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# The Diasporic Experience as Opportunity and Challenge for the Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks

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**Xavier BOUGAREL**

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, many social scientists have regarded globalisation as the major characteristic of the contemporary world. An important component of this process of globalisation is the migration – either voluntary or forced – of millions of men and women, and the ensuing formation of broad diasporas. Yet throughout human history, individuals and entire peoples have never stopped migrating, and the empires of the past also contributed to the circulation of goods, ideas and people. Thus, in the first part of this paper, I will show that the globalisation that Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina has undergone over the past three decades is not totally new and must be viewed as part of a long historical process. Then, I will focus on the formation of a substantial Bosniak diaspora and will describe its role in the shaping of both the national Bosniak identity and the Islamic tradition of Bosniaks. Lastly, I will show why the diasporic experience represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the Islamic tradition of Bosniaks, as defined by Fikret Karčić and other ulemas from the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Islamic tradition of Bosniaks and the world**

The concept of an “Islamic tradition of Bosniaks” is useful because it enables Bosnian Muslims to say which religious tradition they wish to be part of, but it obscures the fact that this tradition appeared not within a national context, but within an imperial and global one. I am not a specialist of the Ottoman Empire, so I will not speak at length about Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Ottoman period. But I would like to mention a few facts about that period: Bosnian Islamic institutions were linked to the *Sheikh ul-Islam* of Istanbul, Bosnian ulemas went to study in the largest religious schools of the Empire, Sufi brotherhoods in Bosnia-Herzegovina originated in Anatolia and Central Asia, and the pilgrimage to Mecca already brought together believers from around the world. Thus, during the Ottoman period, the Islamic tradition of Bosniaks was not a closed-off universe, but instead part of a broader Ottoman tradition, animated by numerous global religious networks.

The Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 was a major breaking point for Bosnian Muslims, on both a political and a religious level. But the creation of Islamic institutions peculiar to Bosnia-Herzegovina, organised around the *Reis-ul-ulema* and the *ulema-medžlis*, did not prevent Bosnian ulemas from going to study in the Ottoman Empire or from receiving religious literature in the Ottoman language. During the movement for the autonomy of religious institutions in the 1900s, one of the most important demands was for the *Reis-ul-ulema* to receive an accreditation (*menšura*) from the *Sheikh ul-Islam*. Thus,

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<sup>1</sup> See, *inter alia*, Fikret Karčić, “Šta je to ‘islamska tradicija Bošnjaka’?,” *Preporod*, December 1, 2006, 14-15; Mehmedalija Hadžić, ed. *Zbornik radova naučnog skupa ‘Islamska tradicija Bošnjaka’: izvori, razvoj i institucije, perspektive (14-16 November 2007)* (Sarajevo: Rijaset Islamske zajednice u BiH, 2008).

during the Austro-Hungarian period, Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina remained largely Ottoman in nature. Moreover, the most important change was the arrival of reformist ideas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, brought in by intellectuals such as Safvet-beg Bašagić and Osman Nuri Hadžić, or ulemas such as Džemaludin Čaušević. Yet this Islamic reformism came not only from the Ottoman capital, but also from Egypt (with Muhammad Abduh) and the Russian Empire (with Ismail Gasprinski). Hence Bosnian Muslims slowly left the Ottoman sphere of influence, not to move into isolation, but to open up to other parts of the Muslim world.<sup>2</sup>

Admittedly, this process sparked sharp reactions from the political and religious elite. This was flagrant during the interwar period, when the Kemalist revolution and the abolition of the Caliphate in Turkey fuelled disputes about how Islam should be interpreted. The reformists – gathered around the *Reis-ul-ulema* Džemaludin Čaušević – insisted on the need to reform the waqfs and religious schools, considered it licit for men to wear hats and women to give up wearing the veil and showed interest in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's modernisation project. Traditionalists, grouped together around the magazine *Hikmet* ("Wisdom"), opposed these reformist views and favoured an Islamic tradition that was not very different from the Ottoman tradition. Later on, led by Mehmed Handžić and the association of ulemas *el-Hidaje* ("The Right Way"), they developed a revivalist interpretation of Islam that was more assertive in nature. These debates between reformists, traditionalists and revivalists are reminiscent of debates in other parts of the Muslim world. While Čaušević had regular contact with representatives of the Indian *Ahmadiyya* movement in Berlin, Handžić was influenced by his contacts with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood during his studies at Al-Azhar. Here again, the religious debates underway in Bosnia-Herzegovina were not isolated ones, and must be viewed in a global framework.<sup>3</sup>

In this context, the Communist era stands out as the period when Islamic institutions were cut off from the outside world, and religious life was forcibly reduced to a few rituals in mosques or in the family circle. Yet this impression is partly inaccurate. On the one hand, the decline of religious life was not only a result of Communist repression, but also the reflection of a secularisation process affecting all of Europe. On the other hand, beginning in the 1960s, Bosnian Muslims restored some contacts with the rest of the Muslim world, with pilgrims leaving for Mecca, students studying at Al-Azhar and at other Arab universities, and students from non-aligned countries coming to Yugoslavia. Husein Đozo, the man who enabled the Islamic Community to meet the challenge of secularisation, also had a global background. A former student at Al-Azhar, he was influenced by the reformist thought of Egyptian Mahmud Shaltut, and his intellectual horizons extended well beyond Bosnia-Herzegovina to encompass all of Europe.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, *inter alia*, Fikret Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekt islamskog reformizma* (Sarajevo: Islamski teološki fakultet, 1990); Enes Karić, ed. *Prilozi za povijest islamskog mišljenja u Bosni i Hercegovini XX. stoljeća* (Sarajevo: el-Kalem, 2004); Amir Karić, *Panislamizam u Bosni* (Sarajevo: Connectum, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> See, *inter alia*, Xavier Bougarel, "Farewell to the Ottoman Legacy? Islamic Reformism and Revivalism in Inter-War Bosnia and Herzegovina," in *Islam in Inter-War Europe*, eds. Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain, (London: Hurst, 2008), 313-343; Adnan Jahić, *Hikmet. Riječ tradicionalne uleme u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Tuzla: BZK Preporod, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> See, *inter alia*, Omer Nakičević, ed. *Život i djelo Husein ef. Đoze. Zbornik radova sa naučnog simpozija*, (Sarajevo: Fakultet islamskih nauka, 1998); Enes Karić, "Husein Đozo i islamski modernizam", in Karić, *Prilozi*, 515-553.

### **After 1990: the challenge of globalisation and pluralisation**

By insisting on the global dimensions of the evolution of the Islamic tradition of the Bosniaks before 1990, I do not mean that this date has no importance in the political and religious history of Bosnian Muslims. For the Bosniaks, the 1990s were the worst years of their history. The breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbian then Croatian military aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the genocide of the Bosniak people led to the deaths of 100,000 people, 66% of whom were Bosniaks (83% regarding civilian casualties). On a religious level, 107 employees of the Islamic Community lost their lives and 729 mosques were destroyed, i.e. more than half of all mosques in Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the same time, the Bosniaks became the focus of attention for the international media and major international organisations. This abrupt arrival at the heart of a globalised world also resulted in a tightening of ties with various governmental and non-governmental actors of the Muslim world.<sup>5</sup> Through the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the UN General Assembly, Muslim states endeavoured to support Bosnia-Herzegovina, notably trying to lift the embargo on weapon sales. With the discreet support of the United States, Iran and other Muslim states supplied weapons to the Bosnian army, and various Persian Gulf countries collected substantial amounts of money. These funds were used to equip the Bosnian army and reinforce the domination of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) in the regions that it controlled. This Muslim solidarity was not disinterested, and in the 1990s, Bosnia-Herzegovina became an important location for confrontation between Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Alongside states, various non-government actors arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war, including Islamic humanitarian organisations and the mujahideen, or foreign Islamic combatants. These actors brought with them an interpretation of Islam often described as “Wahhabi”, but that I would call neo-Salafist, and they attacked local religious traditions in the name of a global, a-historic form of Islam.<sup>6</sup> The Islamic Community may not have understood the importance of this neo-Salafist phenomenon right away. After gladly welcoming the mujahideen and Islamic humanitarians in the early months of the war, the Islamic Community quickly came into conflict with them, but it believed that strong state intervention would be enough to re-establish its monopoly over religious life. The repression that followed the September 11 terrorist attacks revealed the limits of this view. Granted, the neo-Salafist networks lost some of their main leaders, were weakened financially, and were divided into advocates and opponents of violence. Yet they remained firmly implanted within a portion of Bosniak youth and even within the Islamic Community itself, and the latter was forced to recognise neo-Salafism as a lasting religious reality. The efforts made since 2006 to better define the Islamic tradition of Bosniaks reflect this shift of the Islamic Community from pure denial to an attempt at intellectual confrontation with the neo-Salafist religious

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<sup>5</sup> See, *inter alia*, Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan and Jonathan Bentall, *The Charitable Crescent: Politics of Aid in the Muslim World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); Harun Karčić, “Islamic Revival in Post-Socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina: International Actors and Activities,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 4 (2010): 519-534.

<sup>6</sup> See, *inter alia*, Ahmet Alibašić, *Traditional and Reformist Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Cambridge: Centre of International Studies, 2003); Eldar Sarajlić, *The Return of the Consuls: Islamic Networks and Foreign Policy Perspectives in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Oxford: European Studies Centre, June 2010), accessed October 8, 2015, <http://www.balkanmuslims.com/pdf/Sarajlic-Bosnia.pdf>

margins in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>7</sup> Beginning in 2012, this confrontation took again a dramatic tone, without fundamentally changing, as young Bosniaks left for jihad in Syria and Iraq.

The neo-Salafist phenomenon must be placed in a larger context. It is part of the globalisation of Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but it is not its sole vector. Since the early 2000s, the most dynamic transnational Islamic actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina have no longer been neo-Salafist movements from the Arab world, but Turkish religious actors close to the official Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) or related to neo-Sufi movements such as Fethullah Gülen's *fethullahcı*.<sup>8</sup> And, just as the Syrian civil war brought the jihadi issue back to the forefront, so has the fight in Turkey between Recep Erdoğan and Fethullah Gülen disturbed many believers in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, neo-Salafism has contributed to a rapid rise of pluralism for Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is also attributable to the restoration of political and religious freedoms after 1990. This pluralism inevitably challenges the monopoly previously held by the Islamic Community on the interpretation of Islam and organisation of religious life. Thus, since 1990, Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina has undergone an accelerated insertion in a globalised world. Against this backdrop, I will now focus on another aspect of this globalisation: the formation of a sizeable Bosniak diaspora.

### **From *gurbetçi* to *Gastarbeiter*: Bosnian Muslim migrations before 1990**

Already during the Ottoman period, many Bosnian Muslims moved around the Empire, whether as members of the Ottoman elite or as simple migrant workers (*gurbetçi*). During the Austro-Hungarian period, the *gurbetçi* was replaced by the refugee, or *muhadžir*. It is worth noting that after the Austro-Hungarian occupation began in 1878, the first doctrinal debate among Bosnian ulemas was about the need for religious emigration (*hidžra*). In 1884, Teufik Azapagić, the mufti of Tuzla, called on Muslims to remain in Bosnia-Herzegovina since their religious rights were respected by the new imperial power. This fatwa formed the basis for how Bosnian Muslims later defined their place in non-Muslim Europe, and is thus one of the founding moments of the Islamic tradition of Bosniaks.<sup>9</sup> However, between 1878 and 1918, around 100,000 Bosnian Muslims immigrated to the Ottoman Empire. Emigration to Anatolia continued during the interwar period, and for Sandžak Muslims, continues to this day. In Turkey, the Bosnian Muslim diaspora was controlled closely by the modernising state, and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) held a strict monopoly on

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<sup>7</sup> See Ahmet Alibašić, "Pravci i elementi razvoja islamske tradicije Bošnjaka u bosanskom kontekstu," in Hadžić, *Zbornik radova*, 491-509; Ahmet Alibašić, "Kako pobijediti 'vehabizam'?", *Preporod*, December 15, 2006, 16 and 48.

<sup>8</sup> See, *inter alia*, Kerem Öktem, *New Islamic Actors after the Wahhabi Intermezzo: Turkey's Return to the Muslim Balkans* (Oxford: European Studies Centre, June 2010), accessed October 8, 2015, <http://www.balkanmuslims.com/pdf/Oktem-Balkan-Muslims.pdf>; Ann Ross Solberg, "The Role of Turkish Islamic Networks in the Western Balkans", *Südosteuropa*, 4 (2007): 429-461.

<sup>9</sup> See, *inter alia*, Muhamed Mufaku al-Arnaut, "Islam and Muslims in Bosnia 1878-1918: Two Hijras and Two Fatwas," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 2 (1994): 242-253; Mehmed Teufik Azapagić, "Risala o hidžri", *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke* (1990): 197-222.

religious life. Today, Turkey is one of the few countries home to a substantial Bosniak community without the existence of corresponding Islamic religious institutions.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to this emigration to the East, beginning in the Austro-Hungarian period, there was emigration to the West. The primary destination was the city of Zagreb, as shown by Zlatko Hasanbegović in his book on this topic.<sup>11</sup> But during the Austro-Hungarian period, some Bosnian Muslims went much further abroad, even crossing the Atlantic. In 1906, a charity (*cemiyet ül-hayriye*) was founded in Chicago. The name of this charity shows that at that time, Bosnian Muslims identified themselves in religious rather than national terms, and it would be an anachronism to speak of a Bosniak diaspora at that time.<sup>12</sup> Following the Second World War, a new generation of Bosnian Muslim immigrants appeared in Western Europe, America and Australia. This group was made up mostly of former German Army soldiers or students from the University of Vienna. In the post-war context, these immigrants played a decisive role in forming local Islamic institutions such as the Spiritual Administration of Muslim Refugees (*Geistliche Verwaltung der Muslimflüchtlinge*) in Germany, led by imam Džemal Ibrahimović, or the Muslim Social Service (*Moslemische Sozialdienst*) in Austria, led by Smail Balić.<sup>13</sup> In the 1950s, these Muslim immigrants tended to identify as Croats. However, disagreements with Croatian political emigration, along with the recognition of the Muslim nation in Yugoslavia, prompted Bosnian Muslim immigrants to stop identifying as Croats. Led by Adil Zulfikarpašić, these immigrants opted for a Bosniak national identity while the League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina promoted a Muslim national identity. This distinction was visible again in 1990 within the SDA, as Zulfikarpašić came into conflict with Alija Izetbegović and his allies.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, Smail Balić published the newspapers *Der gerade Weg* (“The Right Way”) and *Islam und der Westen* (“Islam and the West”), wherein he advocated the idea of a European Islam, well before the intellectuals and ulemas of Bosnia-Herzegovina took on this topic.<sup>15</sup> Thus, during the Communist period, Bosnian Muslim emigration was a laboratory of ideas whose importance was fully felt after 1990.

The start of political emigration to the West announced a reorientation of Bosnian Muslim emigration, which beginning in the 1960s was no longer directed mainly towards Anatolia. During this period, a new generation of economic migrants made its appearance, emigrating to the West to find work, notably in Germany, Austria and Scandinavia, and therefore known as *Gastarbeiter*. These migrants, estimated at 60,000 in the early 1980s, kept their distance

<sup>10</sup> See, *inter alia*, Safet Bandžović, *Iseļjavanje Bošnjaka u Tursku* (Sarajevo: Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Zlatko Hasanbegović, *Muslimani u Zagrebu 1878-1945* (Zagreb: Institut Pilar, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> See, *inter alia*, Muharem Zulfić, *Sto godina Bošnjaka u Čikagu* (Chicago: Džemijetul Hajrije, 2003); Senad Agić, ed. *Sto godina Bošnjaka u Americi* (Chicago: Bosnian American Cultural Association, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> See, *inter alia*, Oliver Pintz, “Vom Moslemischen Sozialdienst zur Islamischen Glaubensgemeinschaft (IGGiÖ). Ein Beitrag zur Genese des institutionalisierten Islam in Österreich” (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 2006); Esnaf Begić, “Die bosnisch-herzegowinischen Muslime in Deutschland und ihre religiöse Organisation” (MA thesis, University of Bochum, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> See, *inter alia*, Mustafa Imamović, *Bošnjaci u emigraciji* (Sarajevo / Zurich: Bošnjački Institut, 1996); Šaćir Filandra and Enes Karić, *Bošnjačka ideja* (Zagreb: Globus, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> See, *inter alia*, Richard Potz and Nedžad Grabus, eds. *Smail Balić. Vordenker eines europäischen Islams / Mislilac evropskog islama* (Vienna: Facultas, 2009).

from post-war political emigration. They went to Turkish or Arab mosques, or created Yugoslav *džemaats* (parishes) mainly attended by Bosnian Muslims and Albanians from Yugoslavia. Similar economic migrations occurred within Yugoslavia itself, leading to the opening of prayer rooms in various cities in Slovenia and Croatia. In 1987, a large mosque was inaugurated in Zagreb, symbolising the long-standing presence of the Muslim community there. The head imam, Mustafa Cerić, had studied at Al-Azhar, then been the imam of the Islamic Center of Chicago from 1981 to 1987, and therefore had direct experience with the diaspora. The Zagreb mosque, a modern and dynamic Islamic centre, was already proof of the growing importance of the diaspora in the life of the Islamic Community.

### **The diaspora, between a shared Bosniak identity and different state citizenships**

Beginning in 1990, the issue of diaspora became radically different. The breakup of Yugoslavia meant that all Bosniaks living outside the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina became part of the diaspora. This was especially the case for Bosniaks living in Serbia (145,000 people according to the latest census), Montenegro (54,000), as well as Kosovo (28,000) and Macedonia (17,000). In Croatia (31,000) and Slovenia (21,000), where the presence of Muslims is more recent, independence accentuated the pre-existing semi-diasporic situation. Therefore, within the Yugoslav area, the term “diaspora” covers very different situations. Beginning in 1992, this was compounded by the consequences of the war and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Between 1992 and 1995, 1,200,000 Bosnian citizens, most of whom were Bosniaks, found refuge in Western Europe or North America. At the same time, the number of Bosniak refugees in Turkey or other Muslim countries was no higher than a few thousand. Thus, the humanitarian crisis of the 1990s did not change the direction of migratory flows observed since the 1960s. After the Dayton Agreement was signed in December 1995, hundreds of thousands of Bosnian refugees returned to Bosnia-Herzegovina, but an equal number of Bosnian citizens left the country for economic reasons. In 2012, the Bosnian diaspora was estimated at 1,200,000 people worldwide, the majority of whom being Bosniaks.<sup>16</sup>

While Bosniaks in Bosnia-Herzegovina were taking up arms to fight for their survival, the Bosniak diaspora was mobilising politically. The 1990s saw a sharp increase in the political engagement of the Bosniak diaspora. In the Sandžak, a branch of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) was created, as was a Muslim National Council, which called for autonomy for the region. The SDA also participated in politics in Croatia and Kosovo, and to a lesser extent, in Macedonia. In Western Europe, *džemaats*, local sections of the SDA and various humanitarian associations mobilised to help refugees and the civilian population of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, this consensual mobilisation of the diaspora during the war should not overshadow the diverging trends that appeared after 1995. In the successor states of the former Yugoslavia, political divisions multiplied, symbolised in Serbian part of the Sandžak by the confrontation between Sulejman Ugljanin and Rasim Ljajić, and in the Montenegrin part of the Sandžak and in Kosovo by an increase in the number of small Bosniak parties. Everywhere, Bosniak political leaders became part of the political system in their respective states. Two examples are the Montenegrin SDA’s support for Mile Djukanović in the late 1990s, and Ljajić and Ugljanin becoming ministers in the Serbian government in the 2000s. In

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<sup>16</sup> See, *inter alia*, Marko Valenta and Sabrina Ramet, eds. *The Bosnian Diaspora. Integration in Transnational Communities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).

the Serbian Sandžak, Muamer Zukorlić, the mufti of Novi Pazar, presented himself as the only defender of Bosniak national interests, winning 70% of the Bosniak vote in the 2012 Serbian presidential elections. At the same time, new institutions were created to represent the national Bosniak minority in most former Yugoslav states, even while in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the SDA lost its dominant position and national institutions created during the war disappeared or stagnated. As for the Bosniak diaspora's massive mobilisation in the West, this gave way to voluntary associations that now only represent a vocal minority. Most Bosniaks living abroad have integrated their local societies, and their political identification with Bosnia-Herzegovina has weakened, as shown by their low level of participation in post-war elections. Everywhere, the strong political engagement of the 1990s gave way to feelings of disenchantment – similar to the feeling of disenchantment within Bosnia-Herzegovina itself.

Thus, the 1990s and early 2000s were a period for the Bosniak diaspora to redefine a shared Bosniak identity in different political contexts. Responses to this major challenge were different from one place to the other. Hence the Bosniak elite of the Montenegrin Sandžak supported Montenegro's move towards independence, whereas those of the Serbian Sandžak disagreed on whether they should recognise the legitimacy of the Serbian state. Likewise, population censuses have shown that the vast majority of Slavic-speaking Muslims in the former Yugoslavia now considered themselves to be Bosniaks, although a sometimes significant proportion continued to identify themselves as “Muslims” (22,000 in Serbia in 2011 and 21,000 in Montenegro the same year) or, in Croatia, to call themselves “Croats” (9,500 in 2011). Lastly, some political and religious leaders of the diaspora have attempted to influence the political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina itself. Thus, the Congress of North American Bosniaks initiated the World Bosniak Congress held in Sarajevo in 2012, and the Bosniak Academy of Sciences and Arts was founded in Sandžak with support from Muamer Zukorlić. These initiatives, supported by Mustafa Cerić, *Reis-ul-ulema* from 1993 to 2012, came up against silent hostility from the political, intellectual and religious elite of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Hence nationalist overstatements by some actors of the diaspora fails to obscure the fact that the Bosniaks of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and elsewhere have had to adapt their practices to various political contexts, as seen also in the evolution of religious institutions in the Bosniak diaspora.

### **The diaspora, between religious desocialisation and emergence of Islam in Europe**

The breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992 led to the disappearance of the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia a year later. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina was created, forming “the one and only community of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, of Bosniaks outside the homeland, and of other Muslims who accept it as their own”,<sup>17</sup> and incorporating the *mešihats* of the Sandžak, of Croatia and of Slovenia. However, in reality, the creation of new Islamic institutions in the states of the former Yugoslavia coincided with many power conflicts. The Islamic Community of Montenegro declared its independence and gradually built up its authority in the Montenegrin Sandžak, at the expense of the mufti of Novi Pazar. *Reis-ul-ulema* Mustafa Cerić visited Podgorica in 2005, signalling recognition of the legitimacy of Montenegrin Islamic institutions. In the Serbian Sandžak, conflicts over participation in Serbian politics, relations with the *Reis-ul-ulema* of Sarajevo and Muamer Zukorlić's personal activism resulted in an Islamic Community of Serbia being

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<sup>17</sup> “Ustav Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini”, accessed October 8, 2015, <http://www.rijaset.ba>



created in 2007, as a rival to the Islamic Community in Serbia recognised by Sarajevo. The Islamic institutions in Croatia and Slovenia did not suffer such a serious crisis, but Dino Mujadžević has recently shown how, in Croatia, two conceptions – “ethnic Bosniak” and “civic Croatian” – coexist within the Islamic Community.<sup>18</sup> Lastly, the rapid growth and strong mobilisation of the Bosniak diaspora in the West has resulted in a surge in the number of Bosniak *džemaats*: in Germany, their number rose from 14 in 1992 to 70 in 2012. This growth coincided with stronger institutionalisation. In 1994, a Union of Islamic Parishes of the Bosniaks was created in Germany (*Vereinigung islamischer Gemeinden der Bosniaken*, or VIGB). Thirteen years later, this became the Islamic Community of the Bosniaks in Germany (*Islamische Gemeinschaft der Bosniaken in Deutschland*) with its own mufti.<sup>19</sup> Ongoing debates in the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina on redefining the ties with Islamic institutions of the diaspora must be resituated in this context.

Apart from these institutional challenges, the Bosniak diaspora is characterised in more than one way by a specific religious experience. Most Bosniaks living in the West are not religious or not very religious, and they do not attend Bosniak *džemaats*. Thus, for a large number of Bosniaks, the diaspora is a place for religious desocialisation, and is therefore a major challenge for the Islamic Community in charge of transmitting the religious tradition to the younger generations. Likewise, the Islam practised by Bosniaks in the West is not very visible in the public sphere and does not make substantial demands,<sup>20</sup> whereas in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in the Sandžak, Islamic institutions and symbols have re-entered the public area they had been evicted from in 1945. On the other hand, some of the most radical neo-Salafist groups have also appeared among young Bosniaks of the diaspora. However, this fact is not contradictory with the previous one: young neo-Salafists often have no prior religious education and are therefore more likely to be attracted to an extremist interpretation of Islam. Here again, the diasporic experience is a challenge for the Islamic Community, in a context where it lacks the institutional and social weight that it has in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

At the same time, however, the diasporic experience is an opportunity for the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina and for the promotion of the Islamic tradition of the Bosniaks. Firstly, Bosniak *džemaats* and their federations take part in the Islamic institutions of various European countries. Sometimes, they play an important role: thus, Bosniak imam Senaid Kobilica was the head of the Islamic Council of Norway from 2007 to 2012. In most cases, the Bosniak diaspora plays only a secondary role compared to the Turkish and Arab communities. This is notably the case for the Islamic Community of the Bosniaks in Germany within the Central Council of Muslims (*Zentralrat der Muslime*) or the German Islam Conference (*Islamkonferenz*). This direct interaction with the complex realities of Islam in Europe makes the Islamic institutions of the Bosniak diaspora a potential mediator between the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Muslim communities of Western Europe. The diaspora institutions can contribute to a realistic approach that was missing from some initiatives originating in Sarajevo. For example, the “Declaration of European Muslims”

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<sup>18</sup> Dino Mujadžević, “The Islamic Community in Croatia: Between Ethnic Bosniak and Civic Croatian Identity,” *Südosteuropa*, 3 (2014): 275-304.

<sup>19</sup> See, *inter alia*, Mirsad Mahmutović, *Džemati Bošnjaka u dijaspori* (Sarajevo: Rijaset Islamske zajednice, 2003); Begić, *Die bosnisch-herzegowinischen Muslime*.

<sup>20</sup> See, *inter alia*, Xavier Bougarel and Dimitrina Mihaylova, “Diasporas musulmanes balkaniques dans l’Union européenne,” *Balkanologie*, 1-2 (2005): 57-211; Nadje Al-Ali, “Gender Relations, Transnational Ties and Rituals among Bosnian Refugees,” *Global Networks*, 3 (December 2002): 249-262.

made public in August 2005 by the *Reis-ul-ulema* Mustafa Cerić claimed to speak for all European Muslims, without taking account of their diversity. It addressed EU institutions although religious policy is the responsibility of EU member states, and made claims that would be unacceptable to largely secularised European societies.<sup>21</sup> Through the Bosniak diaspora, other components of the Islamic tradition of Bosniaks could be promoted in Western Europe, especially what Fikret Karčić calls the “tradition of Islamic reformism” and the “practice of expressing Islam in a secular state”.<sup>22</sup> A good illustration of this reality is the publication by Armina Omerika, a former delegate to the German Islam Conference, of texts by major Bosnian reformist ulemas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> But this circulation of ideas is not a one-way street, and if the diaspora represents an opportunity for the Islamic tradition of the Bosniaks, this is also because it allows this tradition to be enriched with new outside contributions, as has always been the case in the past.

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<sup>21</sup> Mustafa Cerić, “Deklaracija evropskih muslimana”, accessed October 8, 2015, <http://www.rijaset.ba> On the issue of the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Islam in Europe, see also Christian Moe, “A Sultan in Brussels? European Hopes and Fears of Bosnian Muslims,” *Südosteuropa*, 4 (2007): 374-394; Christian Moe, “Is Multicultural Man Circumcised? Bosnian Muslims and European Identity Discourses,” in Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Levent Tezcan, eds. *Konfliktfeld Islam in Europa* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007), 267-279.

<sup>22</sup> Karčić, “Šta je to”.

<sup>23</sup> Armina Omerika, *Muslimische Stimmen aus Bosnien und Hercegowina: die Entwicklung einer modernen islamischen Tradition* (Freiburg: Herder, 2013).

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