

WESTERN BALKANS EXTREMISM RESEARCH FORUM

WESTERN BALKANS EXTREMISM RESEARCH FORUM TEAM OF RESEARCHERS

LEAD RESEARCHER: VLADO AZINOVIĆ, PhD is an associate professor at the Department of Peace and Security Studies, School of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo. He is the co-founder and Secretary General of the Atlantic Initiative. Azinović is the author, co-author and editor of “A Waiting Game: Assessing and Responding to the Threat from Returning Foreign Fighters in the Western Balkans” (2018), “Between Salvation and Terror: Radicalization and The Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in the Western Balkans” (2017), “The geostrategic aspects of jihadist radicalisation in the Western Balkans”, in “The Challenge of Jihadist Radicalization in Europe and Beyond, European Policy Center” (2017); “The New Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters’ **Bosnian** Contingent” (2016), “Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Nexus with Islamist Extremism” (2015), as well as book chapters, articles, essays and reviews on terrorism-related issues. Dr. Azinović serves as an expert witness for the prosecution in terrorism-related cases tried before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is also a UN and OSCE consultant on terrorism and violent extremism.

RESEARCHER FOR ALBANIA: GJERGJI VURMO is Programme Director at the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) and Senior Researcher covering the areas of good governance, civil society, EU accession, and security. Gjergji has been a senior researcher on a number of projects in the area of countering and preventing religious radicalism and violent extremism. He is the lead author of the studies “Religious radicalism and violent extremism in Albania” (IDM 2015), “Religious tolerance in Albania” (UNDP 2018) and a number of other analytical papers dealing with violent extremism. Through his work with the IDM, Gjergji has gained wide experience of working with target groups and influential multipliers, particularly civil society groups, media, academics, government and business interest.

RESEARCHER FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, AND MONTENEGRO: EDINA BEĆIREVIĆ, PhD, is Co-founder of the Atlantic Initiative which researches a broad range of security issues including radicalization, violent extremism, gender and security and gender and judiciary problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At present, she is an associate professor of security studies at the Faculty of Criminal Justice, Criminology and Security Studies at the University of Sarajevo. During 2015 and 2016, she was the lead researcher on the FCO project “Understanding and countering radicalisation into violent extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. She has extensively published works on the issues of war crimes, genocide, radicalisation and transitional justice issues. Edina is the author of “Genocide on the Drina River” (Yale University Press, 2014) and “Salafism vs. Moderate Islam: A Rhetorical Fight for the Hearts and Minds of Bosnian Muslims” (Atlantic Initiative, 2016).

RESEARCHER FOR KOSOVO: SHPEND KURSANI is PhD Researcher in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, where he researches contested states in the post Second World War international order. Shpend has been doing research on the recent emergence of the foreign fighter phenomenon and militant Islamism, among ethnic Albanians in the Western Balkans, primarily in Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. He has been researching the topic since

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2013, and has published several related policy and academic works. He already published a comprehensive "Report inquiring into the causes and consequences of Kosovo citizens' involvement as foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq" in 2015; a book chapter on "The Foreign Fighter Phenomenon in Kosovo: Covering a Blind Spot" in 2017; the "Kosovo Risk Assessment Report Since Independence" in 2017; and most prominently the recent journal article on "Salafi pluralism in national contexts: the secular state, nation and militant Islamism in Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia" in 2018. Shpend has also been a social and political activist and has been active as an opinion maker for a number of media outlets in the region and beyond. He is currently a regular columnist for *Prishtina Insight*.

RESEARCHER FOR SERBIA: PREDRAG PETROVIĆ is Executive Director of Belgrade Centre for Security Policy. As BCSP research coordinator he was in charge of managing and designing research methodology on complex and multiyear projects in the area of Security Sector Reform in Serbia, and he drafted a model of the referral mechanisms for preventing youth radicalization in Novi Pazar. He also conducted very sensitive research work, such as identifying and interviewing the victims of ammunition depot explosions in Serbia, as well as interviewing managers of private security companies who were linked to criminal groups. He specialises in security governance (terrorism, organised crime), intelligence governance, and integrity of the security sector.

RESEARCHER FOR MACEDONIA, FILIP STOJKOVSKI, will not attend the meeting.

NATASIA KALAJDZIOVSKI is a junior researcher and co-author of the report for Macedonia. Natasia is a PhD candidate at Middlesex University's School of Law, where she was awarded a fully-funded research studentship to complete her studies, and is a graduate of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Broadly speaking, her research focuses on intelligence-led responses to counterterrorism within the British national security context, as it pertains to domestic threats. Natasia's early work in the Western Balkans includes a publication about the modernisation of transparency and oversight intelligence mechanisms in Macedonia. Within the counterterrorism field, she has consulted with the Berghof Foundation and the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), interned with the Security Governance Group, and was a lead analyst with the G8 Research Group. Natasia is also a junior research affiliate with the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society (TSAS).