational, leisure and cultural opportunities, religion, transnational dynamics)* are all replicated at the meso-level to a certain extent. We can see that religion is seen as a potential driver, but this is mostly due to meta-narratives established through media and public discourse. The most relevant driver at both levels is political issues that also crosscuts all the other six drivers in some way. Divisions built on politicised nationalism within the community are ingrained in all aspects of life and serve as the basis for establishing the divided community of "two schools under one roof". The in-group vs. out-group narratives that are key to radicalisation have political issues of divisive nationalism at their core.

Analysis Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF MESO-LEVEL DRIVERS

Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina mostly spend their free time with families and this is also where they make the most important decisions (Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2019). Due to its extreme importance, the family (primarily parents) directly and indirectly influences the formation of (ethnic) identity in children and youth and transmits values that are characteristic only for a certain ethnic group. The importance of emphasizing ethnic divisions continues through education, therefore schools become training ground in which the struggle for building and preserving one's own (ethnic) identity takes place. Thus, young people direct their free time and activities only to those groups whose members belong to their own ethnic group. Additionally, young people see any denial of civil right or inability to meet needs as a hotbed for ethnic divisions, leading to subjective feelings of injustice, dissatisfaction, and disenfranchisement. Encouraged and brought up in a world where ethnicity rises above other important issues, students attending classes taught in Bosnian, consider cooperation with students and organisations from neighboring countries as superfluous, even seeing it as a threat to the sustainability of the state. On the other hand, students attending classes in Croatian are more focused on peers and organisations in neighboring Croatia than on peers of (Bosniak) ethnicity in their city. The feeling of belonging additionally 'feeds' the determination to attend classes exclusively in Croatian. For students who attend classes in Croatian language, ethnicity and loyalty to the people are more important than ethnicity. In contrast, students who attend school in Bosnian language prefer nationality, and to them the idea of the state is stronger than ethnicity.

The analysis of the obtained data indicates that behind the scenes, "two schools under one roof" present political issues and the inability to reach an agreement between political actors and find changes that would lead to a joint approach to teaching (respecting members of other ethnic groups). Ethnic affiliation is often used for political purposes, and previous research (such as Puhalo, 2013) has shown that any attempt to integrate "two schools under one roof" is interpreted as a threat to ethnic and national identities.

PREVENTION INDICATORS RESULTING FROM THE MESO ANALYSIS

Education that encourages exclusive worldviews, insisting and resting on artificial divisions can become fertile ground in the development of extreme behaviors. In this way, instead of being a strong protective factor in the fight against violent extremism, the school contributes to its spread. Therefore, it is necessary to make systematic efforts to provide quality education that will prevent various ideologies and acts of violent extremism from coming to life. More specifically, education policies can prevent schools from becoming a testing ground for the development of violent extremism so that approaches to teaching are oriented towards developing pupils' resistance to violent extremism. Curricula should be enriched with content that will: develop critical thinking, encourage interpersonal skills necessary to meet others and strengthen social competencies that are key to active participation in a democratic society. The most important step in the prevention of violent extremism in schools is reflected in the eradication of discrimination, segregation, and politicisation of education, given that these elements

contribute to the violent radicalisation of young people. In these efforts, the key is in cooperation of all actors in the education system (teachers, professional associates – school counselors, psychologists, social workers, principals, parents' councils, student councils…) as well as cooperation with important institutions and organisations in the local community (international organisations, youth associations, etc.).

MICRO-PATHS REPORTED FROM MESO ANALYSIS

Going forward to the micro level analysis and focusing on individuals, it is key to emphasise the intersectionality of the political issues driver. Radicalisation based on politics and political polarisation is nothing new neither particular to Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the way that it intersects and shapes several other drivers needs to be explored. Most importantly, it is relevant to identify what role political issues and nationalism have in emphasizing, strengthening, and shaping other drivers, if any. Also, it would be relevant to explore how relevant political issues and nationalism are on their own, apart from links to other drivers.

General Conclusion

Although the educational model of "two schools under one roof" has been established as a temporary solution and has no basis in the laws and other legal acts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it has existed on several territories for more than two decades. The phenomenon of "two schools under one roof", based on deep ethnic divisions, is the most striking example of ubiquitous segregation, discrimination, and inequality in education. The education model in "two schools under one roof" reflects the cultural specifics of only one ethnicity, does not provide knowledge about Others and does not treat cultural differences as values. Although court rulings in several examples of "two schools under one roof" have confirmed that this model of education is discriminatory, court decisions are not enforced and sanctions for non-implementation are not imposed. Solutions for integration and inclusion are lacking because the phenomenon of "two schools under one roof" in Bosnia and Herzegovina is an extremely politicised issue. The results of the research once again have shown that education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in favor of the divisive ideology, based on the policy of cultural difference pursued by the ruling ethno-national groups. Thus, it can be said that "two schools under one roof" present a symptom of ethno-national divisions (which were rooted during the war and were maintained to this day). Although the international community (led by the OSCE) has proposed several models for solving the problem of "two schools under one roof", this issue, under the influence of political problems, remains unresolved. As a result, we have young people who create their identity, social life, education, and worldview on the belief that differences between people are irreconcilable, and divisions (not only in education but in all spheres of society) are justified. The political ideas behind this institutionalised for of division can clearly be identified as drivers of potential radicalisation among youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Annex I

The questionnaire

1. Do you spend time with your family?
   - Do you have any joint activities?
   - Do you talk with family members about topics that are important and interesting to you?
   - Do you feel that your parents understand you and that they respect your views and opinions?
   - Do you discuss important topics with your teachers, class teacher, pedagogue, or other employees at school?
   - Do you share the problems you have with your class teacher or other teachers?
   - Do you trust them?
   - Do you think that teachers understand your problems?

2. Where do you spend your free time?
   - Do you visit a youth center, a cinema, a theatre, or any space intended for young people?
   - Do you have a place to do sports or other activities?
   - How often do you visit such places (never, once a week, once a month)?
   - Do these contents and activities suit you?
   - Do you have clubs at school that you are a member of?
   - How many hours a week do you spend in these clubs?
   - Are there joint activities for students of both schools?
   - Do you find activities offered by your school suitable for yourself?
   -

3. Does the community where you live experience injustice?
   - What kind of injustice?
   - Are you personally concerned about this injustice and how does this affect you?
   - Are you outraged by this injustice?
   -

4. In your opinion, can violence be an answer or a solution for the injustice that a person experiences in his/her environment?

5. Have you or any of your friends ever experienced violence?
   - E.g. Has anyone beaten, hit, pushed, insulted, or made fun of you?
   - Did you report this violence to someone? If not, why not?
   - Was the reaction of those to whom you reported the violence adequate and satisfactory?
   -

6. When using Facebook, YouTube, games, or any other online platform, do you come across videos, images or text that contain violence?
   - What do you think about such contents?
   - How do you react when you see such content?

7. In your opinion, what is "extremism"?
- Do you know, or have you heard of people you would describe as extremists?

8. Can you describe the relationship between violence and extremism?
- Does all extremism lead to violence?

9. Do you feel belonging to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to what extent? Do you feel like you belong to an ethnic group? Which affiliation is more important to you?

10. Are you a member of the Student Council, youth association, clubs, or other communities?
- Which ones?
- Are you proud of your belonging to such communities?
- How would you describe the characteristics of this community?

11. Can religion be the driver of violence? Can religion be a factor in individuals' resilience to the attraction of violence? Explain how in both cases.

12. What role do the neighboring countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina have in your life?
- Does your school cooperate with schools or organisations from other countries? Which one? What does that cooperation mean?
- As a result, do you feel a stronger sense of belonging to your country, ethnic group, religion, or school?
- Does such cooperation affect your attitudes towards other groups?
- Do stronger ties with neighboring countries contribute to some radical attitudes and behavior, or do they mitigate them

Organised groups of football fans

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Introduction

Football fans in Bosnia and Herzegovina are regularly responsible for urban violence, driven by a combination of fan-based subculture and political ideology. Almost all football clubs have a clear ethnic affiliation with ties to a particular nationalist ideology. This includes a culture of hostility especially towards clubs of the ethnic "other". Political ideas (ideologies) are closely linked to the subcultures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially fans' groups. In the cultural context, these subcultures represent a set of norms, system of values, and behavioral patterns that are different from the cultural patterns of wider community. Fans' groups express resistance towards the dominant cultures, also of their own ethnic group, and highlight radical political ideologies. The groups are self-organised, have common views and values, an original or authentic name, a historical presence and institutional/group memory, specific roles, and behavioral patterns. The research aim focuses on fans' groups that, in many cases, openly advocate nationalism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and homophobia, and who carry out violent attacks on various "others". Groups of this subculture are already visible through staged violence in the streets and during football matches, accentuated by particularistic radical nationalistic ideologies, political folklore, and promotion of animosities and hatred towards "others" and out-groups. We believe this community will provide us insights into the potential radicalisation of an entire cultural segment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, mostly including young men, that reflects some of the most dangerous and vicious political ideas that intertwine with cultural factors to shape this influential and important subculture segment. Bearing in mind that football fans come from specific local cultural backgrounds, it is more than obvious that cultural and lifestyle factors would be the main drivers for this specific community. Furthermore, these subcultural groups are often driven by political ideas, not only strongly influenced by them, but also very often manipulated by various political power centers. Therefore, this approach and selection were adequately based on the CONNEKT project's Working Package 5, which observes seven factors of radicalisation (religion, economic deprivation, territorial inequalities, social digitalisation, political issues, educational, leisure and cultural opportunities, and transnational dynamics) on the meso (community) level. This group represents a connection with the previously analyzed macro/institutional level, where a significant number of respondents indicated the importance of researching football fans' networks. The group exemplifies publicly visible displays of language, symbols and actions directly related to several drivers of radicalisation. Also, the group will be important for the next phase of the project (micro level), as well as for possible recommendations/interventions in the community.

Research Methodology

Subcultures can be important for various studies because subculture groups often develop their own communication styles and social norms. Certain behavioural patterns or values may be mistakenly pathologised by people or groups outside of that subculture. Also, certain subcultures may face discrimination from the majority groups within society (Bauman, 2001). But basically, social groups manage their status problems by creating a new subculture and establishing new norms that do not conform to the dominant culture's norms. These new norms encompass ideological meanings and have symbolic forms of resistance and struggle towards the system and mainstream culture.

The main reasons we have decided to choose football fans communities is that this subculture consists mostly of young people brought together through their shared ties to a football team and general knowledge and adoration for the sport. The intense feelings for a football club can lead to extreme behaviour when fans encounter one another. Football fans in Bosnia and Herzegovina also clearly present their feelings of rivalry and hatred in terms of nationalist symbols and a nationalist identity. Additionally, this includes various forms of socially inappropriate behavioural patterns related to their social rebellion as a result of their social and economic position within society.

An added value of this Analysis is that it brings findings that reflect a very heated social and political atmosphere in Bosnia and Herzegovina within which we have managed to organised focus groups and interviews with football supporters. National and political divisions within the entire society presented challenges but did not prevent our team from meeting with two different groups of football supporters from various parts of the Bosnia and Herzegovina. These two groups come from totally different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This was a serious challenge to obtaining comprehensive and valuable answers from these specific cultural groups. Within a precisely defined social context, this subculture is a perfect fit for our research regarding the comprehension of extremisms, violence, and various forms of injustice among a community defined by their choice of leisure and lifestyle.

The main research objectives were to analyse potential radicalisation factors among youth: religion, digitalisation, economic deprivation, territorial inequalities, transnational dynamics, socio-political demands, and educational, cultural and leisure opportunities.

In order to select participants for focus groups and interviews, we first identified a shortlist of four football clubs with a clear and strong identity and history of publicly visible displays of violence. Football clubs were selected to reflect geographical and community differences, according to the social context and accentuated drivers suitable for the research. The two clubs that were selected as most relevant for the research are located in the north and south of the country, Banja Luka and Mostar, covering both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both have very active and visible football clubs' supporters' groups that we reached out to with requests for interviews, and both agreed without any preconditions. The main criteria for the selection of focus group and interview participants were active and substantial membership in the football clubs' supporters' groups, as well as their age (following the methodological framework that requires 15 to 30 year old participants). While we emphasised gender balance of

participants in our communication with the supporters' groups, our request was not fulfilled. The youngest participants were 19 years old and the oldest 31. All participants in the focus groups and interviews were male, living in Mostar and Banja Luka. All of them are employed and only one participant is in secondary school. For focus group 1 in Banja Luka, we had 4 participants, as well as 3additional participants for the interviews. For the focus group 2 in Mostar, there were 5 participants, and an additional interview was conducted with 2 of them. In both groups, participants included the leadership of the football fans groups, with the main leader present in Mostar and the deputy of the group's leader present in Banja Luka. As previously noted, all other participants were supporters of their football teams, actively involved in the actions of the football clubs' supporters' groups.

According to the project methodology, the BiH field research team requested quiet spaces for adequate completion of the research. Both interviews and focus groups were conducted during one working day in each location. Using a previously prepared questionnaire, the research team was in constant contact with representatives of the supporters' groups in order to organise everything on time and to make sure that all participants would be present during the scheduled interviews. The general questionnaire was structured and adapted to this community, in order to adequately "extract" the essence of the views and attitudes of the group, while considering the daily practices and thematic frameworks in which this group functions. For instance, questions referring to the places of socialisation, free time, as well as the use of social networks were specifically tailored for this community. The main challenge of these research activities was the issue of mutual confidence and trust, especially towards us as researchers, mostly regarding the anonymity of football supporters and handling of potentially sensitive information. Also, our challenge was to overcome a certain 'uneasy atmosphere' related to the already mentioned heightened political and social tensions in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina's society. In conclusion, we have managed to achieve a high level of trust and positive responses from all participants in both groups. This confidence was achieved due to an affirmative approach towards them, without any prejudices towards their subculture. Other challenges were faced during the start of the research activities when establishing contact for the first time, as well as in relation to timing and COVID restrictions. We were concerned about the way the representatives of football clubs' supporters' groups would understand the project's goals, the title of the CONNEKT project, our research aims, and personal intentions. It was crucial to distance ourselves from any media outlet and investigative reporting, emphasizing the scientific nature of our research outputs. Since these communities are very closed and do not appreciate 'intruders', especially from another city and institution, this is a concern we had to constantly keep in mind.

Meso Level Dynamics

Most of respondents in both focus groups (in two different locations and football clubs) stated that the main ways they spend their free time is watching football games, going to cafes, pubs, listening music and spending time with their girlfriends. It was interesting that entire group from Banja Luka resented sport betting, while all participants from Mostar stated that they gamble every day and regularly. Regarding the question whether the community in which they live suffers from injustice, what kind of injustice, and whether they are outraged and personally concerned about it, participants broadly confirmed this. Nevertheless, they had different understanding of social injustice both at the personal and group level. For some of them, injustice can be seen and felt in every segment of the community, primarily through corruption, persistent unemployment, difficulty of everyday life, inadequate wages, emigration of people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and lack of life perspectives for young people. On the other hand, two participants from Banja Luka stressed that the greatest injustice happens on the street in interaction with state authorities. They consider that the political system is the biggest cause of injustice in the community underlining persistent police violence. An interviewee responded that "they beat us regularly, just for no reason, every time they see us."[23] These respondents stressed that police regularly harass and bully football fans, just because of their different behaviour, look and lifestyle.

On the question of whether violence can be considered a justified response to or a solution to the injustice that a person experiences, respondents claimed that violence can be a response to needed change in the system, but also that violence cannot bring about anything good for society in general. Some interviewees claimed that that violence is a 'natural state of mind' in this region of the world for ages, and that it is never excluded as a possibility: "people here simply cannot live without violence. But there are some other countries that are functioning on violence as well."[24] One respondent mentioned protests as the best solution and response to perceived injustice. Regarding their own experience of violence, most of respondents claimed that they have experienced violence from the police and from fans of other football clubs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The focus group from Mostar underlined that nothing was done by police regarding violence committed against them by fans of another club, claiming that in media reporting they were depicted as hooligans, while fans of the other club were not. They also highlighted this situation as perceived collective injustice. The frequency of recent violence among football fans in Bosnia and Herzegovina is certainly, to an extent, connected with an increasing social vulnerability and socio-political frustration among many citizens, especially younger ones. In this case, violence should not be considered as "the strongest nonverbal communication" as German philosopher Friedrich Hacker said, but as the strongest form of communication in general.

For the focus group from Banja Luka, extremism is a very sensitive topic and personally something they could relate to when they were younger. Participants of the other focus group from Mostar do not find

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[23] In-person interview with a football fan from Banja Luka, 25/11/2021

[24] In-person interview with a football fan from Mostar, 18/12/2021

explicitly negative connotations regarding this term. "Extremism is only a form of attachment. It is a comradeship."[25] Almost all these respondents view extremism as something positive, "some kind of love for something,"[26] or "when somebody fanatically love his club more than his father or mother,"[27] and something "special and extraordinary."[28] When respondents were asked about the relationship between violence and extremism, their answers were unanimous. All respondents claimed that extremism in most cases does not lead to violence and that there is no direct relationship between the two.

The political and societal complexity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is very noticeable in the responses of focus groups participants when asked about their sense of belonging to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina in relation to their national or ethnic identity. Almost every participant emphasised that they have no strong feelings towards Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country: "I do not feel any attachment towards Bosnia and Herzegovina"[29]. They emphasised this in different ways but always clearly tinted with political statements and opinions, such as: "We are born here, this is our country, but nothing nice is said about us Croats here."[30] All participants stressed that their national or ethnic identity is far more important for them than a sense of belonging to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some made a point in highlighting a lack, or denial of group rights for their ethnic groups. Regarding the collective identities of their communities, most of participants emphasised their dedication and loyalty to the clubs, underlining their mutual group identity, mutual solidarity, pride, and their positive role within society when necessary (assistance after floods, helping people in need, protests against injustice, etc.). "We are as one" is a commonly repeated phrase. [31]

Focus group and interview participants were eager to talk about their views on whether religion is a driver of extremism and cause of violence or if it can be a factor in strengthening the resilience of individuals. Most stated that religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina has a positive life influence on individuals and that it has nothing in common with violence. They showed high awareness of political manipulation and misuse of religion within society and in media, also throughout history in general. They emphasised that other religious identities, those of other groups they do not belong to, have never been an obstacle or threat to them. Two participants mentioned that they would defend their religion in case it is threatened, a position which might be misused under certain circumstances.

Participants from both focus groups expressed that the role of neighbouring countries in their life is an important one. In Mostar and Banja Luka this relates especially to the role of Croatia and Serbia, respectively. This role is mostly seen through connections with football fans from those countries, their mutual cooperation and friendship. For all interviewed participants this type of cooperation is very important.

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[25] In-person FG with a football fan from Mostar, 18/12/2021

[26] In-person FG with football fans from Mostar, 18/12/2021

[27] In-person FG with football fans from Banja Luka, 25/11/2021

[28] In-person FG with football fans from Mostar, 18/12/2021

[29] In-person FG with football fans from Banja Luka, 25/11/2021

[30] In-person FG with football fans from Mostar, 18/12/2021

[31] In-person FG with a football fan from Mostar, 18/12/2021

Additional findings were collected through conducting in-depth interviews with selected participants. As previously noted, these in-depth interviews were performed with 5 participants. All respondents stressed that the relation with their families are most important to them, that they enjoy a very open relationship with mutual understanding. One participant mentioned that he spends most of his time with his daughter. They stated that their leisure time is spent no differently than that of other young people. Most of their free time is spent in cafes, pubs, with their girlfriends, watching football games on TV and going to the stadium matches. Respondents from Mostar wish there were more cultural opportunities in the city, especially places to go out and more music concerts. In Mostar, sometimes they do sports betting.

Regarding the question on social injustice within their community, all interviewees expressed a critical view on tensions in society, mainly ethnonationalist tensions, and mutual group distrust. They expressed their concerns and discomfort regarding the political and economic conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina equally blaming politicians from all ethnic groups for the situation in the country, singling out prevailing corruption and nepotism.

All participants in interviews disagreed with the statement that violence could be an answer for injustices in society, but also mentioned that it is sometimes unavoidable. Once again, they blamed politicians for the situation in the country due to which people are emigrating to find better life opportunities elsewhere. Only one interview participant claimed that he had not been subject to violence. Others strongly emphasised that they have been victims of violence, mostly by football fans of other teams and of police forces. They stated that police forces often bully them for no reason, physically attacking them and harassing them constantly. Even in instances of police violence and attacks that have been reported, nothing was done about it. Their opinion on this issue is that the public should know about these cases. Otherwise, the public views football fans only as hooligans and troublesome individuals. One participant from Mostar stated that he was pressured because of his language (Croatian) while studying in Sarajevo.[32] He was very disappointed about an inadequate reaction of institutions on this matter as well.

Just as the focus groups participants, our in-depth interviews respondents view extremism in a very positive way, emphasizing its meaning as an extreme devotion to the football club or family. They blame media culture for presenting extremism negatively. They also expressed a lot of criticism towards other football fans who make use of various insulting banners and pictures during matches at stadiums (mostly ethnic hatred contents, glorification of genocide in Srebrenica, crimes in Jasenovac during the Second World War, etc.).[33] For one interview participant, an extremist is a person with character who has nothing to do with violence. Also, it was mentioned that an extremist is a person who has nothing to lose.

All participants claimed that religion cannot be related to violence if people are true believers. Interviewees view religion as a positive attitude towards life, but they are also aware that religion is

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[32] In-person interview with a football fan from Mostar, 18/12/2021

[33] In-person interview with a football fan from Banja Luka, 25/11/2021

used to create animosities between people and to generate conflicts, or as an excuse for terrorist violence. One participant underlined that his parents taught him not to hate other religions while another stated that religion must be a factor in the resilience of people to the threat of extremism and violence.

Additionally, all participant in the interviews expressed negative opinions towards violent contents on online platforms, when using Facebook, watching YouTube videos, or playing games. This is both on platforms related to football and any other online content. They expressed their concern for the impact of violent media contents on children and their development.

Questioned about their feelings of belonging to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of participants stated that this belonging is 'on paper' only. They all confirmed that they were born in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but all of them are mainly concerned about the wellbeing of their own ethnic groups not about the fate of the country. All participants stated that the state or institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not give them anything. Emphasizing their national or ethnic identity is far more important to them as this gives them a sense of community. None of our interviewees are members of political parties or other organisations, but only belong to the football clubs' supporters' groups.

Furthermore, all participants from Mostar have dual citizenship (Croatian in addition to Bosnian and Herzegovinian). They praise their connection to this neighbouring country through ethnic, cultural and sport related contexts, especially the connection with Croatian football clubs' fans. "Even before the war, we were connected and this cooperation is very strong."[34] On the other side, participants from Banja Luka expressed satisfaction with their relationship with clubs from Serbia. This strong cross-border relationship also strengthens their supporters ethnic belonging. Yet claim that they do not support the current political regime in Serbia. This kind of anti-system attitude is at the core of their activities. Some connections with Serbian football clubs and fans are part of football tradition and have been kept alive for decades. These fans do not think that such cooperation affects their attitudes towards other ethnic and religious groups, but that it can definitely strengthen affiliation towards their own group and club. They found that cooperation with football clubs' supporters' groups in Serbia only contributes to radical attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours in the view of others who do not take part in this cooperation and view it from the outside.

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[34] In-person interview with a football fan from Mostar, 18/12/2021

Analysis Conclusions

Organized groups of football fans present a specific kind of challenge when speaking about radicalisation in divided and post-conflict societies such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is mostly due to political and nationalist ideologies that are strongly connected to the identity of this subculture. The findingsclearly shows that in Bosnia and Herzegovina this subculture is under influence of political ideas and economic inequalities within society. The animosity that members of the groups show towards the political system, represented mostly through police forces, and towards ruling politicians, is the most vivid indicator of potential radicalisation. In other words, these drivers can have great impact on future radicalisation, when combined with already existing exclusion and stigmatisation of group members in the public sphere where they are seen as hooligans, criminals, and problematic individuals. The potential for radicalisation in this case can be measured through instances of political and nationalist violence, hatred in public speeches and symbols, physical fights between fans of rival teams, conflicts with police forces, and destruction of property. Based on the responses of our interviewees it is possible to raise a question for almost each of their statements. Why does the socio-economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina block the ambitions and goals of young people coming from a background devoid of wealth? How does this impact their need for self-affirmation, their plans and hope for the future? This kind of socio-economic injustice, related to social class stratifications, ingrained, and institutionalised corruption, and resentment towards 'young people with rich (politically connected) parents' that our respondents mentioned tell us a lot about potential causes and triggers for their resentment and enormous bitterness, which can all be a factor for their radicalisation.

When participants speak about violence and its expressions in various areas of life, it is important to mention that all of them stressed that responses of government institutions are not adequate. Initially, they spoke about judicial institutions, that did not react in many cases of violence or try to address those responsible. After that, they mentioned political and social institutions that did not create efficient prevention programmes for combating violence, religious institutions and civil society organisations that did not use their authority strongly to warn about the serious consequences of violence. This detailed understanding of the complexity of connections among institutional actors coming from a potentially radicalised subculture group presents an added value of our research. The members of football clubs' supporters' groups are fully aware of how institutions (do not) act to address radicalisation, extremism, and violence.

Sport, and especially football, has significant socialisation functions, as we could see in this research. It is about a process of more or less spontaneous and organised transmissions of general and specific cultural contents with considerable impact on younger generations who act as recipients (Vrcan, 2003:252). It is obvious that this role is growing more and more important, also due to the lack of functioning key social institutions such as family and educational institutions. These traditional institutions of socialisation are today experiencing a serious crisis due to the strong influence of informal groups, corruption, digital social networks that are not specialised for socialisation functions, and a prevailing impact of political ideologies and market pressure. This subculture, as demonstrated in this research, has developed, and nourished a strong sense of collective identity and belonging, together

with connective local, particular, and universal specific subculture's values (Tilly, 1987). The integrational processes within this subculture are what leads members to exhibit extreme emotional belonging and accordingly strong mobilisation.

Intersections between Drivers and Interactions among Drivers and Social Contexts

In the context of intersections between drivers and interactions among drivers and society, it is obvious that several drivers are intersecting. Socio-economically, all participants are members of the lower middle class, they have several jobs and live in working-class districts. Beside their evident devotion to their club and football, they are seriously frustrated with the economic and political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They characterised their affiliation to the football fans subculture as form of social and political revolt. Their animosity is particularly strong towards the political system and party politics, represented in the form of their interaction with police forces, but towards media as well. Furthermore, they view violence only as self-defence. The ethnic communities and ethnic identities that they belong to are closely connected and intersect with religion, political grievances, and transnational dynamics. On the other hand, all participant expressed their deep antagonism and hostility towards corruption and nepotism. Their resentment towards state and local institutions are very clear and are shaped buy this view of a corrupt political class. Those institutions according to their statements are the reason for various social, cultural, and political injustices. It is important to highlight that economic deprivation intersects with political grievances that can become serious triggers to radicalisation of this subculture group. This intersects further with in-group socialisation, an undermined and weakened social position and a punitive justice system. Bearing this in mind, this specific community of young people could easily be turned into towards an acceptance of extremism not just in name but also in content, including the use of violence for specific purposes central to the group's identities.

General Conclusion

In order to adequately understand the term of subculture in the context of this research, it is important to note that subcultures are not any cultural characteristics taken separately. For understanding subcultures in the context of radicalisation it is important to assume that they are specific because they form relatively cohesive cultural system. According to sociologist Milton Yinger, subcultures are vital for theoretical, practical, and empirical needs and research, especially in terms of social pathologies and group behaviour. This means that for subcultures we need to have three major conditions: a forced upon adversity or exclusion of individuals or social groups related to certain important values resulting in frustration, a confusion about societal systems of values, and a lack of social control. This is clearer when we understand that each individual and social group usually have their own system of values, arranged according to certain meanings and adopted and accepted by its members. For subcultures it becomes evident that group values are often in opposition with the commonly accepted values of society in general. In other words, rather than being autonomous from the larger culture, subcultures of football fans contain and internalise some of its values and behavioural rules. This commonality is not lasting, subcultures are distinguished from the larger culture by a fairly distinct mix of behaviours, lifestyle, and conduct, as we were able to observe during our research. This specific subculture is also distinguished by a set of beliefs, interests, attributions, and values that are shared and developed through mutual interactions of members. They are characterised by a common fate and dilemma derived from their position counter to mainstream social structures. They are also characterised by patterned interactions and relationships within the subculture and between the subculture and larger social structure (Arnold, 1970).

It is a mistake to conclude that the values systems, attitudes, and conduct particular to subcultures of football clubs' supporters' groups only depend on psychological factors (frustrations, disorders, lack of social control). We found that this subculture in Bosnia and Herzegovina is deeply influenced, established and conditioned through economic, social, and political drivers. Observing these drivers can serve as a potential indicator for measuring increases and intensity of radical ideas and actions of this subculture. Furthermore, nationalist political strategies, displayed through the driver of political issues and ideas, are still very present and influential within mainstream politics and culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This driver is crucial in stimulating political instrumentalisation of football fans through formal and informal institutions, and nationalist media. Although political ideas have not been able to achieve some of their primary goals of societal and political division of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, they are still very much relevant and active through ethnonationalist polarisation and ideological ethnonationalism. As such these political ideas are not a 'matter of the past' only related to the 1990s war, but very much find their expression in contemporary everyday interactions. Consequently, organised groups of football clubs' supporters remain a potential arena for radical and divisive political attitudes, ethnonational polarisation, and political instrumentalisation.

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Annex I

The questionnaire

1. Do you spend time with your family?
   • Do you have any joint activities?
   • Do you talk with family members about topics that are important and interesting to you?
   • Do you feel that your parents understand you and that they respect your views and opinions?

2. How do you spend your free time in the community or city where you live?
   • Do you visit cultural centers, youth centers, cinemas or any space for young people?
   • Is there a place where you can do sports or other activities?
   • How often do you visit such places (never, once a week, once a month)?
   • What do you think about the contents or activities that are being offered at such places?
   • Do you visit betting shops to socialise?

3. Does the community where you live experience injustice?
   • What kind of injustice?
   • Are you personally concerned about this injustice and how does this affect you?
   • Are you outraged by this injustice?

4. In your opinion, can violence be an answer or a solution for the injustice that a person experiences in his/her environment?

5. Have you or any of your friends ever experienced violence?
   • Did you report this violence to someone? If not, why not?
   • Was the reaction of those to whom you reported the violence adequate and satisfactory?

6. When you use Facebook, YouTube, games, or any other online platform related to football but also other things, do you come across videos, images or text that contain violence?
   • What do you think about such content?
   • How do you react when you see such content?

7. In your opinion, what is "extremism"?
   • Do you know or have you heard of people you would describe as extremists?

8. Can you describe the relationship between violence and extremism?
   • Does all extremism lead to violence?

9. Do you feel belonging to the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to what extent? Do you feel like you belong to an ethnic group? Which affiliation is more important to you?

10. Are you a member of a body within your football club, other associations, political parties, civil society organisations or other communities?
- Which ones?
- Are you proud of your belonging to such communities?
- How would you describe the collective identity of this community?

11. Can religion be the driver of violence? Can religion be a factor in individuals' resilience to the attraction of violence? Explain how in both cases.

12. What role do the neighboring countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina have in your life?
- Do you cooperate with similar organisations or associations from other countries? Which ones? What does that cooperation mean?
- As a result, do you feel a stronger sense of belonging to your country, ethnic group, religion, or community?
- Does such cooperation affect your attitudes towards other groups?
- Do stronger ties with neighboring countries contribute to some radical attitudes and behavior, or do they mitigate them?

Youth supporters of online Salafi influencers

Muamer Hirkić, Sarina Bakić, Anida Dudić, Sanela Bašić, Damir Kapidžić

Introduction

After conducting research in the Work Package 4 (macro-level context), the majority of respondents stressed the importance of digitalisation as a factor of radicalisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), primarily because it still represents a largely unregulated sphere from the standpoint of institutional responsibility. Additionally, it was emphasised that, due to its simplicity, the online world offers virtual gathering places or places of incipient socialisation, where online religious or nationalist lecturers could gain a significant number of followers. Several such religious lecturers or *da'is*, who have the rank of "superstars" within their online communities on Facebook and YouTube, regularly post sermons and lectures that could include radical messages and views that are often not supported by the official religious institution – the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Moreover, their sizeable online following allows them a much higher visibility while conducting Islamic missionary work or *Da'wah*, in comparison to the official religious leaders or institution. Nonetheless, this represents an important sociological phenomenon, especially due to susceptibility of youths to online content (Kapidžić et al., 2021). At the same time, youth are open to gatherings and socialisation in both offline and online settings, meaning that their engagement goes beyond the traditional face-to-face interactions, and expands rapidly in the form of likes, comments and shares of the videos and online posts.

According to previous research conducted by Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Salafi online influencers are supported by a network of organisations registered as associations for the promotion of 'positive values' and 'original Islam', youth associations and book clubs (BIRN, 2019). Also, Metodieva noted that previously, local and abroad-based influencers maintained their ties through shared activities, such as guest lectures and online discussions (Metodieva, 2021). Hesová believes that this last wave or form of Salafist activity can be characterised as neo-Salafism – which needs to be distinguished from previous Salafist, Wahhabi and Mujahideen activities in BiH – and which can also be viewed through the prism of online Islamic missionary activism that is mostly based on youth and adult education, religious authority, media activism, and community building (Hesová, 2021).

This study is structured in the following way. The next section explains the methodological approach, while taking into account the added value of meso-level analysis, research objectives, sample description, as well as the research tools used in the study. Section number three analyses all seven project-defined drivers (religion, economic deprivation, territorial inequalities, social

digitatalisation, political issues, educational, leisure and cultural opportunities, and transnational dynamics), and explains the interaction between individual drivers and the chosen social context. Section four delivers conclusions on the analysis of meso-level drivers, as well as the prevention indicators, while the last, fifth section, provides a general conclusion for the study.

Research Methodology

RECAP OF RESULTS FROM MACRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS

The macro-level analysis on structural and institutional approaches towards drivers of radicalisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kapidžić et al., 2021) found different understandings of radicalisation among institutional actors. However, several factors were highlighted as relevant drivers of radicalisation, amongst other political ideas and ethno-political polarisation. Digitalisation and especially social networks were mentioned as potentially relevant mechanisms of spreading radical ideas among youth followers. They can also serve as a tool for socialisation of individuals with radical or extremist ideas as an echo-chamber where such ideas are amplified. These results highlight the need to investigate the use of social media to spread potentially radical ideas among a large audience. The macro-level research emphasised the role of Salafist religious lecturers in using social media to spread their ideas. The community of their online supporters is the focus of this analysis.

MESO-LEVEL ANALYSIS ADDED VALUE

By taking into a consideration youth as the target group, the research team noted that there is growing interest in content produced by online Salafist influencers, which is adapted to the latest social media marketing standards, thus making it straightforward and compelling for the broader audience. Salafi influencers use simple language that is understandable to everyone, provide direct advice and opinions, and often give comments on the trending topics. Exploring such online gathering places is a significant attempt to present the attitudes and values that are nurtured in closed groups that have a large online outreach. Also, most previous research in the countering/preventing violent extremism (C/PVE) sphere has not focused on the effects of digitalisation within youth-related communities, and this study is an attempt to identify and map the main drivers of radicalisation inside the digital environment.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

While observing meso-level in the context of youth supporters of online Salafi influencers, several major research objectives were identified, which proved to be relevant for the analysis. These include, but are not limited to:

- Increasing the knowledge on the digitalisation-related phenomena in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that could correlate with the potential radicalisation drivers among youth.
- Identifying prevalent drivers of radicalisation in the online Salafi communities.
- Mapping the principal subjects and topics within the consumed social media content.
- Establishing a clear linkage between the findings at the macro-level and subsequent meso-level analysis.

DEFINITION OF MESO-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS AND IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL ONES

This community proved to be relevant at the macro-level analysis, where a significant number of respondents mentioned Salafi influencers in the contexts of two drivers – digitalisation and religion.

Given that the idea of community at the meso-level is seen as any place (both offline and online) where socialisation takes place, it was possible to consider online groups that have such characteristics. Therefore, online supporters of well-known Salafi lecturers were selected as a representative group that has its own "digital ecosystem", features, and characteristics, which set them apart and makes them unique in relation to some other, formalised communities. Also, online Salafist communities are not restricted by geography, and thus have the opportunity to connect a large number of young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as from neighbouring countries and diaspora. The profiles of the most popular lecturers number hundreds of thousands of followers, and thus serve as platforms, forums and places of socialisation, where like-minded people gather. Through interactions with the original content, and comments on videos and posts, followers can provide their own views on daily occurrences. For the purpose of the first part of the research, which deals with content analysis, the profiles of the two most prominent Salafist lecturers were selected, which together number around 325 thousand followers on Facebook, and around 46 thousand followers on YouTube. For the purposes of the second part of the research, interviews and focus groups with young people who: i) belong to one of the Salafist associations and religious groups; and ii) regularly follow the online content of Salafi influencers on Facebook and YouTube are planned.

CRITERIA USED FOR SAMPLE SELECTION (OF PARTICIPANTS)

The main criterion set during the selection process was active monitoring of online lectures and educational content of the most popular Bosnian Salafist influencers via YouTube and Facebook platforms. The target group for focus group and interviews are the people who take part in the online dissemination of potentially radicalizing messages. Most supporters use their real-life online identities when interacting with this content, and it is possible to identify and establish contact with them. Due to potential ethics concerns and the difficulty of establishing contact online a different approach was chosen. We reached out to members of communities and associations that support the work of online Salafists as our primary sample.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

In the first part of the study, which is dedicated to a qualitative content analysis of the two most prominent online Salafi influencers, the project team looks at the comments of followers and their approval or disapproval of views and attitudes that are expressed. By doing so, researchers were attentive to the comments written by younger followers from the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the second part of the study, the meso level methodological framework adopted by the CONNEKT project sets out age as an important criterion for participation in the research. All participants in the interview and focus group need to be between 15 to 30 years old. Also, during the selection process, the research team paid attention to the gender ratio within the group. Due to challenges described below, the sample for interviews and focus groups was never established.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES + RESEARCH TOOLS DESCRIPTION

The analysis section was divided into two parts. First, the project team conducted a qualitative content analysis of the most popular posts of the two most followed online da'is on Facebook and YouTube platforms. The posts were selected according to criterion of engagement, or more precisely, according

to the number of recorded reactions or likes – where a total of 20 Facebook posts, as well as 6 YouTube videos were analysed. Due to the possibility of page administrator's moderation of reactions to the content (by limiting the possibility of commenting), it was decided to analyse the 6 most popular YouTube videos on Facebook – because identical videos have been uploaded on this platform as well, with the possibility of commenting. The period taken into account in the analysis is one year (from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021), and the analysis was done in a way that seven defined drivers (religion, economic deprivation, territorial inequalities, social digitalisation, political issues, educational, leisure and cultural opportunities, and transnational dynamics) were coded into the content that Salafist influencers publish to their supporters. Coding was done in such a way that keywords and thematic units relating to drivers were assigned to most popular posts. In this way, posts were classified into adequate categories, which gave the opportunity to observe followers' reactions, as well as potential matches with the assigned categories. Nonetheless, it was possible to obtain a broad picture of the topics that provoke the most reactions, and also to analyse the ways in which such topics are approved, through the comments section below each of the posts. The latter part of the research called for a focus group and 4 interviews with members of a religious group from Sarajevo, who identify themselves as young supporters of online lecturers on Facebook and YouTube.

CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATIONS

Given that Salafi communities are usually closed off to outsiders and outside influences, and often ostracised by the media, the main challenge has been in establishing trust towards us as researchers. As previous research shows (Kapidžić et al., 2021), during a significant number of departures to the Syrian and Iraqi battlefields in the period from 2013 to 2016, as well as during the integration of the illegal congregations or parajamaats into the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, these groups and associations were often the target of a large number of condemnations, which in turn produced distrust in media, as well as the general public.

In the first part of the study, researchers undertook a content analysis of online content of two most prominent Salafi lecturers. Only publicly available content was selected and no names or identifying information of supporters were gathered. For the second part of the research the research team attempted to establish contact with two target associations in Tuzla and Mostar but was unable to gain access. Initial contact, both direct and through intermediaries, was ignored or refuted with baseless arguments. The research team decided to adapt the research plan accordingly and reached out to a religious group in Sarajevo whose members actively follow online platforms of Bosnian da'is and were willing to engage as respondents. The questionnaire subsequently had to be adjusted in line with the content analysis results – meaning that it served as an instrument for verification of information obtained in the first part of the research. Therefore, more focus was devoted to all those factors that occur in the online environment, implying that the team wanted to have more information about the "online life" of the respondents (such as digital practices and use of free time). Moreover, there was a desire to seek more detailed answers regarding the relationship between extremism and religion, lifestyle, and transnational dynamics. However, timing proved to be a major obstacle as the research was repeatedly delayed in January, February, and March 2022 due to COVID infections among researchers and community members. Subsequently there was no

willingness from the community to interact with researchers. This proved to be a major challenge that the research team was not able to resolve in time, especially given the deadlines for deliverables of the project.[35] The report is therefore based solely on the first part of the study and the content analysis.

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[35] Since more focus groups and interviews were conducted for the other three BiH case study reports, the required project workload was nevertheless completed.

Meso Level Dynamics

RELIGION

The idea of producing online Salafist content and establishing a Salafist network of online influencers is based on the desire to bring followers closer to the interpretation of Islam advocated by such groups. Therefore, most of the Facebook and YouTube posts analysed in this study deal directly or indirectly with Islamic regulations and contain religion as a leitmotif, meaning that online Salafi influencers offer interpretations of the regulations in a simple way that is understandable to all followers. At the same time, the essential reasoning behind their actions is the idea of Islamic authority, authentic Islam or a role modelling for all those who seek knowledge from "authentic" sources. The main idea that permeates the analysed posts is the value of active practice of religion and religious rites, and for this purpose, *da'is* use Quran, Hadith, as well as the works of both well and lesser-known authors, interpreters, and scholars – where many of them are from the same or similar Salafist circles. In this way, followers are presented with a dose of legitimacy that supports personal, day-to-day opinions, and thus there is a smaller number of those who could challenge such opinions. Previous macro-level research has shown that most Salafist influencers in Bosnia and Herzegovina completed their formal higher education in states such as Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia – meaning that they did not study within the Islamic Community in BiH, and for that reason, they were not allowed to become officials of this institution. However, online profiles show that Salafi influencers place emphasis on acquired degrees (master's or doctoral degrees), in order to give an even greater dose of legitimacy to their attitudes and thoughts. Although formal titles have become an important part of the overall online identity of these individuals, there are also religious ones – where a large number of followers have adopted standardised titles for lecturers such as *da'i* (lecturer), *alim* (scholar) or *sheikh* (honorary title, in line with "His excellency"), and use them daily in comments that express forms of agreement with the stated views. Most supporters' posts and comments are of a purely religious nature and show general agreement with *da'is*. This can be seen in the form of affirmative answers and expressions of gratitude – where some of the phrases and words that stand out include: "Mashallah sheikh/what God has willed has happened sheikh", "Alhamdulillah/praise be to God", and "Amin/may it be so."

The content analysis has shown that a total of 10 of the 20 most popular posts (mix of textual content, photos and videos) of the two profiles analysed on Facebook have general religious activities and concepts as key topics. In one of the analysed posts, there is a video showing a young person in a life-threatening situation, which produced sympathetic responses from the followers. In the comment sections, a number of followers cited their own examples of facing the similar situations, emphasizing gratitude to God as the supreme authority and saviour. Prayers of both lecturers and followers were also present in other cases of daily occurrences, such as in situations when natural disasters (fires and floods) hit Bosnia and Herzegovina last year. Several posts concern the daily performance of prayer, emphasizing the importance and value of this act, instilling this habit from an early age, as well as gratitude to the supreme authority for the opportunity to pray in groups, without COVID restrictions. Such posts generally receive similar reactions, which indicate the approval and support of followers and do not have forms of differing or opposing opinions. On the other hand, although there is noticeable moderation of the comment section by administrators, several posts have mixed reactions

from followers as well as insults towards da'is. One such post is related to life advice given by a controversial Albania-born Salafi scholar Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani. Also, a significant number of negative comments were left on the video of a young girl whose mother tested her general knowledge about Islam, where a large number of followers referred to the fact that the child was too young and did not truly understand all that was learned by heart. Moreover, in one of the comments left by a member of another religious group, in which he pointed out that his religion (Orthodox Christianity) is the right one, da'i replied that "the Quran clearly states that such people are unbelievers", which can be characterised as a form of explicit "othering" without a two-way dialogue on the topic. In another video, da'i explains the issues of temptation and punishment in Islam, while expressing distrust towards security institutions such as the police. However, a significant number of comments on this post can be characterised as disapproval and disagreement with the position on the topic that the lecturer took.

SOCIAL DIGITALISATION

The basis of online Salafi missionary work is the possibility to make use of social digitalisation through the establishment of virtual gathering places, where mimicking of what is known as traditional socialization in congregations or within places of worships takes place. The development and optimization of social networks, which in a short period of time produced a significant following and thousands of reactions or likes per post, is an impressive undertaking that has given most *da'is* considerable visibility and reach. Research shows that the content is carefully selected, optimised and adapted to the latest standards of social networks, thus following the latest audio-visual production trends. Visual appeal and well-produced content brings greater interest and involvement of the younger population, especially in terms of the language that is adapted to the targeted population. For instance, the language in videos is often simple, with many colloquial terms and humorous, meme-like remarks that are relatable to most "ordinary" people and this alone, contributes to the charisma of the lecturers. Additionally, there are on-the-spot Arabic to Bosnian translations of verses from the Quran, which affirms the idea of authority and authentic knowledge.

When analysing the content, we noticed that there is noticeable moderation of comments on Facebook and YouTube, which is often explained as an attempt to avoid unnecessary discussions, or to allow only positive comments. On the other hand, this form of moderation, in many cases, means one-way communication, without the possibility of discussion and questioning of the content that is posted. Also, in a large number of posts that can be commented on, there are mostly affirmative answers that indicate agreement, and it is often possible to see dozens of identical comments. This form of affirmative approach of followers is not exclusive for this group, but it is quite visible, meaning that it just confirms the relationship between the authority and followers. During the analysis, we also noticed that most of the video content is uploaded in identical format on both platforms, while other posts in the form of photos and text are published via Facebook.

EDUCATIONAL, LEISURE AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

While observing the content on Facebook and YouTube platforms, the majority of activities of online Salafist lecturers can be summarised under the category of "lifestyle coaching", as they offer instant advice for everyday life issues. They often emphasise advice related to the position of women in the family, the

relationship of spouses, allowed and forbidden daily activities, and social phenomena that are not related to religious teachings. Most such opinions stem from religious interpretations of primary and secondary sources and are therefore an integral part of the overall religion-based context, but at the same time, these could be misused and misinterpreted by users to suit their individual aims. Any lifestyle-related topics are subject to individual interpretations, and as such may depend on the individual or authority who presents these topics to the supporters. Therefore, it can be concluded that online Salafi lecturers act as non-formal educational actors, who attempt to deconstruct complex ideas and demanding concepts in a simplified way to all generations and audiences by relying on religious references. In one previous study, Sabic-El-Rayess confirmed this claim by pointing out that, in a vacuum left by formal education, Salafi mentors provide continuing education for the marginalised through mentorship-based clinics, online programming, podcasts, and physical lectures (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2021). In addition, the overall online presence and marketing awareness of online lecturers can be viewed through the prism of a carefully built brand, which has its own characteristics and role in the daily lives of followers. As Sorgenfrei argues, Salafi influencers are able to communicate or promote a tangible product, an ideology, or a message in such a way that followers perceive it as a desirable cultural element and, what is more, as part of a beneficial way of living (Sorgenfrei, 2021).

Our research has shown that YouTube videos are, in a large number of cases, re-uploaded versions of Facebook Live lectures, which are regularly held on their profiles. YouTube content analysis revealed that the most-watched videos in 2021 are questions and answers to general lifestyle inquiries, where each hour-long video offers answers to approximately 50 followers' questions. Topics are diverse and address issues such as liking pictures of people of the opposite sex on Facebook, wearing appropriate, baggy pants (women's clothing), celebrating birthdays, hunting animals for the sake of nutrition, and many others. In their videos, da'is note that these are pre-received questions from followers to which they regularly answer. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is growing interest in opinions and instant lifestyle advice of da'is. This is further confirmed by supportive comments of supporters. The analysed content has a considerable relevance in the context of cultural or "the way of life" driver of potential radicalisation. This primarily refers to the change of the so-called social fabric of the society, where society sees certain practices, perceptions, and physical appearances as foreign and inadequate for the social context of the state, while Salafi influencers and their followers see digital platforms as prolific ground for the promotion of more "traditional" way of life. On the other hand, during the Facebook analysis, two posts out of a total of 20 stood out as posts related to advising and promoting a certain way of life. The first post, which indicates that men should not "look at other people's wives", provoked a number of reactions in the comments, where some of the followers pointed out that one should not question the sheikh's advice, while others stressed that "it would be great if women did the same." The second, and most controversial post of all, referred to the Sarajevo LGBT Pride Parade where one da'i posted a photo of trucks washing the streets after the parade, stating "bravo guys." Many of the comments on this post are offensive, with followers joining in and insulting this community, using words such as "acid", "stench", "disinfection", and "disease."

TRANSNATIONAL DYNAMICS
Previous research in Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown strong links between Salafist networks in the Balkans and within the European Union – primarily in cases of diaspora communities sharing the same language, roots and culture. Also, in Islam, the idea of ummah (community) that transcends nation-

state borders plays an important role, and thus connects Muslims around the world. This concept represents an important segment of the daily work of online Salafis, which is best seen in posts expressing solidarity and support to various Muslim countries and peoples. Several such posts confirm the strong support that online da'is have from the Sandžak region in both Serbia and Montenegro. Also, in one of the posts, da'i points out that people from Sandžak are "the pride of faith", while in several others he pays tribute to the recently deceased Mufti and politician Muamer Zukorlić, who was a respected figure within Bosniak circles in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro. At the same time, most of the comments of the online community are of an affirmative nature, where great gratitude towards sheikh is expressed. In addition to the Sandžak case, there was also a support for Turkey during last year's fires, where *da'is* sent their prayers for "our Muslim brothers in Turkey." Finally, during last year's conflict between Israel and Palestine, one of the online Salafis prayed "for our brothers in Palestine, because the Zionists are committing indescribable crimes and tortures against Muslims," emphasizing that "they are both God's and Palestinian enemies."

OTHER DRIVERS - POLITICAL ISSUES, ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION AND TERRITORIAL INEQUALITIES

Much of the online activism of Salafist lecturers on Facebook and YouTube is about everyday events, implying that political events in Bosnia and Herzegovina have some space in their activism. Often, criticism is directed inwards – more precisely towards the policies of Bosniak politicians and parties, as well as towards the Republika Srpska entity and the treatment of Muslims who are a minority there. In their posts, the da'is mostly pray for imams working in the Republika Srpska, praising their efforts for Muslim post-war returnees. The analysis showed that online Salafi lecturers do not challenge the political system in a way that implies them wanting to become part of those structures, or in a way that they want to change that system from within. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that such posts are not among the most popular ones in terms of supporters' engagement, and as such do not represent a significant driver in the context of this study. The other two drivers that have proven irrelevant to this community are economic deprivation and territorial inequalities. The general narrative that permeates religious teaching is that any economic benefit is subordinate to spirituality – implying that real wealth is in the practice of religion. In addition, the analysis of posts on Facebook and YouTube showed that the driver of territorial inequalities is non-existent in the context of the online Salafi network.

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN DRIVERS AND INTERACTIONS AMONG DRIVERS AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Digitisation is an overarching element, a tool that enables the spread of different drivers such as religion, educational, leisure and cultural opportunities, and transnational dynamics. Moreover, it is possible to note that religion is a constant link between all these drivers. Islam, in this sense, does not represent a source of radicalisation, but it opens the possibility for individual interpretations of religion that do seem problematic, primarily in terms of using sources (authors) that do not necessarily resemble the meaning of Quran or Hadith accepted by the majority of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, the driver of religion has strong linkages to the driver of educational, leisure and cultural opportunities, primarily due to validation of certain lifestyles through religious texts, which can be at odds with established, mainstream societal practices – mostly in terms of physical appearance

and behaviour. Finally, the transnational dynamic is directly based on the concept of religion, or the link between the *ummah*, which contributes to a greater sense of sympathy for any grievances that affect Muslims around the world.

SOCIAL CONTEXTS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE RESULTS OF THE MACRO LEVEL ANALYSIS

Online Salafi lecturers, as well as the community they built and serve, were an important part of the macro-level analysis, where respondents from different types of institutions highlighted the possibility of radicalisation in such groups, primarily in the context of drivers such as religion, digitalisation and transnational dynamics. If we analyse at the attitude of this group towards institutions, it is possible to identify two main phenomena. Focusing on religious institutions, the relationship of online Salafi lecturers with the Islamic Community in BiH has gone through several changes in recent years – from initial criticism, through direct challenge and opposition, to integration and mitigation of rhetoric. Nevertheless, there is still a need to be heard and to have a "louder" voice when performing a Da'wah, and digitalisation and social networks allow them to do so. Likewise, content posted on social media by da'is is more engaging than the content of the Islamic Community, and therefore da'is views and opinions within the online community are more likely to carry the same or stronger weight than the official institutions. On the other hand, digitalisation and online community-building have enabled visible cooperation and networking with the non-governmental Salafist sector in the promotion of various lectures across different platforms and channels, also across borders.

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HOW MACRO LEVEL DRIVERS WORKS AT THE MESO- LEVEL STUDIED (THE SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF FOCUS)?

Drivers identified in the macro-level analysis proved to be compatible with drivers highlighted in the meso-level analysis. Furthermore, this study showed that drivers and their interactions overlap in such a way that digitalisation, or more precisely, consumption of online content containing religion as a leitmotif, can directly or indirectly enhance the driver of educational, leisure and cultural opportunities, and also increase sentiments of concern or compassion for Muslims in other countries (transnational dynamics). The driver of political issues that was identified as highly relevant at the macro-level, and that includes issues such as ethnic nationalism and political ideologies, is not relevant for this analysis. The embeddedness of online Salafi lecturers and their supporters within the Bosniak Muslim societal segment of BiH has shielded it from political drivers that relate to ethnic diversity.

Analysis Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF MESO-LEVEL DRIVERS

The analysis of the content on the Facebook and YouTube platforms of the two most popular da'is in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed the relevance of several drivers such as social digitalisation, religion, culture or "way of life", as well as transnational dynamics. Also, the strong interconnectedness of these drivers was noticed, where social digitalisation allows the expression of other previously mentioned drivers and religion permeates throughout. Online profiles of Salafi lecturers have become virtual gathering places, offering optimised audio-video content and thus ideal conditions for socialisation, while also replacing physical locations such as mosques or masjids.

First, religion can be used as an educational instrument for proving individual views and consolidating one's own authority in terms of interpretations of complex concepts. However, the use of other sources, such as the views of a number of Salafi scholars, can be problematic for end users/consumers of content and can include elements that encourage radicalisation. The analysis of the content showed that there is some dose of critical interaction to such content from the supporters themselves who question certain interpretations through comments. On the other hand, there is also a dose of insulting comments aimed at da'is. Religious content is mainly used in the form of prayers for everyday events, such as various natural disasters, where comments are mostly a direct reflection of the content and do not have the dimension of negative reviews. Second, the driver of educational, leisure and cultural opportunities can be reduced to the idea of promoting a certain way of life, which means the desire to non-violently correct the system through methods of persuading, lobbying and presenting the positive aspects of such an approach to life. Likewise, Salafi lecturers can be viewed from two angles – as educators and as a brand – which ultimately signifies offering a daily reminder of alternative ways of living and acquiring knowledge, while presenting themselves as beneficial role models. Finally, transnational dynamics, paired with religion, proved to be relevant in cases of solidarity with Muslim nations and peoples, implying sympathy for those going through natural disasters or war events – where the latter is particularly important due to the experience of war in BiH.

PREVENTION INDICATORS RESULTING FROM THE MESO ANALYSIS

Although is impossible to measure radicalisation accurately, its presence is visible in the ways in which some supporters express their views regarding the topics that are important to them, or regarding topics that provoke some form of grievance. Also, by approving or agreeing in the form of reactions/likes or comments on Facebook and YouTube, it is possible to conclude that most supporters nurture similar or identical values. However, it is important to note that such instances do not necessarily reflect the position of the whole group, but only parts of the community that have identical views, or parts of the community to which certain topics have personal significance. It is also important to take into account the fact that there is administrative moderation or switching off of commenting, which in most cases means that the allowed comments express different forms of agreement with da'is views. This implies that there is not much space for conflicting opinions or two-way dialogue between content producers and their online supporters.

MICRO-PATHS REPORTED FROM MESO ANALYSIS

Going forward to the micro level analysis and focusing on individuals will be difficult in this case. It proved impossible to gain enough trust within the closed Salafi community or among supporting organisations to allow for focus groups and interviews. This might still be possible when it comes to survey instruments, while engaging community individuals would require outsized effort and commitment. Within the micro-level research, it is key to focus on two aspects: 1) the radicalisation potential of the online content, especially in relation to religious and lifestyle messages that focus on out-groups, and 2) on the relationship between the messenger, the da'is, and their message in order to investigate which of the two carries more weight when it comes to potentially radicalising content.

General Conclusion

Young supporters of the online Salafi influencers have been selected as a community whose attitudes and values are important for a better understanding of the digital space, which is becoming a relevant area for various forms of socialisation. At the same time, the online space is still institutionally unregulated, which opens the possibility for placing and spreading potentially dangerous extremist content. Online Salafi influencers also have significantly better visibility on social networks than the Islamic Community in BiH, and thus represent a challenger for the ultimate religious authority and interpreter of religious regulations.

The methodology of the study was approached from two angles: i) first, an analysis of the content on Facebook and YouTube profiles of the two most popular da'is was done, where 20 posts with the highest number of reactions in 2021 were singled out; and ii) second, interviews that were planned but ultimately not conducted with members of a religious group from Sarajevo, who identify themselves as young supporters and followers of online Salafi influencers. The results showed that digitialisation is an overarching category when it comes to all analysed drivers, which can lead to the interconnectedness of other drivers in the online space. On the other hand, it is noticeable that religion permeates through two drivers – educational, leisure and cultural opportunities, as well as transnational dynamics – which means that religious interpretations are the leitmotif present in all drivers. However, it is important to emphasise that in these cases religion is subject to individual interpretations, as well as the interpretations of various Salafist scholars whose works are promoted. In addition, there is a presence of critically-oriented comments on somewhat more controversial posts, but there are also comments that contain insults addressed both towards da'is and the content. Finally, the driver of transnational dynamic has proven to be relevant only in cases of compassion for struggles of peoples and nations with Muslim populations, both in the region and in other parts of the world.

Research at the meso-level has shown that, in addition to the strong influence that the community can leave on the individual, in terms of agreeing with a large number of views and opinions, there are still individual understandings and attachments to topics that the individual perceives as important. Therefore, the findings of this study will serve for further analysis at the micro-level, where it will be possible to identify the dominant drivers of radicalisation of the individual, as well as the role of "self" perceptions and attitudes towards community, institutions and society in general.

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CONNEKT

What drives youth to violent extremism? How can they turn from being "the problem" into "the key" for a solution? By engaging youth in the research, CONNEKT will raise young voices to become stakeholders in the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism.

CONNEKT is a research and action project which analyses seven potential radicalisation factors among youth aged between 12 and 30: religion, digitalisation, economic deprivation, territorial inequalities, transnational dynamics, socio-political demands, and educational, cultural and leisure opportunities and evaluates them on three levels: transnational/state, community and individual.

Its aim is to establish a multi-dimensional map of drivers of extremism among youth in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Bulgaria, and to identify the interplay between them. Based on the empirical research findings, the project will end up recommending tools and measures for the prevention of violent extremism from a social and community perspective both for the regions of study and the European Union.

Under the coordination of the European Institute of the Mediterranean, (IEMed), the project gathers a multidisciplinary Consortium involving 14 partners from MENA, the EU and the Balkans.