New Islamic actors after the Wahhabi intermezzo:
Turkey's return to the Muslim Balkans

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Introduction

The horrific events of 9/11 solidified Western popular interest in Islamic radicalism[2], empowered particular discourses on religion as an all-encompassing identity (cf. Sen 2006) and created new bodies of research. International organizations, governments, academic institutions and independent research centres became keen on supporting a wide range of scholarly explorations of interfaith understanding—issues of identity and Muslim minority politics. Thus, a great many journal articles and edited volumes on Islam in Australia (e.g. Dunn 2004, 2005), Europe (e.g. Nielsen 2004; Hunter 2002), Canada (e.g. Isin and Semiatiki 2002) and the United States (Metcalf 1996) were published mainly by experts on the Middle East, theologians, political scientists, human geographers and anthropologists. Simultaneously, security analysts and think-tankers produced numerous studies on the threat of Islamic terrorism, focusing on the activities of Osama Bin Laden and *Al-Qaida*. It was in this context that a new body of neocon-

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[2] European and American popular interest in Islamist radicalism is surely not a phenomenon of the early 2000s. It can be traced back at least to the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 (cf. Said 1981). In many European countries, a series of crises implicating Muslim immigrant communities marked such rise in interest. In the UK, the fatwa against Salman Rushdie in the late 1980s was such a turning point; and in France, it was the election victory of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria and the following war in the 1990s (Öktem and Abou-El-Fadl 2009). The fear of larger geopolitical conflicts between 'Islam' and the 'West' was later greatly reinforced with the articulation of Huntington's theory on the *Clash of Civilizations* in the early 1990s (Huntington 1993).

servative literature on Islam in the Balkans, primarily concerned with 'security', made its appearance.

Earlier scholarship on Muslims of the European periphery, produced by Orientalists (cf. Norris 1993), more recent anthropological and sociological investigations of memory, nationhood and identity (cf. Ellis 2003; Neuberger 2004), and the historical works of French academics (Clayer 2001; Bougarel 2003; 2005; 2007; Clayer and Germain 2008) are, however, much less accessible to policy-makers (cf. Walt 2005) and the media industry than security-driven publications. Mainly due to their lack of engagement with theory and academic discourses in general, these publications easily captured a popular imagination unsettled by the 9/11 attacks and the American 'War on terror', shaping parts of the public debate on the Balkans in European medias. This distinct body of literature was perfectly isolated from aforementioned scholarly accounts and reproduced particular discourses concerning 'Islamic terrorism'.[3] At the same time, local and international media discussed Muslim presence in Southeast Europe and expressed concerns over the possibility of the Balkans becoming a hotbed of Islamic terrorism, *Salafism* and *Jihadi* terrorism. After all, the region had experienced brutal armed conflict in Bosnia and Kosovo, both conflicts with greater geopolitical repercussions, and the by-effect of state failure, impoverishment and anarchy. Many security analysts and journalists claimed that these were the exact conditions sought by Muslim terrorists in order to establish bases in the region from which they could organize their attacks on western European states and the US.
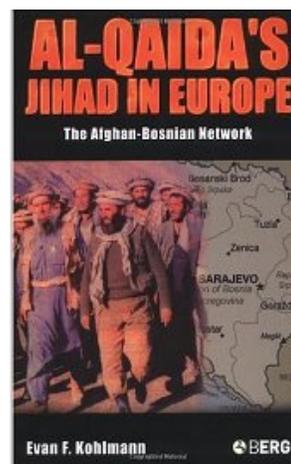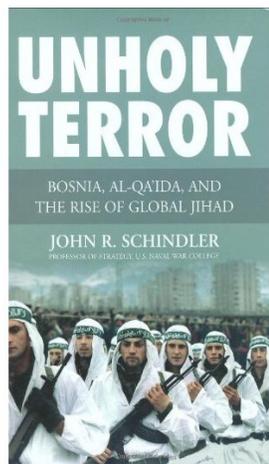
Examples of the security literature on the Balkans, which have had a major atmospheric impact on public debates in Europe and the US.

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[3]   Books were published with such enticing titles as *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qaida and the Rise of Global Jihad* (Schindler 2007), *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network* (Kohlman 2004), *Al Qaeda in Europe: the New Battleground of International Jihad* (Vidino 2006) and *The Coming Balkan Caliphate: the Threat of Radical Islam to Europe and the West* (Deliso 2007).

But is this really the case? Can we talk about a massive threat of Islamic radicalism in the Balkans? Is all influence from the outside world on 'local' or 'European forms' of Islam necessarily a bad thing? Do all Muslims in the area constitute a homogenous and monolithic body of believers? What is the value of statistical information concerning contemporary Muslim presence in Southeast Europe? And finally, how useful is the term 'Muslim' as an analytic category when research moves away from the domains of religious life?

This study of Contemporary Islam in the Balkans addresses these questions in the context of the current state of Muslim affairs in the area while scrutinizing widespread beliefs concerning the possible infiltration of 'alien' 'Wahhabi' and 'Middle Eastern' Islamic traditions and institutions into the Balkan peninsula. Throughout 2010, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Albania, Greece, Bosnia, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Turkey as principal investigator for the British Academy research project 'Contemporary Islam in the Balkans'.[4] The findings, which are presented in this paper, also draw on the workshop at St Antony's College, Oxford, in June 2010, which brought together Eldar Sarajlić, Gëzim Krasniqi, Ali Chouseinoglou, Altin Raxhimi and Dimitris Antoniou and their case studies on Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece and Albania. Both my work and their research identified an important shift in the religious dynamics of the region in terms of actors and ideologies—a shift away from violent conflict, its potentially radicalising effects and the overarching role of Arab and Iranian foundations towards debates on 'national' or 'European' forms of Islam as well as a growing co-operation with Turkish actors. This shift testifies to a sustained but highly differentiated significance of Islam and suggests that Turkey is now becoming a most influential Muslim actor in Southeast Europe, both in terms of formal foreign policy and the low politics of religious networks and brotherhoods, which fill the void left by the expiry of the 'Wahhabi Intermezzo'.

In a brief appraisal of this 'intermezzo' and Turkey's new presence in the Balkans, I will explore the multiple dimensions and the possible constraints for this new 'great brother' in the Balkans. Drawing on my own fieldwork as well as papers of the aforementioned authors, I will first provide a synopsis of the main Muslim communities in Southeast Europe.

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[4] I conducted interviews with members of the Islamic Unions of Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, with the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), as well as with think-tankers, academics and religious actors.

1. Muslim communities in the Balkans: Emigration, De-Islamization and new nationalisms

The Balkans' religious landscape, let alone its Muslim one, is indeed complex and often confusing. The fact that the region's Muslims by no means constitute a homogenous body of believers further complicates this multi-faceted landscape. Popular theories circulating in Greece and Serbia concerning the existence of an 'Islamic diagonal' or a 'Green axis'[5], for example, can be easily deconstructed in light of linguistic, ethnic and theological differences: 'Balkan Muslims' speak different mother tongues (Albanian, Turkish, Slavic languages and Roma dialects); they consist of distinct ethnic groups (Albanians, Slavs, Turks, Pomaks, Torbesh and Roma); and they adhere to different theological traditions (especially mainstream Sunni Islam, *Bektashism* in Albania and Macedonia, *Alevi* communities in Bulgaria, and some strict Salafi communities as a result of the 'Wahhabi intermezzo' in Bosnia and Macedonia). These groups' distinctiveness is shaped by their radically different positions *vis-à-vis* their respective home states, determined by whether they are minorities, majorities or pluralities, and whether they are discriminated against or welcomed by the majority. Additionally, one of the most important distinctions between these groups—and the hardest to represent numerically—is the manner in which they make sense of their own religious identity. The religiosity/secularity distinction cuts across the group identities mentioned above, but in different ways. For Muslims in the Balkans, 'being Muslim' means different things in different places.

The fragmented nature of these identities is further complicated by the specific historical context of gradual 'De-Islamisation' since the 19th century, which has shaped the institutions as well as the sensibilities of Muslims in the Balkans. Forced migration has continued since the early 19th century alongside Ottoman withdrawal from its former European possessions. Episodes of flight and ethnic cleansing peaked during key ruptures and historical turning points, from the independence of Greece in the 1830s and that of the Bulgarian principality in 1878, to the Balkan Wars of 1912-14 and the Greco-Turkish War and the Lausanne Exchange of Populations in the 1920s. Every emerging Christian state in the Balkans eventually coerced at least part of their Muslim populations to flee the country. These early wars and population ex-

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[5] Xavier Bougarel had dismissed the 'Islamic encirclement' and 'radicalisation' narrative as early as 1997, concluding that it would "be unjustified and dangerous to present Balkan Islam and its current evolutions as a threat to Europe. There is no "green axis" in the Balkans, and the Muslim populations of this region are not a crisis factor, but victims and actors among others in a wider regional crisis" (1997: 17). This thoughtful rejection of a biased discourse, however, came just a few years before 9/11, when this narrative became much more pronounced.

changes resulted in around 1.5 million Muslims being evicted or forced to flee, almost exclusively to Turkey (McCarthy, 1995).

The migratory waves of different communities continued unabated after World War II and during the Yugoslav and Communist eras. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims of different ethno-linguistic affiliations migrated to Turkey, whether by choice or by force. In 1950 and 1951, around 150,000 Bulgarian Turks were expelled as a '*fait accompli'* (Bougarel and Clayer, 2001: 30; Höpken 1997: 67). Burcu Akan Ellis (2003) describes in particularly harrowing detail how the 'voluntary' migration treaty between Tito and Prime Minister Menderes led to the exodus of 300,000 Muslims of all ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, via Skopje to Turkey, between 1953 and 1960. The 1953 migrations broke the back of the Turkish communities in Macedonia (Ibrahim, 2010; Selimovski, 2010), also substantially reducing the numbers of other Muslim communities, particularly in the Sandžak, the homeland of most of Turkey's Bosniaks. Finally, a particularly vile episode in the forced emigration of Muslims from the region was the expulsion of over 370,000 Bulgarian Turks after a failed campaign of 'national rebirth' and 'enforced Slavicisation' under the Communist leader Todor Jivkov in 1989. As Höpken reminds us, the euphemistically termed 'Great excursion' became one of the final blows for the Communist regime in Bulgaria (1997: 71, also Ragaru, 2001), but not necessarily for the 'emigration' of Muslims from the region.[6]

These recurring episodes of enforced emigration remain a decisive experience for at least two reasons. First, they underlie the factual roots of the fear of some Muslims in the region of being expelled from their home countries one day, as well as the 'bunker mentality' that is inextricable from this anxiety.[7] Second, these experiences reinforce the deep connections between most Muslim groups in the Balkans with their kin ethnic groups in Turkey, and hence the level of 'familiarity' and 'intimacy', which has often been de-emphasized in equal measure by sending states, nationalist movements, Turkey and even its scholars.[8] This assertion holds particu-

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[6] Probably around half of those who fled Bulgaria in 1989 eventually came back, yet there is a general consensus among community leaders that the most able and successful members of the community and almost all intellectuals remained in Turkey. There is also a significant number of Bulgarian Turks who now live and work in both countries (Gruev, 2010; Ismailov, 2010; Parla Alpan 2006, 20007).

[7] This may also partly account for the ferocity of Albanian nationalism in Macedonia and the particularly fearful withdrawal of urban Muslims from Tetovo and Skopje, which Ellis describes in her closing chapter of 'Shadow Geneaologies', called 'Everything my father is telling you' (Ellis, 2003: 151 ff.)

[8] None of the actors involved in the migratory waves to Turkey seemed to have an interest in dwelling on the event: Bosniaks and Albanians who migrated to Turkey thought of themselves as fully equal citizens of the Turkish Republic; the Turkish Republic imposed a homogenous national identity that was not to be tainted by memories of the old homeland; and the evicting states were happy to have the number of Muslims reduced. More recently, nationalist sentiment among Albanians, and to a lesser extent Bosniaks, has also added to the focal shift away from the immigrant communities in Turkey. There is often a sense of pride that is conveyed,

larly true for Kosovo and Macedonia, where most remaining Albanians and Turks are in close contact with family members living in Turkey, and even more so for Bulgaria and Greece, where channels of interaction with Turkey are even more intensive. It is less so the case for Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where emigration to Turkey occurred mostly in earlier stages, not between the post-War years and the 1990s.

Keeping in mind this history of emigration and stagnation as well as the highly differentiated context of Islam and Muslims in the Balkans, some key demographic and institutional structures still characterise the close to nine million people in the Balkans[9] who identify themselves as Muslim. Demographic material in the region is not very reliable since questions of religious affiliation are not always straightforward to establish. Furthermore, censuses are highly politicised affairs as they might expose facts that are not viewed positively by ruling elites.[10] Censuses in Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia have either been postponed repeatedly or remain contested. Informed guesses on the size and differentiation of Muslim communities in the Balkans can still be made, however, based on the indispensable volume *'Le nouvel Islam balkanique'* by Xavier Bougarel and Nathalie Clayer (2001) and its authors' demographic study of Muslim communities. I have partly updated and adjusted these figures to account for the new countries that emerged after their original research had been conducted.[11]

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Balkans' Muslim presence, despite emigration and violent conflict, is the existence of three countries in which Muslims represent the majority of the population (cf. Table 1). While Albania had been the only Muslim-majority country left in the Balkans after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1912, this changed with the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina[12] in 1991 and Kosovo in 2008. Around six million Muslims live in Kosovo (predominantly Albanian with small Turkish and Slavic speaking populations), Al-

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however, when people in Bosnia claim that "[T]here are probably 3-4 million Bosniaks in Turkey" (Kalajdžić, 2010).

[9] The figure of nine million excludes Muslims in the European provinces of Turkey.

[10] In Macedonia in particular, most Albanians believe that the state is manipulating census data in order to keep the share of Albanians below the constitutionally-significant threshold of 33 per cent (Ismaili 2010; Selimovski, 2010). In Albania, members of the *Komuniteti Musliman* suggest that there have been efforts to manipulate the numbers of Muslims in the census expected for 2011 by counting members of the broadly Muslim *Bektashi* sect separately (Kruja, 2010).

[11] Bougarel and Clayer's study rests on the figures available at the time, which in some cases were very limited. For example, in Albania, where the share of Muslims in the total population was established as 70 per cent in 1942, no recount has ever taken place.

[12] Strictly speaking, Bosnia-Herzegovina is a Muslim plurality country, in which Muslims constitute the largest group, but not the majority. Considering, however, that the Republika Srpska is now almost homogenously Serbian, it is fair to say that the Bosniaks (i.e. the Bosnian Muslims) are the majority in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

bania (almost exclusively Albanian) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bosniak); each country has an approximate population of about two million Muslims. At least 700,000 citizens of Macedonia are of Muslim faith, most of them Albanians and to a much lesser extent Turks, Bosniaks and Roma. These groups constitute slightly less than a third of the entire population as a whole, and probably more.[13] Significant Muslim minorities live in Montenegro and Serbia, particularly in the Sandžak. Even though Bulgaria's Muslim population of Turks (and smaller communities of Slavic-speaking Pomaks and Roma) make up only 14 per cent of the population of Bulgaria, they still amount to more than a million people. Among the smaller Muslim minorities, the mostly Turkish Muslims of Western Thrace in Greece deserve mention. They only account for 130,000 individuals, but are important in terms of Greek-Turkish relations and due to their particular legacy of Ottoman institutions.[14]

Table 1: Approximate number of Muslims in Southeast Europe

Country	Numbers	Share in general population (estimate)	Muslim community
Kosovo	1,800,000	90 %	Muslim majority
Albania *Including Bektashis*	2,300,000	70 %	
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2,200,000	48 %	
Macedonia	700,000	33 %	Very large Muslim minority
Montenegro	110,000	18 %	Significant Muslim minority
Bulgaria	1,100,000	14 %	
Serbia *Sandžak* *Presevo* *Vojvodina*	500,000	5 %	
Greece *Western Thrace[15]*	130,000	1.5 %	Minority Islam
Croatia	50,000	1.3 %	
Romania	50,000	0.3 %	

Based on Bougarel and Clayer (2001: 16) and adjusted with census material and interviews. All figures are rough estimates.

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[13] According to the *Bashkësia Fetare*, the number might be as high as 900,000 with a share of 80 per cent Albanians, 10 per cent Turks and 10 per cent Roma and Bosniaks (Selimovski, 2010).

[14] Due to bilateral agreements and the Lausanne Treaty, the Muslim communities of Western Thrace continue to have access to *Sharia* Courts. Since Greece emerged as one of the destinations for Muslim scholars and dignitaries after the abolition of the Caliphate in Turkey, the Ottoman language in Arabic print was used in newspapers and education well into the 1970s (Chouseinoglu 2010, Katsikas 2009, Bonos 2008).

[15] These numbers exclude the significant numbers of Muslim immigrant communities in the Attiki region of Athens and to a lesser extent in Thessaloniki (Antoniou 2010, Papadopoulou 2004).

In terms of linguistic differentiation, one can ascertain three main language groups. Albanian speakers are the largest Muslim community in the Balkans today, with the language spoken widely in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia.[16] The second largest language group is that of Slavic languages, dominated by Bosnian but also consisting of small groups of Slavic speakers in Kosovo (*Goran*), Macedonia (*Torbesh*), and Bulgaria and Greece (*Pomak*). Turkish speakers account for slightly less than a quarter of the Muslims of the region, with significant numbers in Bulgaria and Greece, and enclaves in Kosovo and Macedonia. Finally, a small group of speakers of Roma languages needs to be mentioned, even though most of them also speak Turkish, Albanian or Slavic languages.

This linguistic diversity suggests a high level of fragmentation and an absence of a space of cultural continuity. If Muslim elites in the region were fluent in Turkish and partly in Arabic up to the inter-War period, and all Muslims in Yugoslavia were educated in Serbo-Croat until the 1990s, new generations educated since the 1990s lack a common language. Particularly Albanian speakers, many of whom used to be bi- or tri-lingual (with command of Serbo-Croat and Turkish, particularly in Kosovo and Macedonia), are now almost exclusively educated in Albanian. There is, hence, no *lingua franca*, which binds the Muslim communities of the Balkans together. It would, however, not be entirely exaggerated to argue that Turkish seems to be making a modest comeback at the level of Muslim elites, due to the educational resources provided by the Gülen movement, Turkish scholarship programmes, as well as Turkish state agencies such as TIKA and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), as we shall see below.[17]

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[16] It is this linguistic continuum, which is increasingly referred to as a larger 'Albanian space' of cultural interaction (Zogiani, 2010), not to be confused with the political project of a 'Greater Albania'.

[17] I conducted most of my interviews with members of Muslim community organisations in Turkish. In Bosnia and Albania, where no indigenous Turkish speakers exist anymore, my counterparts had studied in Turkey or at the Gülen schools, where Turkish is one of the languages of instruction. In Kosovo and Macedonia, Turkish is still spoken widely, at least among the now mostly Albanian urban Muslims.

Table 2: Ethno-linguistic differentiation of Muslim populations in Southeast Europe

Language groups	Presence in countries	Share
Albanian speakers	- Albania - Kosovo - Macedonia - Montenegro	52 %
Slavic speakers	- Bosnia - Torbesh in Macedonia - Pomaks in Bulgaria and Greece - Gorani in Kosovo	32 %
Turkish speakers	- Bulgaria - Greece - Macedonia - Kosovo - Romania	12 %
Speakers of Roma languages	Everywhere in the region, particularly in Bulgaria	4 %

Based on Bougarel and Clayer (2001: 19) and expanded with fieldwork material. All figures are rough estimates.

As shown above, Muslims in the Balkans do not have a common language with which to speak to one other. This notion of linguistic fragmentation becomes even more pronounced in countries composed of two or three neighbouring linguistic groups. This reality not only curtails a 'common sense of Muslimhood', but also can actually fuel inter-ethnic animosities. Languages in the Balkans carry complex historical contingencies that play out differently in each country. Albanians, for example, often associate Gorani (Slavic) speakers in Kosovo and Torbesh (Slavic) speakers in Macedonia with their particularly unwelcome experience of Serbo-Croat rule in the two Yugoslavias (Aruçi, 2008). In Macedonia, good relations between the Turkish minority and the Macedonian state have tarnished the usage of Turkish, a language that had been the common idiom of the Muslim urban classes, the *Şehirli,* in cities such as Skope (Üsküp/Shkup) and Tetovo (Kalkandelen) well into the 1990s (Ellis, 2003; Poulton, 1997).

In both Greece and Bulgaria, language policies benefiting smaller groups within the Muslim minority have led to further resentment. Though state policies have not been fixed in Greece, especially in the 1980s, the Greek state has tended to endorse education in Pomak[18] to counteract the weight of Turkish. Such educational projects, however, failed to reverse a longer-term

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[18] The Pomaks are a particularly interesting case. They inhabit the mountain ranges of the Rhodopi on either side of the Greek–Bulgarian border. Different contexts have led Pomaks to mostly dissociate themselves from Turks in Bulgaria, while assimilating into the Turkish community in Greece (for these differential trajectories of Pomak identity, see Demetriou, 2004; Michail, 2003: Brunnbauer, 1999).

process of Turkification in Western Thrace.[19] In Bulgaria, grand projects of 'rebirth' and 'assimilation' have confronted the Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks with the predicament of choosing between the Bulgarian state, which would prefer them to fully embrace their Bulgarian identity and eventually shed their Muslim faith[20], and the Bulgarian Turks, who expect them to shed their Slavic origins and identify as Turks.[21] This situation contributes to explaining why some Pomak communities in Bulgaria have chosen to orientate themselves towards the religious institutions of the Arab world and the study of Arabic rather than Turkish.[22]

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[19] In this context, it is interesting to note that the ban on the word 'Turkish' and its derivatives in reference to anything concerning the minority population of Western Thrace took place right after the unilateral declaration of independence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983. The more successive Greek governments tried to prevent the emergence of a single Turkish minority consciousness, however, the more 'Pomaks' and 'Gypsies' consolidated into 'Turks'.

[20] In the Kircali area, a Pomak convert to Orthodoxy, Bojan Sarajev, has now established a monastery, which at least Turkish Muslims in the region see as a new strategy to induce Pomaks into conversion (Köseömer, 2010; Gruev, 2010).

[21] The Chief Mufti of Bulgaria, Mustafa Aliş Hacı Efendi, himself of Pomak origin (but Turkish-speaker), firmly placed Pomak identity within the Turkish context. He told me: "We count all Muslims as Turks". When I inquired whether this also included Pomaks, he responded in a way that really brought to the fore the fluidity of Pomak identity: "Yes. The Pomaks are the real Muslims. The Turks have survived with their Turkish ethnic identity, but the Pomaks had to cling to their Turkishness" (Aliş, 2010).

[22] There is a wide consensus among both scholars and members of the Muslim community that the Pomaks in Bulgaria suffered disproportionately from punitive discrimination (Ismailov, 2010; Emin, 2010) and that some Pomak communities have been more exposed to Saudi influences and education in the Arab world. Polygyny and *niqab* occurs at least in some Pomak villages as a direct effect of imams educated in Salafi institutions (Ismailov, 2010). In some villages like Ribnovo and Srnca, Saudi foundations are still active and many Imams have an educational background in Saudi Arabian institutions (Gruev, 2010).

Table 3: Ethno-linguistic differentiation of Muslim populations according to country

Country	Largest ethno-linguistic group	Other ethno-linguistic groups
Kosovo	Albanians	Turkish, Roma, Gorani (Bosnian)
Albania	Albanians	
Bosnia-Hercegovina	Bosniaks	
Macedonia	Albanians	Turkish, Torbesh, Roma
Montenegro	Albanians	Bosniak, Turkish
Bulgaria	Turks	Roma, Pomak
Serbia *Sandžak* *Presevo* *Vojvodina*	Bosniaks	Albanians
Greece *Western Thrace* *Athens (not counted)*	Turks	Pomak, Roma
Croatia	Bosniaks	
Romania	Turks/Tatars	

Based on Bougarel and Clayer (2001: 16) and expanded with fieldwork material and interviews.

An additional layer of differentiation that underlies the complexity of Muslim communities in Southeast Europe concerns their institutional organisation, relations with the state and the majority population, and their attitude towards the Ottoman legacy. All Islamic administrations in the region have evolved from Ottoman structures of religious governance, albeit at different historical moments and in different fashions, and all used to have a special relationship with the institution of the Caliphate and the *Şeyh-ül Islam* in Istanbul. Bosnia-Herzegovina was the first territory to receive a religious administration engineered in the image of Austrian institutions and with the explicit aim to reorient Bosnian Muslims away from the Ottoman Empire. Yet, as Mirnes Kovač, editor of the Islamic Journal '*Preporod'* (Renaissance) emphasises, despite these efforts: "the Reis-ul ulema [the holder of the high Islamic office created by the Austrian government] throughout the monarchy would be praising first Kaiser Franz Joseph in his *hutba*s, and then the Caliph and Sultan in Istanbul" (Kovač, 2010). The final authority lay with the *Meşihat Istambulski* (Omerdić, 2010), the office of the Şeyh-ül Islam.[23]

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[23] As the eminent scholar Fikret Karčić reminds us, the office of the *Reis-al Ulema* in Sarajevo and the organisation of the Bosnian Muslim community developed as an Ottoman institution, and accepted the symbolic sovereignty of Istanbul (Karčić, 2008; 1997).

In Albania, the break with Istanbul was more pronounced because it was initiated by secular Albanian nationalists, implemented by the state, and occurred even before the abolition of the Caliphate in Istanbul. This break led to the establishment of an Albanian religious community called *Diyanet* and an Islamic Congress in 1923 (Clayer, 2008: 129). The isolation of Muslims, as well as other religious groups in Albania, took on a much more dramatic turn with the declaration of the world's first 'atheist state' in 1967 (Clayer, 1997: 115). In all other cases, the religious communities were established on the basis of bilateral agreements with the Ottoman Empire and carry an Ottoman imprint in terms of organisation and doctrinal orientation, which neither the Habsburgs nor the Yugoslav rulers seem to have eradicated completely. Even though the Rijaset in Sarajevo administered all Muslim religious affairs since the 1930s, neither of the two Yugoslav states outlawed religion as such. In the 1980s, Yugoslav authorities even tolerated a moderate Islamic renaissance.[24] This renaissance was helped by the survival of Sufi religious brotherhoods or *tarikats* through the socialist era, allowing for a continuity in Muslim practice and identity that is particular to the Balkans and to the Ottoman heartlands, where most of them originated. These *tarikats*, particularly in Macedonia and Kosovo, continued to maintain low-profile contacts with their equally ostracised counterparts in Turkey, where the lodges were outlawed in 1925. No such contacts were, however, possible between Turkey and the communities in the more restrictive regimes of Albania and Bulgaria, where the lodges were closed down.

Attitudes towards the Ottoman legacy are also historically contingent. The further east a country is located, the more positively its Ottoman legacy and religious dimension seem to be evaluated. In Bosnia, the Empire is often remembered as an ambiguous legacy: the empire is revered by many for introducing Islam, but scolded for having abandoned the Bosniaks to the Austrians in the 19th century (Resić, 2010).[25] It is often firmly rejected by the majority of secular elites in Albania proper, who think of the legacy in terms of a backward religious empire that drew an essentially European Albania into the Orient.[26] In Kosovo and Macedonia, lay

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[24] In comparing the situation in Yugoslavia and particularly in Kosovo with both Turkey and other Balkan countries, Şeyh Abidin Efendi, who inherited the chair of the Prizren Halveti lodge from his father, stated that "Like in Turkey, there has been a rupture here, but the tekkes were never closed. Individuals were discouraged to come. But the places of worship always stayed open" (Abidin, 2010).

[25] Such ambiguity goes alongside strong shows of support during sport events. A good example was the WM match between Turkey and Croatia in 2008, when thousand of Bosniak fans went out to the streets of Sarajevo waving Turkish flags [http://bosnianfootballculture.blogspot.com/2008/06/turmoil-in-bosnia-after-turkey-croatia.html].

[26] For a detailed overview of the debate in Albania and the often Islamophobic attitudes towards Ottoman history and Muslim identity, including a critique of Albanian novelist Ismail Kadare's principled stand against the Ottoman past and Islam, see Olsi Yazexhi's article on 'The Political Exploitation of Islamophobia in post–communist Albania' (Yazexhi, 2010).

Muslims and functionaries of the Muslim religious communities alike generally hold the former empire in high esteem, generalize the sentiment to Turkey, and consider their practice and meaning of Islam as a decidedly Ottoman and Turkish one.[27] This attitude is shared by secular observers, such as Krenar Gashi (Director of the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development, KIPRED) who suggests that Islam in Kosovo is: "Turkish-style Islam… The Islam here is the Islam that the Turks have brought in" (Gashi, 2010), while the director of the Museum of the Prizren League, Parim Kosova argues that "if it was not for the Ottomans, there would be no Albanians today… and we would have become Serb or Greek" (Kosova, 2010). A sentiment that had been surfacing now and again during my interviews was captured by the *Şeyh* of the *Halveti* lodge, a Sufi brotherhood in the *Saraqhane* neighbourhood of Prizren: "It is the Turks who have brought Islam thus far. It is also the Turks who abolished the Caliphate. The one and only audible voice of Islam was muted. If there is any country, which can now bring this voice back, and carry Islam further, it is Turkey" (Abidin, 2010).

The most intriguing insight, which emerged from interviews with leaders of the Islamic Communities (see Table 4), is the fact that only the three Muslim-majority countries—Kosovo, Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina—seek to maintain fully secular regimes in which all religious communities are effectively separated from the state. In all three cases, disestablishment is anchored in both constitutional provisions and public policies of governments, which stress maintaining equidistance to all religious groups in the country. In Albania, for instance, all four major religious groups, Muslims, Bektashis, Catholics and Orthodox, are recognised (Kruja, 2010). In some cases, equidistance can even result in disadvantaging the majority-community. According to community leaders in Kosovo and Albania, for example, municipal governments in Tirana and Prishtina, despite being dominated by (secular) Muslims, discriminate against the Muslim community by refusing building permits for mosque projects in the city centre while actively encouraging the building of Catholic and Orthodox Cathedrals. Many municipal governments view these circumstances as demonstrative of the 'European-ness' of Albanian culture, referencing the Christian roots of pre-Ottoman Albania (Hajrullahu, 2010),[28] while an increasing number of intellectuals also believe that they "do not have to be ashamed of being Muslim" (Krasniqi, 2010).

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[27] The mufti of Prizren, Lütfü Balık, during an interview in a café in downtown Prizren, confided that "Turkey is our great brother in spiritual terms. If it was not for Sultan Murat, I would not have been a Mufti but a Priest" (Balık, 2010).

[28] This has been brought to my attention by several interview partners in Prishtina and Tirana, where prayer space in the central town is indeed very limited to only a few Ottoman mosques, many of which are now under reconstruction (Kruja, 2010; Hajrullahu, 2010). In both countries, political elites have emphasised the existence of Christian minorities, to de-emphasise the Muslim identity of the majority (Krasniqi, 2010). The unin-

Divisions over doctrine are significant in some countries, particularly in Albania, where a significant proportion of Muslims adhere to the *Bektashi* sect, which has played an important role in the emergence of secular Albanian nationalism, but which differs in doctrine and praxis from the Orthodoxy of Sunni Islam. In Macedonia, there is a more pronounced conflict between the *Bektashi*[29] and Sunni communities, particularly over the right to use real estate (i.e. brotherhood lodges). Even though there is also an *Alevi*[30] community in Bulgaria (Gruev, 2010), it is insignificant in terms of numbers and political influence. In fact, and despite the aforementioned divisions, there is also a layer of common reference, which is thin at the moment, yet may play a more important role in the near future: the overwhelming majority of Muslims in the Balkans adhere to a mainstream Sunni Islam of the *Hanafi* school of Islamic jurisprudence, a tradition they share with the majority of Muslims in Turkey.[31]

All countries with significant Muslim minorities in the region are in principle secular, but in Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, Orthodoxy has an elevated status of 'preferred' or 'traditional' religion (Yalimov, 2010; Pajaziti, 2010) both in constitutional and in every-day life terms. These incompletely secular arrangements result in state-community relations fraught with tension, albeit to different degrees. In Macedonia, where the Muslim community has now become largely synonymous with the country's sizable Albanian population, the 'Islamic Union' (*Bashkësia Fetare Islame*) is left to operate relatively freely, even though functionaries complain of intelligence operations and observations against some of its mosques, in which *Salafi*-leaning preachers maintain a presence (Selimovski, 2010).[32]

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tended side-effect of these policies is that mosque congregations often unwillingly spill out on to the pavements during Friday prayers in Prishtina (Karabaxhakiu, 2010) and in Tirana's small but iconic Ethem Paşa mosque on Skanderbeg Square, which biased observers then cite as proof of growing Islamisation.

[29] The *Bektashi* are a Sufi brotherhood with roots in the Turkish town of *Hacıbektaş*. The brotherhood played a major role in the Islamisation of the Balkans in the 16th and 17th centuries, despite its relatively heterodox Shia origins and its proximity to the *Alevi*. Even though the sect remains strong in Turkey, it held a particularly important role in the formation of Albanian nationalism and took on a more decidedly Albanian orientation after the lodge was closed down in Turkey in the 1920s. Today, relations between both *Bektashi* organisations have been revived.

[30] Like the *Bektashi,* the *Alevis* are a heterodox community with distant relations to Shia Islam and developed mainly among Turks and Kurds, initially in Eastern Anatolia on the border with Safavid Iran. *Alevi* faith today is still rather localised, yet boasts at least 10 million adherents in Turkey. Due to a very different set of practice and doctrine, *Alevis* are often seen as heretics by Sunni Muslims. In Bulgaria, *Alevis* are located in the central Balkan range and particularly in the village of Yablamovo, where they constitute a compact community of 5-6,000 people (Gruev, 2010).

[31] The *Hanafi madhab* was the dominant school among the Turks and in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It is often described as more flexible (and sometimes, less convincingly, as more liberal). In the Arab world, the predominant *madhabs* are *Shaafi*, *Hanbali* and *Maliki*.

[32] There are Salafi preachers who have established a presence in half a dozen of mosques in Skopje, and who tend to engage in provocative acts against the Islamic Union (Ismaili, 2010). Some members of the Union

Table 4: Relations between official Muslim communities and the state

Official Muslim Community	View of the Community	Role of state	Anti-Muslim sentiment	
Kosovo *Bashkësie Islame*	Legitimate but discriminated against	Secular/ Equidistant to all religions	n/a	Majority Islam Islam in competition with secular Muslims
Albania *Komuniteti Musliman*	Legitimate but discriminated against	Secular/ Equidistant to all religions	n/a	
Bosnia-Herzegovina *Islamska Zajednice (IZ)*	Legitimate and supported	Secular/ Formally equidistant to all religions, yet strong relations between the Federation and the IZ	Present in other communities	
Macedonia *Bashkësia Fetare Islame (Makedonya Islam Birligi)*	Legitimate but discriminated against	Secular, but Orthodoxy has elevated status Muslims are free in the organisation of their community life	Present	Significant Minority Islam Contested
Bulgaria *Bulgaristan Başmüftülüğü*	Heavily discriminated against	Secular, but Orthodoxy has preferred status as 'traditional religion', state interferes with and obstructs community life	Prevalent after 9/11, Anti-Muslim, anti-Turkish Party (ATAKA) supports government, Regular attacks on mosques	Significant Minority Islam Beleaguered
Serbia *Islamska Zajednica (Belgrade) Islamska Zajednica (Novi Pazar)*	Conflict over the Belgrade and Novi Pazar-based mufti	Orthodoxy preferred, state interferes with community life.	Prevalent, but change in state attitude	Significant Minority Islam Contested
Greece *elected Muftis of Komotini/ Gumuljina Xanthi/ Iskeçe Appointed Muftis*	Strong conflict between elected and appointed muftis.	Orthodoxy is considered part of Greek national identity. Highly suspicious of 'Muslim' minority, with a tendency to change	Prevalent, existence of nationalist party with Anti-Muslim discourse (LAOS)	Beleaguered Islam

Based on fieldwork research and interviews with the Islamic Unions of Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia and Bulgaria.

In all other Southeast European countries with significant Muslim minorities, the state tends to interfere with the religious administrations: state agencies and courts override the election of religious representatives by lay people and often appoint *muftis* against the will of the laity. In Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, parallel institutions with state-appointed *muftis* are pitted against those with popularly elected *muftis* (cf. Chouseinoglou 2010; Aliş, 2010; Emin, 2010; Ismailov, 2010). Both in Bulgaria and Greece, these incompletely secular arrangements coincide with high levels of Islamophobic sentiment, expressed by anti-Muslim political parties such as ATAKA and LAOS, and characterised by recurring violent attacks against mosques and cemeteries. In Bulgaria, a particular problem remains the obstruction of the accreditation and exten-

wonder whether the Salafi preachers might not be manipulated by actors within the Macedonian security services to tarnish the Muslim community.

sion of the Islamic Institute in Sofia of the Chief Mufti, which would create better conditions for the education of imams and religious scholars in Bulgaria (Köseömer 2010; Chouseinoglu, 2010; Ismailov 2010). This experience of unsympathetic state behaviour[33] and popular disaffirmation contributes to a sense of being 'beleaguered' and 'unwelcome', particularly among more pious Muslims who attend mosques on a regular basis and experience the discrimination more acutely.[34]

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

As this brief exploration of the demographic, religious, ethno-linguistic and institutional differences among Muslims in the Balkans suggests, the term 'Balkan Muslims' or 'Islam in the Balkans' is a highly misleading one. The concept needs to be used with great caution as it implies the notion of a 'common Muslimness', or a collective identity bridging different countries, languages and historical origins. 'Being Muslim' is often a very local affair and only one of many identities, i.e. national, ethno-linguistic (and, though not discussed here, those of class and gender). In addition to ethnic, religious and linguistic fragmentation—which is considerable—Muslim communities in the Balkans must also negotiate diverse institutional and societal frameworks that range from majority to minority status, from secular regimes to arrangements which privilege the Orthodox Church, and from societies where Islam holds a generally positive connotation to more Islamophobic contexts. At the same time, a layer of institutional and doctrinal persuasion is apparent (expressed in the historical orientation towards Istanbul's religious authorities, the prevalence of the *Hanafi* school and the presence of *tarikats*), permeating most of the region's Muslim communities. Attitudes towards Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, however, vary greatly. These sentiments range from general dismissal among the secular elites of Albania, to ambiguous scepticism in Bosnia, and to high levels of sympathy and intimacy in Macedonia and Kosovo. Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria and Greece tend to orientate themselves toward Turkey by default, despite the virulently anti-Ottoman historical education

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[33] A member of the Mufti's office described the barrage of court cases surrounding the election of the mufti and the delaying tactics of the state with regard to the construction and accreditation of the Islamic Institute in the following manner: "This is a state reflex. At the first sight, it looks perfectly legal, as if there were no politics involved. But when you look closer, it is a completely different story".

[34] In Bulgaria, if not in Greece, earlier assimilationist projects undertaken by Todor Jivkov still influence state action. Many Muslims and Turks do, in fact, assimilate, a fact that is not welcome amongst the organised Muslim Community and the Turkish minority (Ali
ş, 2010; Köseömer, 2010). Even though assimilation is certainly a very problematic policy which runs against European human and minority rights norms, it is also fair to say that it creates ways of being accepted into mainstream society, reducing experiences of feeling 'unwelcome' and 'beleaguered'. As a matter of fact, especially for Turks in Bulgaria who insist on their ethnic and religious differences, migration to Turkey is always an easier path than the fight for change and recognition (Emin, 2010).

and anti-Turkish sentiment in the public sphere. The Balkan landscape of Islam remains a complex one.

2. The 'Wahhabi intermezzo'

In contrast to the publications and public debates on 'Islamic extremism in the Balkans', this research strongly suggests that 'Salafism', 'Wahabism', 'Jihadi terrorism' or 'takfiri Islamism'[35], all used rather loosely as synonyms for allegedly growing Islamic radicalism, represent a predominantly marginal phenomenon, which is now waning. The phenomenon is a manageable security issue, involving no more than a few thousand potential extremists in the entire region, most of whom have given up violent struggle and withdrawn to *Salafi*, i.e. radically conservative but often quietist lifestyles, and fewer still, who are probe to violence and under effective observation by internal intelligence services. This is not meant to say that there is no security threat from members of radical Islamist groupings in the Balkans. It is, however, clear that this threat is largely contained—the transnational networks of '*Jihadi*' fighters who came to Bosnia from the Arab world and Iran in the 1990s are almost completely dismantled.[36] Security experts suggest that there are less than 3,000 individuals in Bosnia who could be defined as exerting 'Wahhabi' or 'Salafi' sympathies, and only very few of them are in fact potentially violent (Antunez, 2010).

Indeed, strict Muslim communities are a rarity, while Salafi influences in terms of dress, polygamy and piety remain limited to the specific cases of some Pomak villages and Roma settlements in Bulgaria and to some quarters and villages in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The presence of these enclaves relates to the persistence of severe discrimination and poverty. These conditions have encouraged an acceptance of Salafi mission groups as a form of insulation against an in-

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[35] In public debates in the Balkans and elsewhere, these terms are used in very loose fashion to refer to almost anything that is related to Islam. They do, however, mean different things. Salafism is based on a strict and purist interpretation of Islam, whose adherents seek to live like the disciples of the prophet during his lifetime. While this conservative lifestyle often comes with austere clothing and life arrangements, and is promoted by many Saudi foundations, it is not, per se, violent. Neither is Wahhabism, which shares many of the tenets of Salafism, but has become the dominant form of Islam in the Arab peninsula due to its adoption by the ruling elites of the Al-Saud royal family of Saudi Arabia. 'Takifiri Islamists' are particularly exclusive Islamists that declare dissenters as 'apostates' (*takfir*) who can be legitimately killed. Takfiri thinking is at the root of violent Islamist movements and also widespread among 'Jihadi terrorists' like Al Qaeda and related networks. Many fighters, who joined the Bosniak war effort were also Jihadis (religious fighters), but only some of them were violent takfiris.

[36] The question of foreign fighters' involvement in the Bosnian War has also been answered selectively. While the presence of Islamic voluntaries has been discussed widely in the security-related literature, almost no mention has been made of the Greek volunteers, which joined the Serbian army on grounds of religious solidarity, and committed war crimes against the Muslim populations.

secure environment (Pomaks) or due to the consequences of war and the destruction of livelihoods in Bosnia and rural Kosovo. Yet even in disaffected regions, where war has destroyed the local economy and turned farmers into the destitute jobless, conservative life-styles are the exception—we "are still only talking about one percent of the general population" (Gashi, 2010). If one were to speak in long-term trends, the contention is justified that "Wahhabism in its original form seems to have entered a process of terminal decline in the Balkans" (Oruç, 2010).

This, however, was not always so. Throughout the 1990s, Saudi and Gulf-based religious networks and charity organisations have been rather active. The post-conflict years in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia were particularly important, as disenfranchised rural populations were impoverished and became dependent on the food handouts and services provided by missionary foundations (Bougarel 2007, Blumi 2005). In Albania, where the Islamic Union had been literally destroyed with the 1967 declaration of state atheism, religious foundations from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf almost exclusively funded the reconstitution of community life. The Islamic Union was re-established in 1990, and all *medrese* (religious secondary schools) that opened in the 1990s were financed with Gulf capital and employed teachers with a strict understanding of Islam. As a senior representative of the Islamic Community holds, "[T]he Wahhabi influence was considerable at least until 2001. Arab foundations brought practices that were not part of Albanian and Ottoman culture" (Kruja, 2010).

It was also around this time that scholarships and educational programmes from foundations in the Gulf channelled aspiring *imams* and religious scholars to study in Cairo's Islamic University of *Al Azhar,* Medina or at other Islamic universities in the Arab world, creating alternatives to the higher Islamic institutes in Sarajevo and Skopje, whose operations were impaired by war and ethnic conflict. Many of the imams studying in these universities were exposed to Salafi teachings, schools of jurisprudence and lifestyles that were austere and held little resemblance to the Ottoman Hanefi tradition, as they surivived in the context of secular Communist regimes. Some of these imams returned home with a hardened spirit and a politicised theocratic world-view, which they then tried to instil in their communities. As a senior functionary of the *Rijaset* in Sarajevo estimated, "the majority of muftis in Bosnia graduated from *Al Azhar* or other schools in the Arab world" (Kalajdžić, 2010). This, however, is as much an effect of a Yugoslav policy to send imams and religious scholars to study in non-aligned Arab countries as to a member of NATO, namely Turkey.[37]

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[37] This policy of re-orienting the region's Muslims away from Turkey was not limited to Yugoslavia and the Communist states, who viewed Turkey with suspicion because of its membership in Atlantic and European

The influence of such charity work and Islamic mission has been documented widely. New and more rigorous forms of worship entered the scene, clashing with both traditional Ottoman religious practices and with watered-down religious identities and conventions of the Communist years. New mosques, built with money from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, states looked differently; their architects broke with the intricate ornamentation of Ottoman mosques and introduced austere interiors, where playfulness and notions of Ottoman high architecture, exuberant Neo-Baroque or humble but warm vernacular architecture, used to be the norm. A regional head of the Turkish Development Agency TIKA, Zülküf Oruç, describes the *modus operandi* of Salafi and Wahhabi organisations and also part of their attraction for some Muslims in the Balkans:

> When the Wahhabis restore Ottoman mosques, they destroy all signs of civilisation in the mosque. Wahhabis don't have a conception of civilisation and hence are hostile to Ottoman tradition. This approach does, however, liberate Islam from the monopoly of the Turks. Hence it is tolerated in some countries, where the influence of Turkey is not welcome (Oruç, 2010).

Finally, and most visibly, certain forms of *hijab* (head and body covering) appeared in cities and towns, first in Bosnia and then in Kosovo.[38] Such forms of *hijab* had been invisible for at least five decades, and probably nonexistent before then, in these areas. The preachers and missionaries from the Arabian peninsula, often imbued with a purist and authoritarian spirit of 'Salafism', however, had an ideological disadvantage which curtailed their impact on the region's Muslims, despite the generous supply of charity and development aid—they approached the Muslims of the Balkans as godless people who had forgotten the true Islam. Ignorant of local conventions, religious syncretism and interfaith traditions that flowered in the centuries of Ottoman rule, unsympathetic to both the dominant Sunni school of Hanafism and the *Bektashi* and *Alevi* traditions, Arab missionaries' messages were perceived as too arrogant and too removed from the region's Muslim identities to make real inroads into the society at large.[39] The oft-cited quote from the former Mufti of Kosovo and current Kosovar Ambassador to Saudi

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structures, but was a policy endorsed by Greece as well. One should also remark that until the 1980s, the number of theology faculties in Turkey was very limited and the Turkish state was not interested in promoting religious education, a circumstance that changed decisively in the 1980s under the Premiership of Turgut Ozal, yet that had little effect on the educational orientation of Muslims in the Balkans.

[38] Both in Macedonia and Greece, conservative dress had never been fully abandoned, and remained visible in cities and villages in both countries.

[39] Where Salafi missionaries and Saudi education made a major difference, however, is among those communities that could only identify and distinguish themselves from other groups through their religion. Hence, particularly in Slavic speaking Muslim communities in Bulgaria (Pomaks) and Macedonia (Torbesh), Salafi forms of Islam had a greater impact on every-day life practices, as some members of both groups tried to distance themselves from the Turkish 'big brother', i.e. from the numerically and politically stronger Turkish or Albanian communities.

Arabia, Rexhep Boja in 1999 was emblematic: "Albanians have been Muslims for more than 500 years and they do not need outsiders [Arabs] to tell them what is the proper way to practice Islam" (cited from Blumi, 2005:1).

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Saudi-funded transnational Islamic activism in the Balkans did not have the effect ascribed to it by the majority of security-driven literature. Local Muslim communities, particularly those in post-conflict contexts, did welcome the aid and the reconstruction programmes. Some communities took on a more Salafi outlook physically, but on the whole, this is where Saudi and Emirati influence stopped. Most established communities tried to follow the motto 'your support is welcome, but do not mess with our own affairs'. With the 9/11 attacks in 1999 and the ensuing 'war on terror', most actors with even the faintest connection to transnational Arab Islamic networks and Salafi forms of Islam were progressively squeezed out of the Balkans. All interviewed representatives of the Islamic Unions of the region agreed that since the early 2000s, Salafi and Wahhabi groups from Arabia had to withdraw as the US took measures against the possibility of Al Qaeda launching operations from the Balkans. In Albania, the situation was particularly pronounced as "most of the foundations were closed down. Probably 90 per cent of the members of Arab foundations were asked to leave the country" (Kruja, 2010). This situation resulted in all educational institutions of the Islamic community in Albania being closed down due to a lack of funding. Elsewhere, Islamic communities lost funding at a time when they were most needed to maintain a grip on centripetal forces. The withdrawal of most Saudi funds, however, significantly disrupted the influence of Islamic actors from outside the region and limited their ability to induce a hegemonic shift in the way Islam was lived and experienced in the Balkans.

3. Turkey's new presence in the Balkans

As I have sought to show, the 'Wahhabi Intermezzo' appears to be over. This does not mean that some radical religious organisations, Muslim or otherwise, do not operate in the region, and have a visible presence in some disaffected villages or certain mosques in Sarajevo or Skopje. It does mean, however, that a hegemonic turn that would have destroyed the foundations of Islam in the Balkans—the Ottoman, mostly Hanefi heritage—and introduced a strict, conservative Salafism, has not taken place and is very unlikely to do so in the future. The established Islamic Unions of the Balkans are mostly in control of the majority of mosques and preachers, and the political elites seem to support local forms of Islamic practice, promoted as 'European Islam', 'traditional Islam' or simply 'our Islam'. These nationalising ascriptions notwithstanding, Islam, as all other universalist religions, thrives on interactions between its followers, religious scholars, preachers and theologians. The high-end of Islamic theological education is still very much dependent on the leading institutions of Islamic teachings, which are located mostly outside the Balkans (with the Islamic Faculty in Sarajevo being the sole credible exception). Finally, the realisation of large-scale operations such as the annual *hajj* pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia requires organisational capacities and financial resource often unavailable in what remains a generally poor region. So, what happened after the 'Wahhabi intermezzo' faded out in the late 1990s and how did the Islamic communities cope after the loss of their sponsors?

It would not be exaggerated to argue that it was Turkey and Turkish faith-based organizations that stepped in. The new Turkish presence in the Balkans has been some time in the making, and was being discussed in scholarly as well as security circles as early as the mid-1990s. Since then and until the late 90s, Turkey's presence in the region was limited to the realm of high politics and constrained by the secularist and Kemalist religious outlook of the Turkish Republic (cf. Kentel, 2001). Turkish Foreign Policy was clearly placed in the context of international organizations (e.g. participation in the KFOR forces in Kosova) and the country's diplomatic representatives did not interact with local religious actors, but with state agencies or ethnic Turkish organisations that were acting on a pan-Turkish nationalist platform. The 'ethnic kin-state' model, which Poulton detected in 1997, however, was already being challenged by Islamic networks beginning to operate in the region. There were also many contacts at the grassroots levels, between brotherhoods and charities close to the Turkish *Milli Görüş* net-

work[40], the mainstream, and non-violent Turkish Islamist movements in Turkey and Europe. Yet, most of these actions were disconnected, and, more importantly, often viewed suspiciously by Turkish foreign policy actors and dismissed by members of the Turkish diplomatic service as unsecular (Gangloff, 2001; Ibrahim, 2010).

Ferhat Kentel had argued in 2001 that a 'crisis in Turkish national identity' (Kentel, 2001: 357) limited Turkey's standing in the Balkans. It stemmed from the mismatch between two domains, he argued: On the one side, the country's inward-looking, Kemalist, secularist and nationalist official ideology only allowed for a pan-Turkish, ethnicity-based policy. On the other, economic and political expediency dictated the need to extend the country's foreign policy reach beyond Turkish-speaking communities and the diaspora in Western Europe. It was Turgut Özal, iconoclastic Prime Minister of the 1980s and President of the early 1990s, who began the shift away from isolationist Kemalism towards a more historical and pro-Ottoman imagination of the neighbourhood and a more global engagement with the world (Danforth, 2008). He was followed by Ismail Cem, visionary Foreign Minister of the late 1990s and early 2000s, who postulated the principles for Turkey's future in the world: "If Turkey is to become a country that matters in the world, it first has to embrace its past as an imperial power and to engage with its immediate neighbourhood" (Öktem, 2011: 170). With the victory of the moderate-Islamist Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi,* AKP) in the 2002 elections, this mismatch was resolved in favour of Cem's postulate. Previously shunned by traditional foreign policy elites, the Ottoman Empire, religious legacies and partners in Muslim communities were now accepted as legitimate.

The AKP government opted for a new mode of engagement in the region, which significantly widened the scope of the country's regional influence. In cooperation with religious networks and charities from Turkey (especially the Gülen movement and Turkey-based foundations close to the government), Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül (now President) and his successor, Ahmet Davutoğlu, introduced a new mode of politics that surpassed the confines of conventional diplomacy and high politics, reaching out into the micro-level of community organisations and grassroots politics. This multifaceted policy was complemented by the activities of faith-based organizations such as the Gülen network and groups closer to the Justice and Development Party and the Islamic brotherhoods of the *Nakşibendi* tradition. Recalling the US

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[40] *Milli Görüş*, Turkey's mainstream Islamist movement with ties to the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt became most organised in Germany in the 1970s, where it could operate beyond the confines of the secular Turkish republic. The mosques of the *Milli Görüş* movement became the first ports of call for Bosniaks, who migrated to Germany and did not establish their own mosques for fear of attracting scrutiny from the Yugoslav intelligence services. Hence, *Milli Görüş* was one of the first Muslim organisations to enter thanks to its interpersonal contacts (Kovač, 2010).

presence in the late Ottoman Empire, which was predominantly established by Protestant mission schools of the American Board[41], the new Turkish presence in the Balkans is most visible in the schools and universities of the Gülen network[42] (such as the Burç University in Sarajevo and Epoka University in Tirana) and the *Nakşibendi* brotherhood (Sarajevo International University).

Even at a government level, Turkey's new role as a transnational Muslim power was welcomed by some, if not by all, governments. In the eyes of the international community and states such as Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, Turkey was viewed as a country capable of promoting 'moderate Islam' in the region, seen especially by the US administration under George W. Bush as the antidote to more virulent strands of Islam. This was a challenge that the Justice and Development government under Tayyip Erdoğan was ready to take on. It was hence the new geostrategic context, or the windfall effect of 9/11, which significantly facilitated Turkey's new role in the region as 'moderate Islamic actor', rather than as 'secular Muslim country'.

When we now speak of the 'Turkish presence' in the region, we can differentiate between a range of domains and levels in which Turkish actors operate, mostly within the new Islamic consensus of the Justice and Development government, but sometimes also in conflict within and against it. In the realm of Turkey's diplomacy in the region, much indeed has changed. One only needs to invoke the tripartite meetings that the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu conducted in 2009 and 2010 with Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as with Croatia. These meetings culminated in the accreditation of the Bosnian Ambassador to Serbia (postponed for years)[43] and the adoption of the 'Srebrenica Resolution', a formal apology by the parliament of Serbia that represented a significant step towards regional reconciliation (cf. Sarajlić 2010).

It is mostly on the level of 'low-politics', however, that the Turkish presence made a difference in terms of Muslim communities, and also where the face of Turkish foreign policy changed most decisively. Four such domains and the interactions between them are of particular importance: the intellectual and political networks around Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu;

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[41] The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission established a highly influential network of mission schools and educational institutions that created English-speaking and pro-American elites, especially among the non-Muslim communities of the empire, but also among members of the Muslim elites.

[42] The Gülen colleges are highly successful primary and secondary schools that operate in all countries of the region with the exception of Greece and Bulgaria.

[43] This was one of the important developments that unlocked Serbian-Bosnian relations and elevated Turkish-Serbian relations to a very friendly level. In July 2010, Serbia abolished the visa regime for Turkish passport-holders.

non-conventional foreign policy actors of the Turkish state such as the Turkish development agency (TIKA) and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet); and finally Islamic grass-roots organisations, such as the Gülen movement and Islamic brotherhoods. While these organisations often compete over resources and audiences in their home country, they seem to be more united in the Balkans, at least on first sight. They share a common imaginary of neo-Ottomanism and Turkey's responsibilities in the former imperial domains, ideas that have been at the core of the Turkish education system ever since the 1980s and have been almost universally internalised. Yet, is the Ottoman narrative strong enough to pull together disparate institutions form Turkish state actors to religious brotherhoods, which have been at odds with the Turkish state for much of the last century and unite them under a common Turkish policy for the Balkans and its Muslims communities?

3.1   Intellectual and interpersonal networks: Davutoğlu's role as Islamic intellectual

There is little doubt that Ahmet Davutoğlu is the major driving force of Turkey's 'proactive and multi-dimensional' foreign policy (Keyman, 2009), even though the foundations for his regional foreign policy go back to the former Prime Minister and President Turgut Özal in the late 1980s and the Foreign Minister Ismail Cem of the late 1990s. The former two statesmen had come to the conclusion that Turkey's future lay in a proactive engagement with its neighbourhood and its Ottoman legacy. Yet, it was Ahmet Davutoğlu who embedded this Ottoman reference into a reconsideration of the role of the West and of Turkey from a decidedly Islamic or intellectual-Islamist position. Davutoğlu's residency as Professor of Political Science at the International Islamic University in Malaysia (IIUM) between 1990 and 1995 was a particularly important period in his career, alerting him to the fact that "[t]he majority of people in the world do not live in the West, and we have to be aware that their concerns and traditions are every bit as important as those of the West".[44] His term in Kuala Lumpur was of importance also, because the IIUM was home to a large number of students particularly from Bosnia-Herzegovina and to a lesser extent from Macedonia. These students were studying there thanks to networks established during the term of Alija Izetbegović as President of Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1990 and 2000.

The Bosnian War of the early 1990s played a significant role in creating the conditions for the emergence of a network of Islamist thinkers and actors, who, unlike Islamist movements in the Arab world, were operating within more or less democratic and secular systems. Together with Izetbegović, Malaysia's powerful Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who ruled the country

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[44]   Keynote lecture at the Oxford Conference 'Turkey's Foreign Policy in a Changing World', 30 May, 2010.

throughout the 1980s and 90s, and the Turkish *Milli Görüş* under Necmettin Erbakan were part of a larger attempt to develop counter-hegemonic global Muslim politics that were mostly peaceful and engaged in dialogue with European and American institutions.[45] Davutoğlu was very much part of this larger intellectual and political project, and so was the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which was established after a split within the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi)* and *Milli Görüş* as a democratic conservative party with a strong Islamic reference. Davutoğlu had played a key role in the formation of this new party and became chief foreign policy advisor to the Prime Minister's Office after the AKP election victory in November 2002. For the decisive years between 2002 and 2009, it was not so much Turkey's highly secularist Ministry of Foreign Affairs that was experimenting with new forms of foreign policy, but the Prime Minister's Office, which did not only employ Davutoğlu, but also presided over the Turkish Development Agency (TIKA) and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*).

The contacts from the Bosnian years and the Islamic University have solidified in both political and intellectual networks. In Bosnia, for instance, the Alumni Organization of the International Islamic University of Malaysia has an important standing. Its members "are highly influential in Bosnian society and hold many influential posts in business, education and diplomacy" (Sarajlić, 2010: 18).[46] Some of them are organized around the *Centar za Napredne Studije* (Centre for Advanced Studies), the organization that hosted Ahmet Davutoğlu's Sarajevo lecture in October 2009 in which he laid out his vision of a new *'Pax Ottomanica'* in the Balkans. He argued that the only time the Balkans had escaped the fate of being a periphery to large empires was during the Ottoman Empire, and that this central status could be re-established with a new Ottoman commonwealth:

> Because of this, when we speak of the Balkans, we say it's the periphery of Europe. But is the Balkans really a periphery? No. It is the heartland of Africa-Eurasia. Where does this perception of periphery come from? If you asked Mehmet-Pasha Sokolović, he wouldn't have said that Sarajevo or Salonica were the periphery, whether of Europe or the Ottoman state. Look at history. The only exception in history is the Ottoman state. During the Ottoman times, in the 16th century, the Balkans was at the centre of world politics. That was the golden age of the Balkans. This is a historical fact.
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> Who created world policy in the 16th century? Your ancestors! They weren't all Turks. Some were of Albanian origins, others were Greek converts. Mehmet-Pasha Sokolović is a good example. Were it not

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[45]   The *Milli Görüş* movement of Necmettin Erbakan and its Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) was ruling a significant proportion of municipalities in Turkey (including the well-funded metropolitan administrations of Istanbul and Ankara) in the mid-1990s and played a major role in mobilising the Turkish public to support the Bosnian struggle. The many 'Alija Izzetbegoviç' squares and 'Bosna-Hersek' boulevards, which can be found in cities in Turkey, go back to those years.

[46]   Some of Davutoğlu's students from the Islamic University now hold important positions within the Bosnian Foreign Office, such as the current Ambassador to Iran.

for the Ottoman Empire, he would have been a poor Serb peasant with a small farm or whatever, because farming had not developed in this part of the world then. Thanks to the Ottoman state, he became a leader in world politics. Ottoman history is Balkans history, in which the Balkans held special importance in the history of the world.

Now is the time for reunification. Then we will rediscover the spirit of the Balkans. We need to create a new feeling of unity in the region. We need to strengthen regional ownership, a common regional conscience. We are not angels, but we are not beasts either. It is up to us to do something. It all depends on which part of history you look to. From the 15th to the 20th century, the history of the Balkans was a history of success. We can have this success again. Through re-establishing ownership in the region, through re-establishing multicultural coexistence, and through establishing a new economic zone.

We desire a new Balkans, based on political values, economic interdependence and cultural harmony. That was the Ottoman Balkans. We will restore these Balkans. People call this 'neo-Ottoman'. I don't point to the Ottoman state as a foreign policy issue. I emphasize the Ottoman heritage. The Ottoman era in the Balkans is a success story. Now it needs to come back.[47]

Even though Davutoğlu had stressed at the time that it was not the Ottoman state he was trying to re-establish, but the historical centrality of the Balkans, "for weeks, if not months, Serbian newspapers and TV programmes went mad about the idea of 'reintegration' into the empire. Neither did the reference to Sokolović go down well with Bosniaks" (Alibašić, 2010). But the larger frame of Turkey's new policy in the Balkans had now been clearly laid out.

Another such intellectual and political network, in which Ahmet Davutoğlu has played a central role, operates in the larger Albanian cultural space. The publishing house 'Logos A' in the Macedonian capital of Skopje is run by Adnan Ismaili, one of the leading Muslim intellectuals of the country and close friend of Davutoğlu. Ismaili played a major role in establishing the Macedonian branch of Izetbegović's Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka Demokratska Akcije*, SDA) in the early 1990s (Pajaziti, 2010: Ismaili, 2010).[48] Logos A is also in close touch with the Foundation for Science and Art (*Bilim Sanat Vakfı*), a think tank established by Davutoğlu. Logos A has translated a wide range of Turkish and other Islamic thinkers, publishing the leading works of modern Islamic thought in Albanian for the first time. One of its most prolific members, Professor Ali Pajaziti at the Southeast European University of Tetovo, described the publishing house and its larger perspective as a 'liberal-intellectual Islamic' venture: "In terms of intellectual traditions, we were much influenced by the *Milli Görüş* movement, as well as by thinkers such as Mahattir Mohammad and Ismet Özel [a Turkish socialist, who entered Islamic

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47 The speech was first published in the Bosnian journal BH Dani [http://www.nspm.rs/prenosimo/obnovicemo-otomanski-balkan.html?alphabet=l#yvComment21847] and then in English translation at [http://grayfalcon.blogspot.com/2009/11/what-turkey-wants.html].

48 The project to establish a non-nationalist Islamic party proved to be inconclusive in the wake of rising secular Albanian nationalism in the 1990s.

politics]. … Ours is very much an eclectic intellectual project that has an 'Albanian-Islamic synthesis' in mind" (Pajaziti, 2010).

There is general agreement that Ahmet Davutoğlu has significantly pushed forward this liberal-Islamist project both in Turkey and in the Balkans, particularly in Bosnia and Macedonia, thanks to interpersonal relations, a common ideological persuasion, and the support of Turkish government agencies. To what extent they had a major impact on public debates, which remain dominated by fiercely secular elites in most countries, is another question. It is also fair to say that the liberal-Islamist project found many collaborators in Bosnia and Macedonia, and to a certain extent in Albania and Kosovo. But it has not made inroads into the political organisations of Turks in Bulgaria such as the DPS, the Movement of Rights and Freedoms, which remain staunchly secular and operate in the same political worldview as Davutoğlu. The impact of Turkish policy in the intellectual arena appears very much in its infancy.[49]

3.2 Technical assistance to rebuild communities: The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA)

The Turkish Development Agency TIKA (or in full, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency, *Türkiye İşbirliği ve Kalkınma İdaresi*) was initially established during Turgut Özal's Presidency as an instrument for proactive foreign policy and 'soft power' projects aimed at gaining goodwill and popular support in the Central Asian republics and in the Balkans. Throughout much of the 1990s, when weak coalition governments dominated Turkey's politics and the country's external aspirations were limited, the Agency became a dumping ground for nationalist and pan-Turkist bureaucrats, losing much of its functional capacities (Oruç, 2010). The fate of TIKA changed significantly, however, after the AKP's election victory, when the charismatic career bureaucrat Hakan Fidan began to run the organisation in 2003.[50] Fidan was a close confidante of both Ahmet Davutoğlu and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan. At this time, Davutoğlu was not yet Foreign Minister (he would succeed Abdullah Gül only after the 2007 elections), but he found the possibility to run a parallel and mostly complementary foreign policy through TIKA.[51] While TIKA indeed cultivated relations with

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[49] In this context, the *Yunus Emre* Institute, modelled on the British Council and the Goethe Institute, may play a significant role in the medium run. The Institute has just opened its doors in Sarajevo, Skopje and Tirana. [http://www.yunusemrevakfi.com.tr].

[50] Hakan Fidan's prominence within government circles was confirmed, when he was appointed as Director General of the National Intelligence Agency (*Milli Istihbarat Teşkilatı*, MIT) in 2010.

[51] The re-activation of TIKA was also hoped to serve another political cause: throughout much of the 2000s, Turkey was building up support for its bid as temporary member of the UN Security Council in 2009-10 (Çoruh, 2010). TIKA became particularly active to demonstrate to other member states in the developing

Muslims grassroots organsations and excelled in terms of symbolic projects such as the restoration of major Ottoman mosques and, of course, non-religious projects such as those in health care and agricultural development, it also faced major constraints. Namely, TIKA, as an agency of international aid and assistance, can only act in states officially deemed as 'developing countries'.[52] As such, the agency's operations were limited to the Western Balkans, while it was kept from operating in Greece and soon after in Bulgaria, both of which now count as 'donor countries'.[53] Finally, and despite Ahmet Davutoğlu's term as Foreign Minister since 2007, members of TIKA state that relations between their agency and the Ministry are anything but satisfying, with coordination often obstructed by diverging institutional cultures.[54]

Especially in the Balkans, and in addition to its conventional projects in the areas of capacity building, infrastructure construction agricultural deveeopment,and the agency has followed a policy to support the existing Islamic Unions, their formal institutions, and, in particular, the restoration of the major Ottoman mosques. For example, a region head of TIKA, a staunch follower of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis[55] and of Davutoğlu's neo-Ottomanist thinking, summarised the role of his agency and of Turkey in general: "Turkey's role is not to bring Islam to the Balkans. It is to protect what is there. This is why we support the Islamic Union" (Mahmut, 2010). And indeed, TIKA has contributed significantly to the Islamic Unions in Kosovo and Albania, as well as to Islamic NGOs such as *Merhamet* in Macedonia (Çoruh, 2010). The main administrative building of the *Komuniteti Musliman* in Tirana was renovated in 2010 with generous financial help from TIKA. Interestingly, and even though TIKA's cadres are closer to the Sunni *Milli Görüş* tradition, the agency has also contributed to the construction of the World Bektashi Centre in Ankara.[56] The coordinator for the Albanian projects suggested that this was

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world that Turkey meant business, i.e. development aid and economic interaction without a 'colonial tinge'. The organisation established a presence in 23 countries, also in Asia and Africa. Whether it was due to TIKA's actions is hard to establish, but Turkey was indeed successful in its bid.

[52] Another limitation flows from the agency's statute as a technical assistance agency, meaning that it cannot normally fund and realise the construction of new mosques (Çoruh, 2010).

[53] It seems, however, that there are ways around the limitations, i.e. by cooperating with municipalities in Turkey, which are coupled with Turkish municipalities in Bulgaria (Köseömer, 2010) and play an important role in organising support for Muslim communities, especially during high festivals.

[54] A senior member of TIKA, for instance, insisted that "despite new cadres and a change of outlook, the old elitist groups still dominate the ministry and obstruct projects, which appear too 'Islamic'" (Undisclosed Interview Partner). The tensions, which the TIKA member refers to, are as much due to the power struggle between the established Kemalist elites and their new Islamic contenders, as well as between the Prime Ministry of Tayyp Erdoğan and the increasingly self-confident Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.

[55] An indicator for his predilection for the Ottoman legacy is the bureaucrat's mobile phone tune, which was a recording of a surprisingly Janissary march.

[56] The Turkish contribution to the World Bektashi Centre is particularly interesting, since it was a collaboration with the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), which is, after all, a Sunni organisation.

due to the pragmatic nature of the work of the agency: "Bektashism is really important in Albania. We hence believe that Bektashism creates an excellent platform to develop relations with the country".[57]

Since the mid-2000s, TIKA has been overseeing building projects that that restored the main Friday mosques in Prishtina, Prizren and Skopje to their former glory, as well as dozens of secondary mosques. According to a bilateral agreement between Turkey and Albania, TIKA, together with the Turkish Ministry of Culture, the Directorate of Foundations and the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs, will restore twenty Ottoman mosques in Albania that survived the rule of Enver Hoxha (Kruja, 2010; Oruç, 2010). The restoration of Ottoman mosques is important for the self-confidence of the Muslim communities since these mosques were particularly targeted by Serbian forces as symbols of the Muslim enemy in the wars of the 1990s. Reconstruction also seems to be a significant act of symbolical re-appropriation of Ottoman material heritage and an affirmative statement of the role of Turkey as protector of the Muslim people of the Balkans. As a TIKA staff member suggested, "[i]n Albania, we will soon start restoring more mosques, especially as you have the construction of massive Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The mosques are there, and we need to keep them alive" (Oruç, 2010).

Few would criticise the commendable endeavour of renovating mosques and supporting the established Islamic Unions, which are identified and often self-identify as repositories of 'traditional', 'European' or 'national' forms of Islam.[58] Yet, as demonstrated earlier, Turkish foreign policy until the 2000s had engaged at the grassroots level only with ethnic Turkish and nationalist associations. It seems that the networks established in those days are now largely disbanded. The beneficiaries of the Pan-Turkist persuasion feel left out. Enes Ibrahim, a former party functionary of the main Turkish Party in Macedonia, sounded very concerned when he argued that Turkish policy here "has changed a lot. Since the mid-1990s, you have the Gülen community and their colleges. … When Hakan Fidan became the Secretary of TIKA, nothing

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[57] This rationale was echoed but importantly modified by the Eurasia office director of the external relations department of the *Diyanet*: "We support the Bektashi community, because we are against the efforts to separate Bektashism from Islam, as some try to do in Albania. Bektashism has a clear Islamic history, but in Albania it has swayed away from it. But, it would be better off under the mantle of Islam. The Bektashi leaders have been out of touch with many of the foundations. We are trying to bring them back into the mainstream (Kılıç, 2010).

[58] A recurring theme in conversations with the Muslim community leaders of the region was the role of the established communities in containing Salafi tendencies. The Chief Mufti of Bulgaria, Mustafa Aliş Hacı Efendi, for instance, argued that Salafi have become very active in the Roma slums of Plovdiv, and particularly in Stolipinovo: "If the Mufti's Office was allowed to be stronger, we could be much more effective against such radicalisation" (Aliş, 2010). A member of the Islamic Union of Macedonia (*Bashkesie Fetare Islame*) insisted that they have been struggling against 'Wahhabis' trying to establish themselves in their executive boards and mosque associations (Selimovski, 2010).

stayed the same. Much of their money, and the money of Muslim foundations from Turkey goes to Albanian villages. TIKA is supporting those who use the name of Turkishness, but who are not Turkish" (Ibrahim, 2010).[59] Ibrahim criticises that rather than supporting their ethnic kin, the Turkish government has started to invest in the much larger Muslim group of Albanians. Like the support for the Bektashi Centre, engagement with the Albanian population in Macedonia appears as politically more expedient than cooperation with the dwindling Turkish community, especially if the region's larger Muslim community is at stake. Finally, despite these tensions and disagreements, there is now sufficient evidence to argue that the work of TIKA (often in cooperation with other Turkish agencies) has changed the architectural landscape of the Western Balkans—Ottoman mosques, neglected during Yugoslav times, destroyed in the violent conflicts of the 1990s or disfigured by Saudi-financed reconstruction projects, have once again become the iconic and proud reminders of the Ottoman heritage of the region.

3.3 The new *Meşihat*: The Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*)

Turkey's Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet Işleri Genel Müdürlüğü*) is the government body that—surprisingly for a state that identifies itself as secular—deals with all religious matters of the country's Sunni Muslim majority. *Diyanet* employs the imams, pays their salaries, organises religious life and acts as the highest religious authority in questions of doctrine and practice.[60] Particularly since the military coup of 1980, when the generals mandated a revision in state ideology and introduced the 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' (*Türk Islam Sentezi*)[61] (Kaplan, 2006), the Presidency has embarked on several internal missions to bring people back into the fold of a patriarchal Islam, even if they were followers of heterodox Alevi traditions. With close to 80,000 employees and a budget larger than that of many service ministries of the Republic, the Diyanet is probably the world's largest and most centralised Muslim religious or-

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[59] Ibrahim goes on to suggest that most projects are in fact channelled through Adnan Islamili and that Logos A is a recipient of major payments (Ibrahim, 2010). As much as these allegations may be true, they might also arise from a sense of frustration at being deprived of their former funds.

[60] While the official narrative of the Republic of Turkey has been one of secularism of *laiklik* (from the French *laïcité*), in fact, the *Diyanet* regime is the opposite of a secular disestablishment of state and religious institutions. State and religion have been intertwined in Turkey, whether in the Ottoman Empire or the Republic, and in both cases, primacy lay with the state rather than religious scholars. This predominance of the state was one of the main distinguishing factors to the Safavid Empire and Iran, where religious scholars always had an independent social and political role.

[61] The Turkish-Islamic synthesis was an eclectic mix of authoritarian, if incoherent, ideologies, ranging from Turkish ethno-racial nationalism, Islamist supremacism and Ottomanism to Kemalist authoritarianism. The 'synthesis' had been circulating in conservative circles well before the Putsch of September 1980. Its influence went beyond the remit of the now mandatory religious education in schools and the many hundreds of religious preacher schools (Imam Hatip Liseleri) that were set up to provide a strongly religious curriculum (cf. also Öktem, 2011).

ganisation, comparable in scope and capabilities only to the Vatican. Despite the veneer of a secular regime, the *Diyanet* today stands very much in the tradition of the Office of the *Şeyh-ül Islam* and feels increasingly less inclined to disguise this legacy.[62]

Until the 1980s, the Presidency's remit had been limited to Turkey's Muslims. At that point, religion was not a significant resource in the construction of dominant forms of national identity. After the coup of 1980, however, the *Diyanet* began to develop administrative capabilities that extended well beyond the national borders and expanded massively into countries with Turkish immigrant populations.[63] If the 1980s marked the expansion of Turkish state Islam to the immigrant communities of Western Europe, then the 1990s saw a gradual orientation towards the Muslim communities of Central Asia and the Balkans. Ever since, the *Diyanet* has played a major role in providing service to the Muslim communities of the Balkans on several levels. Its status, like TIKA's, as a Presidency subordinate to the Prime Ministry and independent from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, increased its ability to act outside the limitations of diplomatic conventions and to work with Islamic Unions and grassroots organisations rather than with often stolid state agencies.[64]

Since 1995, the Presidency has been organising an 'Eurasian Islam Council'[65] (*Avrasya Islam Şurası*) to bring together heads of the Islamic administrations of 38 countries and 12 autonomous republics in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, in the Caucasus and in the Balkans. At these meetings, issues of Islamic practice, from higher education to the accreditation of university degrees[66] and the organisation of the pilgrimage are discussed and often resolved by extending the *Diyanet's* religious services to the Islamic administrations of

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[62] Even after almost a decade of government by the Islam-oriented Justice and Development Party, the idea of a re-established Caliphate or *Şeyh-ül İslam* is an absolute taboo among the country's secular leaning elites.

[63] In the Netherlands, the local host association of the *Diyanet* was established in 1982 and was soon running more than 140 mosques, becoming the largest Muslim association in the country (Öktem, 2010). In Germany, the *Diyanet* Foundation was founded around the same time and now has more than 800 mosques in its fold. Also here, the *Diyanet* is the largest Muslim association in the country (Öktem, 2009). In all cases, it is the Presidency in Ankara that appoints imams for service abroad (usually for three years); these imams are coordinated by an attaché for religious affairs in the respective embassy. The attaché is a member of the presidency, and not of the foreign office staff.

[64] The *Diyanet's* Department of External Relations consists of four directorates covering 'Muslim communities in Eurasia', the 'Turkish Diaspora', Inter-faith dialogue, and Islamic countries and communities outside Europe and Asia (Diyanet, 2010).

[65] So far, seven council meetings took place every two to four years, most of them in Istanbul and Ankara. The meeting of 2000 was held in Sarajevo and in 2002, the representatives met in Kosovo.

[66] One example of the council's role is the provision of opportunities for theological education. The Higher Islamic Institute in Sofia has been operating without accreditation for a while. As a result, the institute's diplomas are not recognised and its graduates cannot take on certain appointments. To address these issues, the *Diyanet* created the possibility for graduates to complete an additional year at Ankara University's Faculty of Theology and graduate with a diploma from Ankara (Kılıç, 2010).

other countries (Kılıç, 2010).[67] As a complementary forum to the Eurasian Council, the Presidency has also hosted an annual meeting of the leaders of the Balkans' Muslim communities since 2007.[68]

Above all, the *Shuras'* and Councils' aims are dominated by the mission to facilitate the spread of the *Diyanet's* assistance and services to other Muslim communities. In addition to the organisation of the *hajj,* the education of preachers and religious scholars rests at the heart of *Diyanet* policy and is realised through the provision of scholarships, the organisation of educational programmes for religious personnel and the publication of books, as well as translations of the Qur'an in the languages of the host country.[69] The scholarships cover introductory Qur'an courses in Turkey for students and professional training for imams; studies in religious high schools (*Imam-Hatip)*; graduate courses at faculties of theology; and post-doctoral courses.[70] As shown in Table 5, around 1,000 students with a religious interest study in Turkey every year with full scholarships granted by the *Diyanet.* When distributed among the countries of the region, this number may not strike one as massive, but in the medium-term it translates to a significant amount of religious personnel with a background of Islamic education and preparation for clerical service having been trained in Turkey.[71]

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[67] Where no formal administrative structures were existent or where capabilities were limited—as in most countries of the Balkans and all countries of the CIS—the *hajj*, or the pilgrimage to Mekka, has often been organised by Salafi organisations. In a number of countries, including the entire former Yugoslav space, the pilgrimage is now organised by the Turkish *Diyanet*.

[68] Since 2007, the Balkan Islam Council has met in Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania, and in May 2010, in the Kosovar town of Prizren. The Prizren Council was co-hosted by the Chair of the Presidency, Dr. Ali Bardakoğlu and the Mufti of the Kosovar Islamic Union, Naim Tërnava Hoxha (Balık, 2010). The meeting, which was very well advertised in the city and accompanied by a series of religious concerts and events, opened the way for the *Diyanet* to act as the official organiser of the *hajj* for all Muslims in the Balkans. Given the centrality of the *hajj* in the practice of Islam, this role is a highly symbolic one.

[69] In all Islamic communities that I visited, I came across publications of the *Diyanet* Foundation *(Diyanet Vakfi)* in Turkish and local languages. Many of the books are introductory manuals on Islamic doctrine and practice. Often geared towards children, they are produced in high quality, illustrated appealingly and well translated and revised by leading religious scholars (for instance by the Chair of the Islamic Union of Kosovo, Naim Tërnava). Interestingly, these books mention the *Diyanet* and Ankara as the publisher and place of publishing, respectively. However, these books only use the direct translation (i.e. *Bashkësisë fetare të dijanetit* in Albanian) without mentioning that it is the *Diyanet* of Turkey who is the actual publisher, and not the Islamic Unions of Albania or Kosovo (cf. Menekshe, 2008). The monthly magazine *Diyanet Avrupa* (in Turkish) is also widely available.

[70] The Theology Faculties of Marmara University in Istanbul and the universities in Bursa and Ankara are some of the first ports of call for students from the Balkans, with several dozen studying in each department at any time, creating additional opportunities for networking.

[71] In addition, there are several hundred scholarships for 'Turkish and related communities' that are made available by the 'Great Student Project' (*Büyük Öğrenci Projesi*) of the Ministry of Education. 100 students are admitted annually from Kosovo alone, albeit seventy per cent of the places are reserved for Turkish students

Table 5: Scholarships granted by the Diyanet in the Balkans in 2009

Country	Numbers of Muslims	Recipients of grants	Turkish communities[72]
Kosovo	1.800,000	195	30,000
Albania	2.300,000	174	n/a
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2.200,000	135	n/a
Macedonia	700,000	59	70,000
Bulgaria	1,100.000	310	800,000
Serbia	500,000	23	n/a
Montenegro	110,000	-	
Greece *Western Thrace only*	130,000	280	100,000

Based on the Diyanet country statistics for the year 2010 (Diyanet, 2010a).

Despite these influences, the most visible contribution of the *Diyanet* to the region has been its role as facilitator of the reconstruction and construction of mosques. In these cases of symbolic restoration projects, the Presidency collaborates with TIKA and the Turkish Ministry of Culture, which regards mosques of the Ottoman period as part of the Turkish-Islamic heritage. The construction of new mosques, however, is another story—neither TIKA nor the *Diyanet* has a constitutional mandate. In response, the Presidency initiated the so called 'twin cities' project, which brings together the local mufti's office of a town in the Balkans with a mufti office in Turkey: "Rather than having to channel everything through the centre, we have created direct links between Muslim congregations. The mufti's office of Prizren, for instance, is now coupled with the office of Antalya. The mufti of Antalya started a collection for the construction of a new mosque in the sister community, raising over 700,000 Euros. Now, the mosque is being built and people in Prizren call it the 'Antalya mosque' (Kılıç, 2010).[73] According to senior offices in Ankara, there are several dozen twinning projects in the Balkans. Many of these projects create networks between congregations in Turkey and the Balkans, often developing beyond the construction of the mosque and continuing via mutual visits by members of the congregation, preachers and young people. The *Diyanet* magazine for Europe (*Diyanet Avrupa*) regularly runs photo stories on such community visits to Turkey.

(Karabxhakiu, 2010). In Bulgaria, 60 to 80 students are chosen annually for study in Turkey, and many of the returnees become influential in their countries' political systems (Ismailov, 2010).

[72] The table also marks quite clearly the continuing ethnic bias of the *Diyanet*, even under the more Islam-oriented Justice and Development government. The ratio of scholarships per person is significantly higher in countries with significant Turkish communities, and particularly so in Greece.

[73] Other successful sister cities from the region, mentioned in interviews conducted in Ankara, were Ulcinj in Montenegro with Alanya, Berat in Albania with Yozgat, and Maglaj in Bosnia with Kayseri (Kılıç, 2010).

The *Diyanet's* role in hosting the Eurasian and Balkan Councils, in addition to the reconstruction and construction of mosques, are indicative of the role of the Presidency and Turkey as symbolic leader of the Muslim communities of the Balkans and Central Asia. This is a message, which is generally well received, especially by the small and underfunded Islamic Unions of the Western Balkans and those of the former Soviet space. Kemal Kılıç, director of the Office for Eurasia in the *Diyanet*, stressed that relations are "generally excellent. When Ali Bardakoğlu visited Sarajevo on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the arrival of Islam in Bosnia, he was applauded unanimously by all leaders of the region" (Kılıç, 2010). This, however, does not mean that the Turkish *Diyanet* enjoys unequivocal support from all Muslims in the region. Particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the *Rijaset* is well organised and chaired by the charismatic Reis Mustafa Efendi Cerić, the supremacy of the *Diyanet* is not universally welcome. Criticism focuses on the theological foundations of the *Diyanet* and its President, its politics, as well as its attitudes. Mirnes Kovač, of the Islamic journal *Preporod*, for instance, believes that

> Turkey can sometimes behave very arrogantly, as it has done with regards to the apology campaign of the Serbian Parliament. It may have helped to nudge the Parliament, but it has no right to take away the Genocide from us… And then, there is a fair amount of ignorance.[74] When you look from the *Diyanet*, from Ankara, how can you understand that the Islamska Zajednica is completely independent from the state? (Kovač).[75]

A high official of the Islamic Union echoes these concerns, arguing that "the Islamic leaders everywhere are elected by the leader of by the state. The Sheikh of Al Azhar is appointed by the state. And the President of the *Diyanet* is a state employee. But the leader of the Muslims should be elected by the *ulema* (religious scholars)" (Omerdić, 2010). Despite these tensions, however, the Bosnian Muslim elites seem to agree that "among all Muslim countries, cooperation with Turkey is most advanced".[76] This relation with the '*primus inter pares*' is a complex

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[74] This criticism is also shared by some of the more pragmatic members of TIKA, who believe that "the Diyanet is not really very professional, as its representatives often lack the knowledge of local communities. They sometimes act without thinking much about the structures here (Mahmut, 2010).

[75] A particularly contested issue is that of the mufti of Sandžak. There are two Mufti offices now, the representative of the *Rijaset*, and the Serb-leaning mufti of the *Mešihat*, Adem Zulkic, who is seen as a Serbian pawn. This seems to be one of the major disagreements that sours relations between the two largest and most influential Muslim communities in the region. According to members of the department for external affairs, Cerić is seen as trying to keep the Sandžak under his control, even though there is also a local community with links to Belgrade.

[76] This ambiguous position vis-à-vis Turkey is noted by members of the respective *Diyanet* departments who believe that Cerić is trying to act as the 'leader of Muslims in Europe', while he also stresses to Turks that he recognises the predominance of the Istanbul *Mešihat*, which is now represented by Istanbul. "The Reis sometimes challenges the authority of the President of the *Diyanet*. He sometimes argues that Prof. Bardakoğlu is

one indeed—welcomed by most, eyed suspiciously by others. The Bosnian Muslim establishment, most vocally, belongs in the latter category. The *Diyanet*, for its part, is trying to shape Balkan Islam in the image of its own understanding of Islamic doctrine and practice, which is the indeed the closest to local traditions, while using its external relations to legitimate itself as the heir of the Ottoman *Meşihat* and as what probably is the world's largest and most centralised administration of Muslim religious affairs.

3.4 The 'Islamic Grassroots': The Gülen schools and Turkey-based Islamic brotherhoods

Unlike the agencies of the Turkish state, the 'Islamic grassroots' (i.e. Turkey-based faith organisations, mission schools and universities) do not operate within clearly visible and centralised hierarchies. While this does make their study more laborious, it is also an indicator of the flexible and often localised nature of faith-based social networks. Additionally, such faith-based organisations, even if they lack hierarchical structures, are always held accountable by some umbrella organisation and tend to reproduce an organisational logic wherever they operate. Such organisations have been described as 'neo-Sufi movements' (Solberg 2007: 441) in the tradition of the charismatic *Bediüzzaman Said-Nursi* (also called *Nurcu*) such as the Gülen network, and the pious and more quietist followers of *Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan*.[77] Both networks contain many subgroups, local foundations and even companies. Yet, they are all dedicated to the service of 'God and humanity' and are particularly active in the educational sector, operating Qur'an classes, religious seminaries, student halls, and even universities. They also all agree with the neo-Ottomanist framework that has permeated modern Turkish identity. In fact, some of these organizations are strongly committed to the idea of a Turkish return to the Balkans.[78]

Probably the most visible and impressive network is the movement of the followers of Fethullah Gülen, or, as he is called by his disciples, *Hocaefendi*. Much has been written about this increasingly globally acting movement of educational institutions, charities and businessmen (Agai, 2004; Alpay, 2009).[79] The movement has a complex organisation, which is not hierar-

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not a Reis, but only a civil servant. This implies that Reis Cerić is supposed to be the real leader of Muslims. We do not agree. But we continue our support" (Kılıç, 2010).

[77] The founder of this most important and influential *Nakşibendi tarikat* (Islamic brotherhood) was born in 1888 in Silistra, a town in today's Bulgaria. He was a leading religious scholar, hafiz and imam until his death in 1959 (Denizolgun, 2010).

[78] A magazine published mostly by students of the International Balkan University in Skopje bears the telling title *'Evlad-ı Fatihan'* (The children of conquerors).

[79] The movement has been organising regular international conferences to represent and contextualise themselves. Even though there is little critical work presented at these conferences, and the general approach is one

chical as such, but run by local foundations, which are rooted in civil society. Nevertheless, all educational institutions close to the movement operate on the basis of virtually identical organisational models: they act on the same moral project of *hizmet* (service), and finally, they are all inspired by and, in the final instance, answerable to Fethullah Gülen himself (Öktem, 2011: 127-30). The pioneers of the movement, often pious and idealistic school teachers from central Anatolia, established the first schools in the Balkans in Albania as early as 1993, and became active in Macedonia in 1996, in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1997, and in Kosovo in 2000.[80]

In all three countries, the organisational structure and the content of the curriculum is close to identical and mirrors Gülen schools in Turkey and elsewhere. First, pioneers from the movement—always from Turkey—begin by establishing a local umbrella organisation that seeks to create a grassroots base in the country and acts as an intermediary for donations from partner communities in Turkey. Eventually, the first primary schools and colleges are established; once this is achieved, to the pioneers extend their support base both in Turkey and in the host country, expanding their institutional capabilities. In the Western Balkans, there are currently ten such colleges with several thousand students. These colleges follow an exclusively secular curriculum that conforms to the requirements of the host states and places utmost importance on the hard sciences. Most classes are held in English, but local languages as well as Turkish are also taught (Hadžagić, 2010). Shaped in the image of Turkey's non-religious school system, students at the Gülen schools wear uniforms, are generally co-educated and are not normally allowed to display Islamic dress and *hijab*.[81]

It is important to state that the Gülen schools are not Islamic charities. Quite to the contrary, these are private colleges that have to finance themselves through fees and, if need be, by occasional support from home communities in Turkey (especially in the first years of operation). The underlying logic, however, is that the local foundations become financially independent and able to run their own business without additional donations. As a result, and even though some students also receive scholarships, most students have a middle and upper middle class background. In Prishtina, Sarajevo and Tirana, the Colleges are among the most successful, and particularly in Albania, Muslim political elites tend to send their children there.[82] The

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of sympathetic embrace, there is now a body of literature *by* the movement *on* the movement, much of which is available at the website: http://en.fgulen.com/

[80] There are no Gülen institutions in the classical 'strong' states of the region, i.e. in Bulgaria and Greece. This research did not focus on institutions in Montenegro, Serbia and Romania.

[81] The staunch adherence to non-religious dress code is also criticised by parents, who would prefer to see their daughters allowed to wear the *hijab* (Ismaili, 2010).

[82] The children of Albanian Defence Minister Fatmir Mediu and Economy Minister Genç Ruli are pupils at the Turkish colleges (Documentary on the Gülen TV station Samanyolu, broadcast 5 April, 2010).

'business model' underlying the colleges evokes that of American mission schools operating in the late Ottoman Empire. With primary schools, parents' associations and alumni organisations, a social base emerges which at least in the medium-run sustains the management of the colleges; it also contributes to the movement's growth.

Table 6: Educational institutions of the Gülen movement in the Balkans

Country	Institutions
Kosovo	Umbrella organisation Gulistan Education Centre (2000)
	Mehmet Akif College, Prishtina (2000)
	Mehmet Akif College, Prizren
Albania	Umbrella organisation Sema Foundation, *Fondacioni Sema*
	Colleges • Tirana, Kolegji Mehmet Akif (1993) • Shkoder, Shkolla Hasan Riza Pasha (2001) • Tirana, Institucioni Parashkollor M. Akif (2006) • Tirana, Qendër Kursesh Meridian (2006)
	The following medreses are operated jointly with the *Komuniteti Musliman*: • Elbasan – Cerrik, Liria • Kavajë, Hafiz Ali Korça, • Tiranë, H. Mahmud Dashi • Buharaja-Berat, Medrese Vexhi) • Korça
	Epoka University (2008)
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Bosna Sema Foundation (1997)
	Primary schools in • Sarajevo • Tuzla • Zenica
	Colleges in • Sarajevo • Bihać • Tuzla
	International Burch University Sarajevo (2008)
Macedonia	Yahya Kemal Colleges and primary schools in • Skopje (1996) • Gostivar (1999) • Struga (2002)
	Zaman Makedonya

Based on fieldwork interviews and online resources (see also Table I-3 for website addresses).

As shown in Table 6, however, the schools of the Sema foundation in Albania are not limited to secular institutions. In what is a significant departure from the ethos of the Gülen movement—secular schools operated in the spirit of mission by good deeds and model behaviour—the Sema Foundation was requested to take over the religious high schools of the Islamic community. The *medresas* had been established in the early 1990s with donations from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, yet these donors were gradually phased out. As Genti Kruja from the *Komuniteti Musliman* recalls:

> When the *medresas* lost their sponsor in the mid-1990s, the serving Secretary General of the Community was seeking for ways to save these schools. The Turkish colleges of the Gülen *Cemaat* [Religious Community] were already well respected, so he convinced them to take over the first school in 1995. In 1998, the *medresa* of Kavajë was saved from a Wahhabi group and given into the care of the Gülen foundation. In 2005, the influential *medresa* of Tirana was given up by a Qatari foundation and placed into the custody of the Gülen community. And in 2010, the Cemaat also reconstructed the *medresa* in Korça, where it demolished and rebuilt the mosque first built by the Arabs (Kruja, 2010).

Nowhere than in the case of the religious schools of Albania is the direct transfer from Arab Salafi networks to Turkish Islamic foundations more visible and more complete. The fact that a Turkish Muslim network of a certain persuasion is running literally all religious schools of a country is significant, if not universally welcome. Both conservatives in Albania as well as Islamic intellectuals elsewhere have criticised the Gülen *medresas* in Albania for being too secular, for being co-educative and for toning down the religious content of the curriculum (Ismaili, 2010; Pajaziti, 2010). In fact, the Gülen *medresas* are not significantly different from the other Turkish colleges, safe for a more flexible handling of the Islamic veil and a higher share of religious education.

Another area in the educational landscape of both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania in which the Cemaat has played a role has been higher education. Burç, or Burch University, in Sarajevo is a spin-off from the Turkish College and the Bosnia Sema Foundation. It was established in 2008 and, for now, is a rather modest institution with only 300 undergraduates and 16 professors, both of which mostly haul from Turkey. According to the University's Secretary General, Orhan Hadžagić, the development plan foresees a student body of 5,000 in 4 departments (Economics, Languages, Information Technologies and Bio-Engineering). Even though most of the current students hail from Turkey—and are, to a significant extent, students who cannot attend university in Turkey due to their Islamic attire—the share of Turks is decreasing (Hadžagić, 2010; Smajić, 2010).[83] Another such institute of higher education is Tirana's Epoka

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[83]   The administrative staff of the university is almost entirely Bosnian, but out of 16 professors, 12 are from Turkey.

University, which has succeeded in positioning itself as a more influential institution in the country's academic life. Both universities are private foundations and charge considerable fees[84], and both are in close contact with Fatih University, which is the University of the Cemaat in Istanbul.

While the Gülen Cemaat has institutional structures that are more amenable to analysis and presentation in a straightforward manner, other brotherhoods and religious communities are more decentralised and also operate in a more localised fashion. There are many small Turkish-operated foundations that provide regular Qur'an reading circles and Qur'an courses and run student dormitories in the same way they do in Turkey. Foundations such as the Turkey-based 'Society for the Furthering of Sciences' (*Ilim Yayma Cemiyeti*) are run by disciples of charismatic leaders such as Osman Nuri Topbaş and by followers of Sülyeman Hilmi Tunahan, who all stand in the tradition of the *Nurcu* and *Nakşibendi* brotherhoods. To assess their impact on the ground, more in-depth fieldwork would be necessary. Given the more quietist outlook of these movements, however, their impact remains limited to individuals with a more pious orientation. At this end of the spectrum, some overlaps also exist with non-violent Salafi factions. Yet even the quietist *Sülyemancı* are, in the end, more flexible when it comes to compromises with the modern world and its institutions.

Where the *Nurcu* and *Nakşibendi* networks seem to have made a leap forward is with two universities established recently in Sarajevo and Skopje by members of Turkey's Justice and Development government.[85] The International University of Sarajevo opened its doors in 2010 and boasts around 1,000 students in the faculties of engineering, economics and education (Smajić, 2010).[86] The student body is half Bosnian and half Turkish, with many of the female students wearing some form of *hijab*. Independent observers recount a similar impression of the International Balkan University (IBU): "The IBU is a university for Turkish girls, who cannot study in Turkey due to the headscarf ban. But it doesn't seem to be a well-managed institution, with only very few students from Macedonia" (Jusufi, 2010). One might counter that the headscarf ban, which had been enforced on Turkish campuses since the late 1990s is about

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[84] Between 2,500 and 3,000 Euros per year.

[85] The International University of Sarajevo was opened by Prime Minister Erdoğan in April 2010 and has an impressive campus in the suburb of Ilidža, right across from the Burch University campus. The International Balkan University in Skopje was founded by Veysel Eroğlu, currently a Minister of Forestry of the current Turkish government.

[86] The university has no policy regarding religious education, yet it has a small, but exquisite mosque on its campus—built by the Turkish *Diyanet* Foundation. Some of the student dormitories are run by the *Ilim Yayma Cemiyeti* and other religious foundations; they require from their tenants the observance of regular prayers and the participation in Qur'an reading classes and devotional practices.

to be repealed in Turkey and that the investment must be of a longer-term perspective, yet institutional and academic weaknesses seem to be a real problem. The two universities are interesting case studies, as they stress the extent to which Turkish Islamic networks chose to operate by establishing 'secular' structures and working through them rather than creating 'parallel' or 'revolutionary' institutions and practices, as did many of the Saudi and Europe-based Islamist organisations. These cases also serve as reminders of how suspicion and in-group behaviour is imported from the context of Turkey to that of the Balkans. Even though Burch University and the International University of Sarajevo are immediate neighbours in the suburb of Ilidža, there is no institutional contact between the two (Hadžagić, 2010; Smajić, 2010).[87] Where synergies between two Turkish institutions could have resulted in a stronger academic profile, mutual avoidance comes as a reminder of the contested nature of Turkey-based Islamic politics.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Turkish presence in the Balkan has intensified and diversified in the last decade. If in the 1990s Turkey's foreign policy was still constrained by what Kentel called the 'national identity crisis' and by the secularist predilection of Kemalist ideology, this is no longer the case. Whether on the plane of formal bilateral and regional policy or on the level of Muslim non-governmental organisations, Turkish actors have become a factor to be reckoned with. State actors, especially those subordinate to the Prime Ministry (*Diyanet*, TIKA), are engaged in projects geared at consolidating the official Islamic Unions—possibly with a medium-term goal to bring them in the fold of the emerging *Meşihat*—and restoring Ottoman architectural and religious heritage. Religious foundations have stepped in to replace Gulf-based donors and now provide a large range of services from secular college and university education to Qur'an reading classes. Finally, scholarships by the *Diyanet* and the Turkish Ministry of Education exceed 2,000 recipients per year, creating networks of individuals educated and socialised in Turkey.

There is little doubt that Turkey is the most influential Muslim country in the region, whether in the Western Balkans, or in Greece and Bulgaria, which are both relatively strong states suspicious of any Turkish intervention. Yet the new Turkish presence in the Balkans comes fraught with tensions as well. There are conflicts of interest on many levels, ranging from disagreements between government agencies (particularly between TIKA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to competition between different religious actors (i.e. between the Gülen Cemaat and other *Nurcu* organisations). Finally, the new Turkish presence, particularly in its in-

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[87]   In fact, the Rector of Burch was not invited to the opening ceremony of the IUS in April 2010.

tellectual and neo-Ottomanist tradition, also sits uneasily with many secular Muslim and non-Muslim observers, as the reception of Davutoğlu's Sarajevo speech illustrated. Despite these tensions, however, there are strong indications of the presence of new Islamic networks in the region that circumvent the Arab world and Iran. These new networks have Turkey, and to a lesser extent Malaysia, at their centre. In many ways, they are more conservative than Wahhabi and Salfi networks, which entered the region in the early 1990s to revolutionise Islam. The new networks are geared towards the preservation of existing structures and traditions and the re-discovery of the Ottoman-Islamic heritage. Significantly, they are more successful in the Western Balkans, while they are constrained in Greece by a suspicious state and in Bulgaria both by the state and by the post-Communist and secular Turkish party.

Table 7: Synopsis of Turkish actors in the Balkans

Type	Actors	Mission statement	Active in
State actors	Diyanet Işleri Başkanlığı *Pesidency of religious affairs* Diyanet Vakfı *The Diyanet Foundation*	- Support for the Official religious communities - Education of religious personnel in Turkey and of local medreses - Restoration of mosques - Building of new mosques through partner congregations - Organisation of an annual Council meeting of Muslim leaders in the Balkans	All countries.
	TIKA *International Cooperation and Development Agency*	- Technical support for the Official religious communities - Restoration - Financial support for NGOs	All countries, with the exception of Bulgaria, Greece and Romania.
	Municipalities *Particularly those with large immigrant communities from the Balkans (i.e. Bursa, Bayrampaşa in Istanbul)*	- Restoration and building of mosques - Religious services especially during Ramadan (Ramadan dinners, sponsored by businessmen in Turkey)	All countries, and particularly in Bulgaria
	Ministry of Education	- Scholarships for higher education for Turkish and 'related' communities ('Great Student Project').	Eligible for students in all countries
Religious Communities	Nurcu	- Reading circles - Student dormitories - Quran courses - 2 private universities in Sarajevo and Skopje	Albania Macedonia Kosovo Bosnia Herzegovina Serbia
	Suleymancı		
	Foundations		
	Gülen community	- Several primary and high schools - Two universities in Sarajevo and Tirana (Epoka) - Newspapers - All religious schools of the Islamic community in Albania	

Concluding remarks

In this paper, I have sought to demonstrate that Muslim communities in Southeast Europe are diverse, localised and often fragmented along ethnic, linguistic and even doctrinal lines, in addition to being divided by distinct historical legacies. Even though the financial and organisational presence of Arab charities and Islamic foundations was prominent throughout the 1990s, it never really challenged this basic structural characteristic. Despite amenable circumstances—the Bosnian War, the genocide and the conflict in Kosovo, all of which facilitated the involvement of *Jihadi* warriors particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina—*Salafi* and *Wahhabi* associations failed to impose their austere understanding of Islamic practice and doctrine, let alone inject a sense of 'Muslimness' beyond national and linguistic particularities. Once the region's governments began to expel Arab charities and foundations, Turkish actors, both at the state and grassroots levels, entered the scene. With the election of the Justice and Development government in 2002 and the subsequent transformation in the foreign policy outlook towards larger Muslim, rather than only Turkish, ethnic concerns, Islamic foundations, educational institutions as well as the mighty *Diyanet* started to play a major role in most countries of the region.

The intensity of Turkish actors' impact, however, has been mediated by the political, legal and societal structures of the countries in which they operate: the Western Balkans, with their relatively weak states and large Muslim populations, have become central for Turkey's new policy of engagement with Muslim communities. Particularly in the Albanian-speaking communities of Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania, Turkish actors have penetrated the established Islamic Unions and the education sector. In Bosnia, where religion is generally regarded as deeply intertwined with national identity, and where Reis Mustafa Cerić seeks to represent a 'European Islam', Turkish foreign policy is often viewed more ambiguously. Even there, however, the legacy of pan-Islamic mobilisation under Alija Izetbegović in the 1990s has created channels for the emergence of intellectual Islamic networks, in which the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu plays a personal role. In Bulgaria and Greece, strong nation states with a traditional distrust towards their mostly Turkish Muslim minorities, the new Turkish actors have been less successful. In Bulgaria, the secular Turkish Party for Rights and Freedoms has kept their distance from the AKP government.

One question that emerges from these findings is what difference the new Turkish presence will make in the Balkans? Can the security-conscious observers who tend to associate most Arab involvement with *Jihadi* terrorism lean back and be satisfied that the Balkans is now enjoying a wave of 'moderate Islam'? Or, could it be that the new Turkish foreign policy and its

grassroots collaborators are there to complicate an already complex picture with talk of Otto-man nostalgia, claims for supremacy of the *Diyanet* and a rising tide of new Islamic conserva-tism? These might still be early days for the analysis of Islam and Muslims in the Balkans after the 'Wahhabi intermezzo', but some provisional conclusions in four inter-related domains are nevertheless possible: the ultimately secular theatre of regional politics, the tensions within the array of Turkish state and grassroots actors, the continued significance of a specific Ottoman religious tradition, and the gradual transformation of the *Diyanet* into a transnational actor.

Ahmet Davutoğlu's Sarajevo speech and its inherent vision of a neo-Ottoman Commonwealth under Turkish leadership raised some eyebrows, not least in US foreign policy circles, whose unfavourable and worried views of neo-Ottoman adventures have become available recently thanks to Wikileaks (US Embassy Ankara, 2010). Beyond the rhetoric and Davutoğlu's deeply philosophical Islamic worldview, Turkey's high politics in the Balkans have been pragmatic and almost universally lauded. Davutoğlu's trilateral meetings with Bosnia and its neighbours have helped to overcome longstanding deadlocks while behind-the-scenes negotiations have prompted the first steps of Serbian-Bosniak reconciliation. For a European future of the West-ern Balkans, these are important developments. It seems that in the Western Balkans, Turkey has succeeded in acting as a regional power broker beyond religious concerns; the state has in-deed contributed to regional integration and good neighbourly relations.

In the domain of religious politics, however, the field has been much messier. Above all, and despite the recent consensus on a neo-Ottoman Islamic Turkish (rather than a secular Turkish ethnic) identity, tensions abound both within Turkish state agencies and between state and non-state actors, complicating the possibility of a unified Turkish position in the Balkans. Conflicts exist between the mostly secular and Kemalist foreign policy elites within the Foreign Ministry and the new Islam-oriented cadres of Ahmet Davutoğlu as well as their colleagues at TIKA. Turkish diplomats have been mobilising Turkish communities based on their ethnicity and in the ideological language of pan-Turkism for decades; their reorientation towards pro-Islamic politics seems unlikely. Frictions also exist between the government's pro-Islamic cadres and the Gülen community, which is seen as too independent in its outlook, as well as between the community and other religious foundations as they compete over the same audiences. These frictions limit the synergy between Turkish actors while creating opportunities for local Islamic actors to pick and choose their partners—and also to manipulate these partners if their own au-tonomy is at stake.

Despite the fragmented nature of Southeast Europe's Muslim communities, and despite their lack of a common language, there is an important layer of religious tradition rooted in the pe-riod of Ottoman-Turkish rule in the Balkans. The experiences of different Muslim communi-

ties during the demise of the empire, during Austrian rule in the 19th and early 20th centuries, were very diverse. The Yugoslav, Greek, Bulgarian and Albanian Kingdoms in the inter-War years were forged through these disparate experiences and created different trajectories for their Muslim communities. During the Cold War, Islam as well as other religions were heavily policed in Bulgaria, brutally oppressed in Albania, eyed suspiciously in Yugoslavia and stringently regulated in Greece.[88] The social and economic devastation of the Bosnian and Kosovar wars reshaped both national identity and territory. Nevertheless, a very large majority of the region's Muslims adhere to the Sunni-Hanafi tradition, a legal school of Islam that is synonymous with the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. The much smaller Bektashi and Alevi communities also have very strong connections with the centres of their faith groups, which remain in Turkey (even if Bektashism in Albania has taken on an Albanian national perspective over time). And the *tarikats*, the Sufi brotherhoods, which created the template for popular Ottoman and today's Turkish religious life, flourish in Kosovo and Macedonia and foster strong relations with their counterparts in Turkey. This rich tradition, even though it has many local variations, has survived and comes as a reminder of how trying it must have been for Salafi missionaries, for whom culture and tradition beyond the example of early Islamic history is anathema, to operate within this environment.

If the Ottoman cultural context, coupled with the experience of Communism and secular nationalism of Islam in the Balkans proved a mostly infertile ground for Salafi missionaries, it would not be too far-fetched to argue that the *Diyanet* and Turkish foundations more generally can operate in a cultural climate to which they are more accustomed. Indeed, the role that the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs and its President Ali Bardakoğlu[89] have played in the last decade is impressive: with the Eurasian and the Balkan Islam Shuras, the *Diyanet* has established itself as the highest authority of Sunni Muslim communities in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Thanks to its massive personnel and its centralised structure, and due to thousands of annual student scholarships, publications and religious services, the institution has begun to shape how Islamic Unions in the Balkans interact with one other and with the Islamic world. A case in point is the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *hajj*, which the *Diyanet* will now organise for many of the smaller Islamic Unions in the region. Another is the growing number of imams and religious scholars who are being educated in Theology faculties in Turkey. Yet, if the

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[88] It is important to stress that Greece is the only country in the region, which has not allowed for an Islamic Union to be established. Religious life there is organised, in theory by two Muftis, and de facto by two appointed and two elected ones.

[89] Ali Bardakoğlu was President of the *Diyanet* from 2003 until he was succeeded by his deputy, Mehmet Görmez, in November 2010.

Diyanet has been building up a claim for dominance of the Islamic Unions of the region, it has encountered some veritable resistance from the Bosnian Reis Mustafa Efendi Cerić who wishes to connect the eminent historical role of the *Sarajevski Rijaset* in Yugoslav times with a paramount role in the leadership of 'European Islam'. So far, however, this competition between *Rijaset* and *Diyanet* has not obstructed the latter's operations.

These tensions notwithstanding, we can provisionally state that the Turkish presence has begun to change the visible 'face' of Islam in the Balkans: Ottoman mosques, *tekkes* and *hans* are being restored and will soon outshine the austere Wahhabi and Salafi temples, which were built throughout the 1990s and early 200os. Turkish is making a modest comeback among religious and non-religious elites thanks to Turkish colleges and scholarships granted by the Ministry of Education and the *Diyanet*. One conclusion that could be drawn from the research presented in this paper is that the 'Turkish return' to the Balkans might have, in the medium-run, a much stronger impact on the organisation of Muslim communities and the practice of religious life than the culturally alien and politically revolutionary Arab and Iranian efforts at Islamic mission. How this impact is going to play out in people's everyday lives and in the (foreign) policy choices of elites will depend on the political, legal and societal framework in each country, as well as on developments in Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

It appears highly likely that the Justice and Development Party will remain in government for at least the next four years, in which it could address many of the internal tensions discussed above. Yet, will the US administration continue to classify Turkey as a moderate and benign Muslim power, if the country's government continues to challenge some of the unquestionable cornerstones of US policy on Iran, Israel and Iraq? If Turkish Islamic actors were to be seen in the light of an anti-Western bias, their operations could easily be curtailed. This, however, is unlikely, especially in the absence of any credible alternative. Finally, the European Union may also play a role, at least in the Western Balkans. A strong commitment to eventual EU membership will create a different environment for Turkish actors as well, and might lead to their progressive 'Europeanisation'. In any case, the diversity of Muslim communities in the Balkans will continue within different political and institutional settings, becoming increasingly interconnected in a larger Muslim space stretching from Turkey to Western Europe.

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Internet resources

Table I-1: Islamic Unions in the Balkans

Country	Name	Link
Kosovo	*Bashkësie Islame*	www.bislame.net
Albania	*Komuniteti Musliman* *Komuniteti Bektashi*	www.kmsh.al www.komunitetibektashi.org
Bosnia-Herzegovina	*Islamska Zajednica/ Rijaset*	www.rijaset.ba/en/
Macedonia	*Bashkësia Fetare Islame* *(Makedonya Islam Birliği)*	www.bim.org.mk
Bulgaria	*Мюсюлманско Изповедание - Главно Мюфтийство* *Bulgaristan Başmüftülüğü*	www.genmufti.net
Serbia	*Mešihat - Islamske Zajednice u Srbiji (Belgrade)*	www.islamskazajednica.org
	Rijaset - Islamska Zajednice u Srbije (Novi Pazar)	www.rijaset.rs
Greece	*Elected Muftis of* *Komotini/ Gumuljina* *Xanthi/ Iskeçe*	www.gumulcinemuftulugu.info www.iskecemuftulugu.org
	Appointed Muftis of *Komotini (Μουφτεία Κομοτηνής)* *Xanthi/ Iskeçe (Μουφτείας Ξάνθης)*	www.muftikomotini.com www.muftixanthi.com
Turkey	*Diyanet Işleri Başkanlığı* *Balkan Islam Şurası*	www.diyanet.gov.tr/english/

Table I-2: Turkish state agencies in the Balkans

Institution	Offices	Link
TIKA Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency	Regional offices in • Sarajevo • Skopje • Tirana • Podgorica • Belgrade	www.tika.gov.tr
Yunus Emre Institute	Cultural Centres in • Sarajevo • Skopje • Tirana	http://www.yunusemrevakfi.com.tr
Diyanet	Represented by religious attachés	www.diyanet.gov.tr/english/
Turkish municipalities	Occasional cooperation projects	i.e. http://www.bursa.bel.tr

Table I-3: Foundations and institutions of the Gülen network

Country	Name	Link
Kosovo	**Gulistan Education Centre**	http://www.gulistankosova.eu
	• Mehmet Akif College, Prishtina (2000) • Mehmet Akif College, Prizren	www.mackosova.com
Albania	**Sema Foundation (Fondacioni Sema)**	www.sema.edu.al http://gulistan.edu.al
	Colleges • Tirana, Kolegji Mehmet Akif (1993) • Shkoder, Shkolla Hasan Riza Pasha (2001) • Tirana, Institucioni Parashkollor (2006) • Tirana, Qendër Kursesh Meridian (2006)	http://gulistan.edu.al
	Medreses operated co-jointly with the *Komuniteti Musliman* • Elbasan – Cerrik (Liria) • Kavajë (Hafiz Ali Korça), • Tiranë, (H. Mahmud Dashi) • Buharaja-Berat (Medrese Vexhi) • Korça	www.sema.edu.al/Liria.html www.sema.edu.al/Alikorca.html www.sema.edu.al/Mahmuddashi.html www.sema.edu.al/VexhiBuharaja.html www.sema.edu.al/Korcamedrese.html
	Epoka University	www.epoka.edu.al
Bosnia-Herzegovina	**Bosna Sema Foundation**	www.bosnasema.com
	Primary schools • Sarajevo • Tuzla • Zenica	http://internationalschool.ba/
	Colleges in • Sarajevo • Bihać • Tuzla	www.sarajevocollege.com
	International Burch University Sarajevo	www.ibu.ed.ba
Macedonia	**Yahya Kemal Colleges** and primary schools • Skopje (1996) • Gostivar (1999) • Struga (2002)	http://www.yahyakemalcollege.edu.mk
	Zaman Makedonya	http://mk.zaman.com.tr/mk-tr
Bulgaria	Zaman Bulgaria	http://bg.zaman.com.tr/bg-tr/mainAction.action

Table I-4: Other organisations

Country	Name	Activity	Link
Bosnia	International University of Sarajevo	Close to the AKP government and religious brotherhoods	http://www.ius.edu.ba
Macedonia	International Balkan University,	A project of the AKP government [initiated by Veysel Eroğlu]	http://www.ibu.edu.mk
Turkey	Ilim Yayma Cenmiyeti [Society for the furthering of sciences]		http://www.iyc.org.tr
	Bilim Sanat Vakfi	Think tank close to Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu	http://www.bisav.org.tr
	Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi Vakfı		http://www.hudayivakfi.org
	Hulus Efendi Vakfı		http://hulusiefendivakfi.org.tr