

Combating a Shared Security Threat through Unified Narratives

Politicized Terrorism in Western Balkans

Sidita Kushi

Northeastern University

Abstract

The joint threats of religious radicalism, foreign fighter recruitments, and terrorism have dominated the Western security agenda for decades. But recently, the transatlantic community has begun to view even its southern European neighbors with growing suspicion. Since the beginning of the Syrian war, the Balkans has increasingly come under media and political attack for breeding and exporting Islamist foreign fighters across the Middle East and Europe. This article analyzes the historical trajectory of these concerns in the past five years and argues that although the threat of terrorism is relatively small within overwhelmingly moderate and pro-Western Balkan communities, it poses several unique regional consequences. It is argued that the most optimal way to prevent the enlargement of this threat is for Western partners to treat Western Balkans nations as equal partner in security policy, fighting against the same shared threat of Islamist terrorism. The West and domestic elites must also eschew the vilification of moderate Muslim communities and learn to separate true threats of terrorism from sensationalist commentaries that enflame ethnic and nationalist agendas.

The Balkan Peninsula is no longer a primary regional hazard for Western Europe and the United States—at least not in comparison to the internationalized crises of the 1990s. But with its corrupt, volatile institutions, bleak economic prospects, and still-enflamed ethnic and nationalist narratives, the Balkan region remains especially vulnerable to international and regional security threats (see respectively, Lilyanova 2015; Uvalić 2014; Kushi 2014). International terrorism and its calls for global recruits is a particularly worrisome trend for Western Balkan societies, still healing from decades of violence and lacking strong security infrastructure to expose developing threats (Woehrel 2008a).

In this article, I first highlight some of the dominant changes within Western Balkan societies that have arisen in the post-conflict era and in tandem with new international security threats. The most significant of these transitions is an increase in domestic-bred religious extremism and militarism, in lieu of the past's foreign fighter worries (see, for example, Maroevic and Williams 2005). Although this trend is relatively small in comparison to its linked global phenomenon, it holds unique repercussions within the Balkan—especially as it relates

© 2016 *Global Outlook*

to possibilities of political misuse and exaggeration for nationalist, anti-minority agendas. Moreover, growing ideological extremism or mere perceptions of extremism may reawaken civil conflicts between antagonistic populations, which have relied on a long tradition of religious moderates to contain instability.

Given the geographic position and historical legacy of the Balkans, any such regional threats could cascade across Europe and the transatlantic sphere. Destabilized Balkan societies could also encourage the inflow of more militant recruits into the heart of Europe and the Middle East, fomenting an atmosphere conducive to global terrorist networks. Hence, it is imperative that the European Union and its transatlantic partner, the U.S., continue to invest in the socio-economic potential of the Western Balkans so as to curb potential nefarious influences from within and abroad.

Most importantly, however, the West, in defending against shared contemporary security risks, must begin to reshape its political narratives of the Western Balkans to one of unity and inclusion, instead of one that fosters a “civilized us versus uncivilized them” mentality. Alienating the Balkans from Western influence is a primary tool of terrorist recruitment, and Europe should never be complicit in fostering such sentiments. Additionally, analysts, politicians, and citizens alike should remember that in the Balkans, terrorism is a label often thrust upon vilified political opponents and minority ethnic groups—and acts as a political smoke-

screen for other domestic issues.¹ Thus, while cautioning against exaggerations and politicizations, I conclude with recommendations for a unified transatlantic response toward global terrorism—being careful not to brand the Western Balkans neither as a secular safe haven nor as a barbaric arena of Islamic terrorism.

Mapping the Threats

When discussing security risks stemming from fundamentalist-driven terrorism in the Western Balkans, it is important to recognize that the Balkans does not exist in isolation. Terrorism is a global menace, increasing by 61 percent during the 2012-2013 period, primarily due to the Syrian civil war beginning in 2011 (Institute for Economics and Peace 2014). Five countries—Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Syria—suffered 80 percent of terrorist fatalities in 2013, with more than 6,000 people dying in Iraq alone. The West, measured via the Organisation for Economic Cooperation

¹ One recent example of this phenomenon can be found in the range of narratives that the Macedonian government has employed to distract from its corrupt practices—with the Kumanovo attack remaining a source of speculation between ethnic terrorist motives and government-concocted distraction. These narratives typically serve to vilify ethnic minorities under the label of terrorism. They also serve to highlight the differences between nationalism-driven terrorism and extremist religion-driven terrorism. See Tumanovska and Coalson (2015) and Jordanovska (2015).

and Development (OECD) countries, only experienced five percent of all terrorist fatalities since 2000, but this group also suffered from some of the deadliest attacks, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace (2014) report.

In general, the Western Balkans is still quite secular and religiously tolerant in social composition, with surveys showing that less than half of Balkan Muslims and only 15 percent of Albanian Muslims see religion as central to their lives. Hence, conservative Islam is not very popular among the large Muslim populations of the region and neither is the radical, militant ideology linked with extremist Islamist fringes (Likmeta 2012). In other words, the Balkans does not stand at the epicenter of the global extremist-driven terrorism threat, yet its geopolitical context and socio-economic dynamics make it a vulnerable and politically charged case. The Western Balkan region possesses all three main factors most conducive to terrorist activity, as determined by the Institute for Economics and Peace (2014): (1) high social hostilities between ethnic and religious groups; (2) the existence of state-sponsored violence and human rights abuses, and (3) high levels of violence, especially organized crime. As a legacy of the bloody wars and ethnic cleansing campaigns of the 1990s, the relationship between Muslims and Christian Orthodox citizens in Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo remain uncertain, characterized by protests and vandalism of places of worship by opposing groups (see Naimark and Case 2003; b92 2014a). Contemporary ethnic relations between

Serbs, Croats, Albanians, Macedonians, Bosnians, and Montenegrins also tend to mimic the hostilities of religious divides and past conflicts, while organized crime is practically a daily defining feature of life (Lilyanova 2015).

Religious radicalism has grown since the fall of Yugoslavia and the collapse of Albania's communist regime, bolstering any lingering social hostilities. The opening of the secular societies to international actors prompted an influx of radical activists, theologians, and militants – seeking to spread their ideologies onto new soil (Woehrel 2008a). Today, still feeding off widespread socio-economic desperation, radical imams, who completed their religious studies in Arab nations and receive funding from these same countries, recruit from the poorest of the population, especially vulnerable youth (Poggioli 2010). As a telling pattern, the vast majority of the leaders of the Balkan militant Islamic movement, such as Nedžad Balkan, Bilal Bosnić and Kosovo clerics Zekerija Qazimi and Lulzima Qabashi, received their education in the Middle East, where they accepted ideologies very distant from moderate Balkan Islam (Bardos 2014a).

Unfortunately, the international context of rising ideological extremism, civil wars across the Middle East, and resentments against Western policies are beginning to slowly erode the region's secular, moderate foundations. The internet has also made it easier for radical groups to recruit Balkan natives, grooming them from afar (Ninković 2013). For instance, before the conflict in Syria began in

*Sidita
Kushi*

2011, fewer than a dozen natives from the Western Balkans had joined in foreign fighter missions. In contrast, by June 2014, 218-654 Balkan natives were fighting alongside Islamic militants in Syria. These fighters come from Bosnia (50-330 fighters), Kosovo (80-150), Albania (50-90), Macedonia (6-12), and Serbia (30-70) (see Holman 2014).

In the next sections, I offer specific cases of this changing regional dynamic, speculating as to its main origins. Second, I introduce a brief framework from which to propose potential solutions. Finally, I suggest several pathways in which the EU and the U.S. can begin to curb the influence of religious extremism so as to minimize the threat of terrorism in the Western Balkans and in the transatlantic sphere.

From Foreign Fighters to Domestic Recruits

The countries of the Western Balkans have always possessed high ethnic and religious heterogeneity within small geographic confines, with large (typically secular) Muslim populations existing for centuries. But the violent intrastate campaigns and subsequent international interventions of the post-Yugoslavian era and “multicultural” state-building efforts have acted to politicize religious and ethnic identities across the Balkans.²

² For a detailed analysis of how the wars and interventions of the 1990s deconstructed the Balkans along hyper-enforced ethnic and religious lines, in the name of multiculturalism, see Campbell (1998).

Beginning in Bosnia, for example, the intrastate violence of the 1990s attracted the attention of hundreds of foreign fighters from across the Arab world. These fighters merely heeded the religious divisions that the international community had exposed as an explanation of the mass violence between Orthodox Serbs, Muslim Bosnians, and Catholic Croats (Hedges 1992; Woehrel 2008b). Although many of these mujaheddin were driven out after the war, about 700 to 1,000 of them remained and received citizenship—spurring Western concerns about foreign Islamic radicals creating cells of security-evading “white al Qaeda” from within the Balkans and into Western Europe (Maroevic and Williams 2005; Woehrel 2008a).

This fear was not limited to post-conflict Bosnia, but also encompassed the following crises in Kosovo. Yet excluding inflammatory Serbian and Russian claims about the existence of an al Qaeda presence in Muslim-majority Kosovo, there appeared little Western cause for concern (Centre for Peace in the Balkans 2004). Although radical Islamic organizations attempted to recruit among the Kosovar population during the 1990s and beyond, they had limited success in an atmosphere of Western admiration (Woehrel 2008a). At this point Western actors did not seriously consider the risk of native-Balkan bred terrorism—as it seemed highly improbable that intrastate conflict between ethnic and religious groups would transform into an international terrorist campaign. Moreover, in the post-conflict era, as foreign fighters within Bosnia were be-

ginning to dissipate, the reestablishment of a secular peace was seemingly under way.

But with increasing monetary investments from Islamic organizations over the years, suspicions grew. From 1992 to 2001, Saudi Arabia alone spent about \$500 million in mosque-building projects in Bosnia—with many projects suspected to be fronts for al Qaeda (Woehrel 2008a; Weinberg 2014). The post-war institutional vacuum and the subsequent division of Bosnian territory and institutions along ethnic lines further aided the proselytization of Wahhabi ideology and the politicization of religious identity. Yet even after the September 11 terrorist attack, Western actors still focused on ways in which the Balkan region could facilitate foreign terrorist activity, with its black markets, weak regulations, and insecure borders—not on the potential of native radicalizations (Woehrel 2008a, 2008b).

The following years, however, signaled a gradual change in social terrain. Incentivized by generous Arab funding opportunities and discouraged by previously glorified Western initiatives, more Balkan clerics began to train in the Middle East, becoming immersed in more radical forms of Islam. The year 2005 brought about a thwarted plot by a Bosnian Islamist groups to bomb the British Embassy in Sarajevo and another discovered plan in Croatia to bomb the papal funeral (Maroevic and Williams 2005). Consequently, by the next year, the U.S. State Department warned that the decentralization of the Bosnian state

made it an especially vulnerable target for terrorist plots and recruitment (Woehrel 2008a). The threat of so called “lone wolf” terrorists, who could strike individually and at any time, began to take hold.

Measuring the Damage: Low Numbers, Significant Trends

In a brief sum, over the past decade, militant Islamists, native to the Balkans, have planned and attempted a range of violent plots, including but not limited to: the 2002 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Vienna; the 2007 Fort Dix bomb plot; the 2009 New York City subway attack plot; the 2011 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo; the 2012 murder of two U.S. servicemen at Frankfurt Airport; and the first Balkan suicide bomb attack in Baghdad in 2014 (Bardos 2014b). Most recently, in Bosnia, a gunman attacked a police station in Zvornik, killing an officer and injuring two others (BBC News 2015). This event prompted the quick arrest of over ten people suspected of terrorist activity (Voice of America 2015). In Kosovo, five men were also arrested on suspicion of trying to poison Prishtina’s water supply. The plan is thought to be inspired by ISIS propaganda videos urging Muslims to poison the unbelievers’ water and food supplies (Lyman 2015).

ISIS is now specifically targeting the region in their video campaigns for jihadist glory against the non-believing West and its supposed puppet regimes across the Balkans (Gordon Meek 2015). In general, radical elements target poor, ru-

ral communities in the Western Balkans, sometimes, even paying parents in the beginning phases of regular mosque visits and ideological transformation (Orzechowska 2014). This is not to say, however, that religious radicalization is limited to groups with lower socio-economic status, as even well-educated, higher-income communities often fall prey to its social incentives and bonds (Abrahms 2008).

This propaganda, coupled with gradual social immersion efforts, is having some effect, as a recent report found that in 2013 and 2014 in Bosnia alone, 156 Bosnian men and 36 women travelled to Syria, taking with them 25 children (Azinović and Jusić 2015). Even worse, earlier in the year, Bosnian authorities estimated that up to 1,000 people from the country were thought to be fighting with ISIS (Banco 2014). Reports also reveal the weaknesses of the Bosnian state in combating this small but existing threat. With twenty-two police agencies operating in the country with overlapping jurisdictions, the lack of coordination between agencies on security issues is to be expected. Yet it is still shocking that Bosnia lacks a single consolidated database on potential domestic threats (Borger 2015).

These threats have not been lacking across the Balkans as a whole. In the past year, the State Investigation and Protection Agency in Damascus detained sixteen people accused of financing and recruiting Bosnians to fight in Syria and Iraq. This past November, Bosnia also detained eleven people suspected of terrorist acts (World Bulletin 2014).

Aside from the previously mentioned

water-poisoning arrests, five citizens of Kosovo were indicted on terrorism charges for fighting in Syria most recently (Reuters 2015a). In the last year, the small nation also arrested over fifty-five Islamists along with nine imams and indicted 32 suspected terrorists this May alone (Hajdari 2015b; News24 2014; Bytyci 2014). According to various estimates, there are currently between 200 to 300 Kosovars in Syria (Mejer 2014; Hajdari 2015b). On a per capita basis, Kosovo has the most militants of any European nation, and due to its unstable institutions, economic troubles, and unfavourable ethnic relations, it is perceived as one of the more vulnerable Balkan nations for extremist activities (Institute for Economics and Peace 2014; McDonagh 2014).

Dogmatic Islamic pockets are also visible among Albanians in Macedonia, where radical Saudi Arabian theologians have been active for years. As with other regions of the Balkans, these agents take over parts of civil society through charitable and educational work—often providing better social goods than inefficient, bickering state apparatuses (Bugajski 2015). Hailed as an example of this creeping dynamic intermixed with nationalist agendas, in May 2015, an alleged terrorist incident took place in the city of Kumanovo in which eight police and fourteen Albanian terrorists, supposedly from Kosovo, were killed (Tumanovska and Coalson 2015). In the aftermath of this attack, Macedonian police arrested nine people out of the 36 believed to have fought alongside Islamist

insurgents in Iraq and Syria (Reuters 2015b). Noting its domestic environment, Macedonia faces particularly high probabilities of terrorist threat politicizations for the sake of government distractions and reactivated ethnic politics.

Serbia faces rising risks as well. Serbian citizens have not been impervious to ISIS recruitment calls, with over 100 of them thought to be fighting in the Middle East (b92 2014b). In addition, Serbia faces unique concerns about its Orthodox Christian citizens joining the fight in Ukraine, siding with the pro-Russian rebels (Jackson 2014; DW 2014). Furthermore, the dangers in Serbia lie in the division of both ethnicities and religious affiliations. Most likely, these divisions are ripe breeding ground for sensationalist declarations of Islamic extremism and exaggerations of threats stemming from Bosnian and Albanian populations.

As with the rest of the Western world, the Balkans is now too experiencing the vulnerabilities that come along with a more open society—with one of them being the rise in public terrorist attempts and recruitment campaigns. It, thus, needs to invest in better systems and infrastructure to eradicate the gradual threat of domestic extremism that is exporting itself across the Mediterranean and into Europe. In the Balkans, even small threats of religiously-motivated terrorism can alter important social dynamics, and contemporary patterns of extremism signal worrisome changes in Balkan nations' cultural landscape. One can sense a subtle transformation from a unique Balkan form of Islam, which has allowed the inhabitants of the peninsula a shot at coexistence, to an im-

ported radicalism that allows little room for multi-religious societies. Perhaps the most worrisome prospect is that hostile Balkan ethnic groups and governments may use threats of terrorism, whether real or constructed, to project other violent political/nationalist agendas.

Preventing a Joint Threat – Creating Unified Political Narratives

All actors aiming to reduce the risk of fundamentalist-driven terrorism in the Balkans must be cautious in their approaches, as they can indirectly contribute to the exaggeration or politicization of threats. Even the most well-intentioned Western actors often fall prey to sensationalist commentaries that automatically correlate Muslim identities with radicalism in a region that remains overwhelmingly pro-West. But isolating the large Muslim communities across the Balkans is counter-productive and aids the terrorists' cause. Many scholars, indeed, claim that it was the neglect and isolation of rural communities by international governments and organizations over the past decade that made it easier for Middle Eastern charity organizations and Islamic groups to gain credibility over Balkan governing elites (Hajdari 2015a).

Western attention to the Balkans has been waning in the past years. The U.S. has lessened its commitments to the region as the Middle East took foreign policy precedence, while NATO-led peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Kosovo have been reduced over the decades—with SFOR's Bosnia mission conclud-

ing in 2004 (Woehrel 2008b). The EU is now the main regional player, attempting a range of state-building, security-maximizing, economy-boosting initiatives in collaboration with Balkan counterparts.

For the most part, Balkan governments have been eager to coordinate with the EU on security issues. They continue to work with the U.S. and the EU to arrest terrorist suspects, shut down non-governmental organizations linked with terrorist activity, and freeze financial assets of suspected terrorists. Since December 2004, the Albanian government has frozen the assets of main organizations (Taibah, International Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, Al Haremein, and Global Relief Foundation) and many individuals identified by the United Nations as suspected of supporting extremist groups (Woehrel 2008a). In the past year, Bosnia has passed a law that sentences convicted Islamists and recruiters up to 10 years in prison (Weinberg 2014). Kosovo and Serbia are also bolstering their anti-terrorism laws, with the Kosovar government prohibiting citizens from fighting in foreign wars (Hajdari 2015b; News24 2014; Bytyçi 2014).

But pure legal maneuvers and rash arrests are not long-term solutions to the threat of terrorist recruitments in the Balkans. Instead of turning Muslim communities into the enemy or the convenient political “other,” domestic and international actors must craft narratives of solidarity that pit both the West and the Balkan’s moderate Muslim communities against the global forces of religious extremism and militarism. After all, ISIS recruitments and Islamic militarism are threats

shared by European, U.S., and Balkan societies alike.

The only way that ISIS and other Islamic militant factions could win over enough Balkan Muslims so as to pose a significant regional threat into the future is to turn these Muslims against the West. In places like Kosovo and Bosnia, this is a very difficult feat, as citizens still remain immensely grateful for NATO’s interventions in the 1990s and for supporting Kosovo’s independence from Serbia. Instead, extremist groups will try to turn the West against Muslims, mainly by provoking governments and international actors into frantic, divisive actions. If extremist factions succeed in making the EU, the U.S., and pro-Western Balkan governments perceive all devout Muslims in the region as potential terrorists, they will inevitably win. States will begin indiscriminate hunts and arrests in Muslim-majority communities and the EU will fail to address its own creeping Islamophobia.

If, however, domestic authorities and international actors are careful not to over-react to terrorist threats and activities, one of the biggest strategies of terrorist groups will fail. Better yet, if domestic, EU, and U.S. authorities explicitly craft joint policy initiatives, anti-terrorism taskforces, and security infrastructures, the message of unity may overtake past messages of religious division, Western vs. non-Western dichotomies, and “us” vs. “them” mentalities that have long characterized Western policies within the Balkans.

It is one thing for the EU and U.S. to throw more highly-regulated or even flexible funding at the Balkans, but it is

another to view the region as an equal partner and planner of European security. Aside from preventing a small, but emerging threat of terrorism, this narrative may also be ideal for other forms of cooperation, such as much needed economic initiatives between fraught Balkan nations and their transatlantic partners. The more the EU and U.S. do to convince the Balkans that it, too, belongs in Europe, through unified social, economic, and security measures, the safer all actors will be from extremist takeover in the long-run.

References

- Abrahms, Max. 2008. "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32, 4: 78-105.
- Azinović, Vlado and Muhamed Jusić. 2015. "The Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters' Bosnian Contingent," *Atlantic Initiative* (<http://atlanticinitiative.org/project-activities-nato-debates/491-new-atlantic-initiative-research-the-lure-of-the-syrian-war-the-foreign-fighters%E2%80%99-bosnian-contingent.html>).
- Banco, Erin. 2014. "Why the Balkans Are Becoming the Transit Point for Foreign ISIS Militants," *International Business Times*, 17 December.
- Bardos, Gordon N. 2014a. "Al Qaeda's Balkan Ties: The Bosnian Connections—An ACD Exclusive," *American Center for Democracy*, 22 August.
- Bardos, Gordon N., 2014b. "Jihad in the Balkans: The Next Generation," *World Affairs Journal*, September/October.
- BBC News. 2015. "Bosnia: Gunman Kills Officer in Zvornik Police Station," *BBC News*, 27 April.
- Borger, Julian. 2015. "Isis Targets Vulnerable Bosnia for Recruitment and Attack," *The Guardian*, 25 June.
- Bugajski, Janusz. 2015. "Balkan Terrorist Threats," *Center for European Policy Analysis*, 18 May.
- Bytyçi, Fatos. 2014. "Kosovo Imams Arrested in Push to Stop Fighters Going to Syria, Iraq," *Reuters*, 17 September.
- b92. 2014a. "Serb Monastery Vandalized with ISIS, KLA Graffiti," b92, 13 October.
- b92. 2014b. "FM: Serbia Supports Fight against Terrorism," b92, 3 December.
- Campbell, David. 1998. *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Centre for Peace in the Balkans. 2004. "Al Qaeda 'Active in Kosovo' Claim Serbs," *Centre for Peace in the Balkans*, 2 February.
- DW. 2014. "Serbian Mercenaries Fighting in Eastern Ukraine," *DW*, 14 August.
- Gordon Meek, J. 2015. "ISIS Aims New Recruitment Video at Balkan Muslims," *ABC News*, 5 June.
- Hajdari, Una. 2015a. "Islamic Extremism 'Imported' to Kosovo, Report Says," *Balkan Insight*, 15 April.
- Hajdari, Una. 2015b. "Kosovo Indicts 32 Suspected Islamist Terrorists," *Balkan Insight*, 8 May.
- Hedges, Chris. 1992. "Muslims from Afar Joining 'Holy War' in Bosnia," *The New York Times*, December 5.
- Holman, Timothy. 2014. "Foreign Fighters from the Western Balkans in Syria," *Combating Terrorism Center: West Point*, 30 June.
- Jackson, Patrick. 2014. "Ukraine War Pulls in Foreign Fighters," *BBC News*, 1 September.
- Jordanovska, Ivana. 2015. "How Low Can He Go?," *Balkanist*, 10 May.
- Institute for Economics and Peace. 2014. *Global Terrorism Index* (<http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/>

Sidita
Kushi

- Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report%202014_0.pdf).
- Kushi, Sidita. 2014. "Ancient Discontent between Serbs and Albanians—Why Real and Imagined Stories Matter Today," *Transconflict* 10 December.
- Likmeta, Besar. 2012. "Survey Shows Balkans Muslims Remain Secular," *Balkan Insight* [online], 17 August.
- Lilyanova, Velina. 2015. "Corruption—Still a Major Problem in Several Western Balkan Countries," *European Parliamentary Research Service*.
- Lyman, Rick. 2015. "Kosovo Charges Five People in Plot to Poison Water," *The New York Times*, 12 July.
- Maroevic, Rade and Daniel Williams. 2005. "Terrorist Cells Find Foothold in Balkans," *Washington Post*, December 1.
- McDonagh, Melanie. 2014. "Letter from Kosovo: Disarray in the Heart of the Balkans," *New Statesman*, November 27.
- Mejer, Jakub. 2014. "Divided Kosovo," *New Eastern Europe*, 9 December.
- Naimark, Norman M. and Holly Case (ed.), 2003. *Yugoslavia and its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- News24, 2014. "Balkan Launch Fight Against Jihadist Recruitment," *News24*, 30 September.
- Ninković, Vladimir. 2013. "From Youtube to Jihad—Balkan Volunteers in Syria," *Transconflict*, 18 July.
- Orzechowska, Ida. 2014. "The Hidden Growth of Islamic Extremism in Kosovo," *New Eastern Europe* [online], 22 August.
- Poggioli, Sylvia. 2010. "Radical Islam Uses Balkan Poor to Wield Influence," *NPR* [online], 25 October.
- Reuters. 2015a. "Five Indicted in Kosovo on Terrorism Charges," *Reuters*, 26 January.
- Reuters. 2015b. "Macedonian Police Arrest Nine for Involvement in Syria and Iraq," *Reuters*, 6 August.
- Tumanovska, Marija and Robert Coalson. 2015. "Government's Claims about Macedonia Terrorist Group Met Sceptically," *Radio Free Europe*, 10 August.
- Uvalić, Milica. 2014. "Structural Weaknesses of the Western Balkan Economies," *Centre for Southeast European Studies: Balkans in Europe Policy Blog*, 25 September.
- Voice of America. 2015. "Bosnia Arrests 12 Linked to Islamic State," *Voice of America*, 15 May.
- Weinberg, Ali. 2014. "ISIS in Iraq, Syria Recruiting Foreign Fighters from Balkans," *ABC News*, 22 October.
- Woehrel, Steven. 2008a. "Islamic Terrorism and the Balkans," *United States Congressional Research Service*, 15 January.
- Woehrel, Steven 2008b. "Future of the Balkans and US Policy Concerns," *United States Congressional Research Service*, 22 May.
- World Bulletin. 2014. "Bosnia: 11 Detained on Terrorism Charges," *World Bulletin* 1 November.

Notes on the author

Sidita Kushi is a doctoral student and instructor in Political Science at Northeastern University. Her research interests include humanitarian military interventions, identity, and security, particularly as applied to Eastern Europe and the Balkans. She also researches political economy dynamics as they intersect with security in post-conflict regions.