



KOSOVO

Quick Facts

Population: 1,895,250 (July 2017 est.)

Area: 10,887 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Albanians 92.9%, Bosniaks 1.6%, Serbs 1.5%, Turk 1.1%, Ashkali 0.9%, Egyptian 0.7%, Gorani 0.6%, Romani 0.5%, other/unspecified 0.2%

Religions: Muslim 95.6%, Roman Catholic 2.2%, Orthodox 1.5%, other 0.07%, none 0.07%, unspecified 0.6% (2011 est.)

Government Type: Parliamentary republic

GDP (official exchange rate): \$6.624 billion (2016 est.)

Source: CIA World FactBook (Last Updated November 2017)

Islam's footprint in Kosovo dates back seven centuries, to the time of the Ottoman conquest. Although much of the ethnic Albanian-majority population practices a moderate form of Islam, the slow pace of social, political and economic development since the 1999 NATO intervention has created fertile soil for Islamic radicalization. Adding to this dynamic is the fact that the post-intervention period (even after national independence in 2008) has seen amorphous and unaccountable UN and then EU missions linger on, with wide authority and influence. A smaller NATO detachment led by the United States, Kosovo Force (KFOR) also remains, though it has handed over most security duties to local government bodies. However, due to the unaccountable governance of supranational organizations, numerous Islamic states and fundamentalist-oriented charities have been allowed open access to this economically underdeveloped corner of Europe.

The result today is that, while most Kosovars are still moderate, the country has produced the highest number of foreign fighters per capita among European countries joining ISIS and al-Nusra Front, with 125 fighters for every million people.¹ While numbers of foreign fighters have dropped sharply in the last year, due to governmental remediation efforts, the issue of countering violent extremism (CVE) and the potential for attacks from returning fighters are prominent concerns for the government and its Western backers today.

While the Kosovar government has tended to downplay the role of Islam (and Islamic extremism) in its nation, it is taking steps to deal with security and social issues associated with radicalization, passing laws against foreign fighters and arresting scores of previous or aspiring homegrown jihadists since 2014. While there are specific connections between Kosovo and the Syrian conflict, in the long term the development of education, health and work opportunities for local youth is probably the greatest challenge Kosovo faces in countering violent extremism. At the same time, the ethnic linkages between Kosovars at home and those in Western European countries has resulted (and will result) in police actions elsewhere on the Continent involving Kosovo-related terror cells linked to ISIS. This will remain a concern going forward.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Today's Islamist activity in Kosovo was, in the beginning, expedited by the 1999 NATO intervention, which replaced Serbian rule with a porous international administration that was preoccupied with matters of inter-ethnic violence, organized crime and institution-building. Relatively little attention was paid to the possibility of Islamic extremism, in part because the narrative of an ethnic nationalist liberation struggle allegedly precluded this possibility. Ultimately, though, the participation of Kosovo Muslims in modern jihad owes to the support of foreign Islamic donors, who sought to build mosques, schools and NGOs in the country following the 1999 NATO intervention. Although many of these groups have since been closed or voluntarily left, they did provide indoctrination and financial support for impoverished Kosovars at a key post-conflict time. Their influence has lingered and has created an extremist fringe that took on a leading role in the Syrian conflict.

The first foreign Islamist actors came to Kosovo in 1999 via in an assortment of Islamic charities. The most important was a Saudi government umbrella organization, the Saudi Joint Commission for the Relief of Kosovo and Chechnya (SJCRKC). It was matched by its official Kuwaiti counterpart, the Kuwaiti Joint Relief Committee (KJRC). Along with then-returning Albanian refugees, representatives of these groups (and the Islamic charities organized within them) entered Kosovo from neighboring Albania, where Albanian and U.S. authorities had been monitoring, and working to control, suspected international terrorist suspects. The Saudis initially allocated over \$22.5 million for the rebuilding or new construction of mosques and schools, and also for supporting orphans in Kosovo.² However, Kosovo investigators of the now-closed charity found in 2016 that most of the Saudi money could not be accounted for, and that very little has ever actually been given to help orphans.³

Although the volume of personnel would gradually diminish over time, and in some instances disappear completely with the progressive downsizing of the UN mission, Kosovo was clearly vulnerable to foreign Islamist penetration in the early years of post-Yugoslav rule. Kosovo's internationally uncertain status also meant a no-visa policy, and with essentially open borders, Kosovo became Europe's primary "safe zone" for foreign radicals. Pressure from the EU—which Kosovo hopes to join someday—led the government to plan to impose visas on over 80 countries in 2013. But, as of August 2016, citizens from over 100 countries (including most of the Gulf states) still did not need visas to enter Kosovo.⁴

Estimates for the number of foreign fighters from Kosovo have varied widely in recent years, with the Kosovar government only admitting to the problem once it began to garner

international interest in 2015. Since that time, there has been an almost complete stoppage of jihadists exiting the country.⁵ Statistics in 2015 claimed some 232 Kosovo-born fighters had joined the ranks of jihadist groups, making Kosovo the highest exporter of jihadists per capita in Europe.⁶ However, a U.S. Institute of Peace study from December 2016, concurring with a State Department country assessment from the summer of 2017, put the total number of foreign fighter from Kosovo at 314.⁷

Interestingly, the USIP analysis noted that “none of the five municipalities with the highest rates of foreign fighter mobilization (Hani i Elezit, Kaçanik, Mitrovice, Gjilan, and Viti) were classified as being among the municipalities with the lowest 2014 Human Development Index in Kosovo.”⁸ The research, which made use of official state statistics, found that “no correlation is readily observable between income and educational levels and vulnerability to mobilization.”⁹ While most Kosovo Muslim foreign fighters were men aged 17-30, they had relatively higher educational levels than did similar foreign fighters from Bosnia. Also, while in absolute terms urban areas (like the capital, Prishtina, and Prizren) were sources for Islamist fighters, the regular tours of Albanian extremist preachers from Macedonia created jihad pockets in tiny municipalities (Hani I Elezit, Kaçanik) that are near the border, and that turned out a disproportionate number of fighters bound for Syria and Iraq.¹⁰

Islamic radical activity relating to Kosovo has taken on an international profile, particularly since the Syrian war began in 2011. Yet it is not only that conflict zone that has drawn Albanians from the Balkan country to carry out jihad; in addition, the traditionally large and embedded Albanian diaspora spread throughout Western Europe is offering new potential for logistics and recruitments of terrorist bases, as has been indicated by several arrests in Italy since 2015. Most infamously, three Kosovar Albanian ISIS devotees (Fisnik Bekaj, 24, Dake Haziraj, 25, and Arian Babaj, 27) were arrested by Italian police in March 2017, after their plan to blow up Venice’s historic Rialto Bridge was uncovered by Italian police.¹¹ According to police wiretaps, the aspiring terrorists (one of whom had returned from Syria) were inspired by the contemporaneous terrorist attack on London’s Westminster Bridge.

As with other cases, all of the men were living legally in Italy—in fact, two worked as waiters in central Venice—indicating again the unique nature of Kosovo’s terrorist threat.¹² Kosovo thus continues to be an exporter of instability and also faces the threat of terrorism on its own soil from returning ISIS and al-Nusra fighters. Finally, given the very high rate of economic migrants during and after the 2015 European migrant crisis, the potential for radicalization grows among both embittered forced returnees and new diaspora members attracted to radical mosques in Western Europe.

As radicalized Kosovars have forayed into the outside world, radical elements have infiltrated Kosovo’s criminal network. Cooperation between ethnic Albanian drug cartels and ISIS is today a growing concern. Kosovars have historically been involved in heroin smuggling from Asia and some cocaine smuggling from South America, along with Albanians. But, as with Albania, they are most active through their extensive diaspora networks in Western Europe. After a large-scale police operation to destroy vast cannabis plantations in southern Albania, the business became fragmented, with older clans replaced by more violent adherents to radical Islam. Kosovo’s most infamous ISIS member, the late Lavdrim Muhaxheri, was for several years the key link between Albanian drug operations and ISIS recruitment. This is said to mark an increasingly violent and religiously-oriented drug-smuggling outfit in the region, with ties to the Italian and other mafias.¹³

Muhaxheri (born circa 1987) had been the best-known Kosovar jihadist associated with ISIS (he previously worked for both the UN administration in Kosovo and NATO in Afghanistan before being radicalized in the small south Kosovo village of Kacanik in 2012).¹⁴ From 2012, he became infamous worldwide—and a source of great embarrassment to state authorities—by appearing in several propaganda videos for ISIS, including one showing him beheading a captive. In an unsettling attempt to justify the crime to Kosovar nationalists, Muhaxheri claimed that he had done “the same thing” as the nationalist Kosovo Liberation Army had done against the Serbs, in 1999.¹⁵

In August 2014, Interpol put Muhaxheri on its wanted list. Then-U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry blacklisted the Kosovar jihadist as a threat to American national security in the Federal Register on October 2, 2014.¹⁶ The terrorist’s death was finally confirmed by family members and the Kosovo police on June 8, 2017. He had been killed by an air strike in Syria—Kosovo authorities estimated at the time that another 50 of their citizens had also been killed in fighting up to that point.¹⁷

Until the time of his death, Muhaxheri had led ISIS’ ethnic-Albanian brigade, and headed its Albanian-language propaganda campaign. He was also the ideological protégé of the (now jailed) radical Kosovar imam Zekerija Qazimi, as was another field commander, Ridvan Haqifi.¹⁸ In June 2017, the Kosovo authorities charged nine men (among 19 arrested the year before) for having plotted to carry out terrorist attacks in Kosovo and other regional countries; most prominent among these was a thwarted attack on an international soccer match between Israel and Albania (the match, held under heavy security, was played in a different city than originally planned). Investigators found that the arrested men had been taking their orders and funding directly from Muhaxheri in Syria, and that some had learned to make homemade explosives similar to those used in terrorist attacks in Belgium and France.¹⁹

An equally worrying problem for Kosovo is the prominent participation of women in the ranks of ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria. In July 2017, it was alleged that a 23-year-old woman, Qamile Tahiri, was among the most radical of 44 known Kosovo Albanian women in Syria. She was said to be running a jihadi training camp for women in Syria and, along with another Kosovar woman, heavily engaged in recruiting newcomers to the terrorist cause from personal and internet channels. Indeed, while general media reporting of the Syrian conflict focused on the role of women as come-along “jihadi brides,” examples such as Tahiri’s indicate a more complex and active role for radicalized women.²⁰

By May 2016, the number of Kosovars (including women and children) who had joined militant groups in Syria and Iraq had reached at least 314 persons (not counting pre-2014 fighters) according to a New York Times investigation. This report found that the development and mobilization of a Kosovar jihadist force had been accomplished by a “corps of extremist clerics and secretive associations funded by Saudi Arabia and other conservative Arab gulf states using an obscure, labyrinthine network of donations from charities, private individuals and government ministries.”²¹ While Kosovo’s interior ministry stated in August 2016 that no new recruits were believed to have departed in the past year, some 50 Kosovars had died in battle and another 120 had returned. Over 100 of these are under investigation by Kosovar authorities.²²

Both before and after the Syrian war, Kosovar Albanians have been involved in both terrorist cells and organized crime.²³ Despite the fact that the U.S.-led NATO intervention in 1999 liberated Kosovo from Serbia, a number of attacks and planned attacks against

the U.S. military have occurred. On September 23, 2016, Kosovo citizen Ardit Ferizi was sentenced to 20 years in prison by a U.S. district court; while based in Malaysia the year before, he had hacked into a U.S. company's database, harvesting personal data on 1,300 U.S. military and other personnel. The Kosovar admitted to having provided this data to ISIS, in the hopes of personal attacks designed to "hit them hard," an official U.S. State Department report recounted in 2017.²⁴ Earlier foiled attacks by Albanians against the U.S. military include the 2008 plot against Fort Dix in New Jersey,²⁵ and another against the U.S. Marine Corps base in Quantico, Virginia.²⁶ In 2012, the shadowy "Kosovo Hackers Security" group infiltrated the U.S. National Weather Service's computer networks; this was reportedly meant to be "a protest against the U.S. policies that target Muslim countries."²⁷

There are also renewed fears that Western targets—and local Balkan communities—could fall victim to a new breed of Islamic terrorists inspired by ISIS. In the June 2017 issue of ISIS's magazine, *Rumiyah* (formerly known as *Dabiq*) Bosnian jihadists threatened that they would soon be bringing their war to the Balkans, targeting Christian Serbs and Croats (allegedly, in revenge for the wars of the 1990s), as well as insufficiently devout Muslims. Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania were specifically mentioned as places where terrorism would be carried out.²⁸ Although as of late 2017 no such attacks have occurred, police continue to make arrests.²⁹ Indeed, the wider threat matrix is definitely keeping regional security services busy. This will be an ongoing reality and, combined with the need to attend to migration-related issues, will have a knock-on effect, with less manpower becoming available to fight organized political violence.

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

The most recent estimate, from 2015, pegged Kosovo's population at almost 1.9 million.³⁰ Ethnic Albanians comprise 92 percent of this population, which is on average one of the youngest in any European country. However, the country's poorly-performing economy has led many Kosovars to look for options abroad, and there is a large Kosovar diaspora in Western Europe. Kosovars and Albanians sought to take advantage of the 2015 migrant crisis for economic reasons, comprising one of the largest numbers of asylum-seekers by nationality. Their asylum attempts, however, generally failed, and the individuals in question were returned to their homelands. Germany alone received 102,000 ethnic Albanian migrants in 2015.³¹ Despite Kosovo's location in the Balkans, it did not receive a significant influx of migrants during the migrant crisis, because it was off the path that most migrants took to enter Europe, known as the Balkan Route. The Balkan Route runs in from Greece through the Vardar Valley corridor in central Macedonia and northwards through Serbia, reaching Hungary and Austria. Since Kosovo was not on the Balkan Route, it was never really impacted by migrant flows that passed through neighboring Macedonia and Serbia. (However, human trafficking gangs from all three countries have been active in facilitating illegal migration, according to the author's interviews with Macedonian and UN officials).

Muslims (who include small populations of Roma, Turks, Gorani and Bosniaks) in total are estimated to comprise 95 percent of Kosovo's total population.³² Approximately three percent of Kosovo's Albanians are Catholic, though this population seems to be increasing, while various foreign Protestant denominations have tried (so far, with less success) to convert Kosovo's Muslims. The beleaguered Serbian Orthodox minority of 120,000 persons is largely concentrated in a few scattered central enclaves, and in more compact northern

municipalities around the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica. However, there is also a small Serbian-speaking Slavic Muslim minority, the Gorani, who primarily inhabit the mountainous southwestern area around Dragas, nestled between Macedonia and Albania. The small Roma minority is mainly Muslim as well, but it is less active, limited by the Roma lifestyle on the margins of society.

The officially recognized Muslim organization in the country is the Islamic Community of Kosovo (in Albanian, *Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës*, or BIK).³³ It is intended to represent the totality of Islam in the country, though there are traditional Bektashi Sufi communities, particularly in western Kosovo, that have certain differences in doctrine and practice. Nevertheless, both the Bektashi and Hanafi Sunni Muslims generally get along and are united by a strong sense of ethnic Albanian nationalism, however, Wahhabi Muslims influenced by foreign ideologies fall outside the structure of the BIK and its control. Their numbers are notoriously difficult to calculate, as there is no strict doctrine or separate institutions governing them; they simply consider themselves “better,” more committed Muslims than the rest.

Of Kosovo’s approximately 800 mosques, some 240 were built following the 1999 NATO intervention—part of “a deliberate, long-term strategy by Saudi Arabia to reshape Islam in its image, not only in Kosovo but around the world.”³⁴ This mosque-building program and other Islamic activities have been driven not only by the Saudis but by other competing actors like Turkey and Iran. Cumulatively, this rivalry between external powers has damaged social cohesion and led to increasing conservatism. A 2016 study revealed that 57% of Kosovars had greater trust in religious institutions than in state ones, while “Kosovar youth are also becoming increasingly conservative, with their main reference points for spiritual and intellectual guidance being local imams.”³⁵

An indication of the government’s concern over religious polarization has been attested to by a new inter-faith body (led by Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic leaders) that meets regularly to discuss better cooperation and references Mother Teresa; though she was born in neighboring Macedonia, the famed nun of Calcutta is considered an ethnic Albanian national hero.³⁶ The Interfaith Kosovo initiative also holds annual conferences featuring high-profile international speakers, with a common aim of promoting interreligious harmony and confronting extremism; for example, its 2016 event was dedicated to the role of women in countering violent extremism.³⁷

Overall, the social and political trends toward increasing Islamic conservatism in Kosovo are not surprising to anyone who has paid close attention to the country since NATO’s intervention. Protecting the legacy and righteousness of that intervention has long led U.S. and NATO officials to downplay the presence of Islamism in Kosovo. Western governments in recent years tried to depict Kosovo’s brand of Islam as harmless, a sort of “Islam-lite.”³⁸ This narrative has, however, increasingly been challenged by the reality of Kosovar participation in the Syria conflict and related radicalization.

Naturally, the Kosovo government—which aspires to join the EU someday—also wishes to downplay any association with radical Islam. However, as of 2017 contemporary developments and anecdotal evidence point to a new trend toward using Islam as a way to define social identities, ideological beliefs, and cultural choices, and no longer simply as a way of making income, as had been the case with the initial Arab “investment” in Kosovo’s people.³⁹

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

The Kosovo state's disputed independent status continued in 2017 to hamper its abilities to cooperate in formal international law enforcement bodies; for example, in advance of Interpol's annual meeting in September 2017, the country's leaders had conceded that they would again have to postpone their membership bid to join the body, which was being held in "hostile" China—a country which, along with Russia, remains a strong supporter of Serbia's claim over Kosovo.⁴⁰ This effectively meant that to join the law enforcement body in 2018, Kosovo would have to lobby the Islamic country due to hold it in that year—the United Arab Emirates.⁴¹ While it is by no means certain that Kosovo could join Interpol even in 2018, the fact that it will have to lobby one of the world's leading Islamic countries adds an interesting nuance to the state's relationship with the Muslim world in the context of fighting terrorism.

There have of course been some successes, even without formal Interpol membership, due to Kosovo's strong Western support. At the same time, these successes have also highlighted Kosovo's role as an exporter of instability, in both having sent foreign fighters to the Middle East and in exporting radicals among its diaspora in Italy, Switzerland and other countries. In August 2014, Kosovo police arrested 40 people suspected of supporting jihadists in Syria and Iraq.⁴² In March 2015, the country passed a "foreign fighters" law at the U.S.'s request, as have several other Balkan countries.⁴³ The law penalizes the act of traveling from one's country to another to participate in a foreign conflict with punishments including prison sentences. The law is meant to be a deterrent to prevent people from going to join jihads and keep control of those who have done so and could pose a threat after returning. In May 2016, police "charged 67 people, arrested 14 imams and shut down 19 Muslim organizations for acting against the Constitution, inciting hatred and recruiting for terrorism," according to the New York Times.⁴⁴ One of the key radical clerics associated with ISIS, Zekerija Qazimi from Ferezaj, was found guilty of recruiting for the terror group and of inciting hatred, and was jailed for 10 years.⁴⁵ Kosovar police further targeted (in a very rare move) a Shiite organization in Kosovo run by an Iranian cleric reportedly linked to Iran's ayatollahs and accused of funding terrorism.⁴⁶

However, the government's success in arresting returned fighters and other radicals has also created a new problem: prison radicalization. Inspections by state authorities through 2017 indicated the presence of more radical (if often, unattributed) works of theology. An RFE/RL study in 2017, quoting the country's justice minister, stated that radical Islam was drawing adherents from convicts who had been arrested for other crimes, and who had shown no previous signs of religious radicalization. To help remedy the situation, the state and prison system began a program with Kosovo's official Islamic community, to send moderate imams and religious content to the prisons.⁴⁷

In response to this phenomenon, by 2017 a combination of governmental and NGO outreach efforts had been made in Kosovo to attempt to reintegrate foreign fighters and empower women, who in traditional Albanian society have generally been kept in a subservient position, experts say.⁴⁸ The U.S. State Department report of July 2017 noted that the country's countering violent extremism program includes "referral mechanism in the municipality of Gjilan that will bring together local officials, religious leaders, and civil society to address community concerns of radicalization to violence. Kosovo's CVE strategy includes the preparation and promotion of counter-narratives to weaken the legitimacy of violent

extremist messages.”⁴⁹

Elsewhere in Europe, international cooperation with Kosovar authorities has occurred. In November 2015, Italian authorities arrested four Kosovars in the Brescia region, where they had been running an ISIS logistics network linked with Kosovo’s former most-wanted jihadist, (now deceased) Lavdrim Muhaxheri.⁵⁰ At home, the Kosovar state is also seeking to counter extremism by other means. One possibility being recommended (in line with similar programs elsewhere in Europe) would offer “jihad rehabilitation” opportunities for some of the arrested men involved in the Syrian conflict.⁵¹

Kosovar-EU relations have been rocky in recent years, with allegations that Kosovo’s top leaders profited from wartime organ trafficking and drug smuggling offset by charges of EU corruption in its own Kosovo delegation, in 2014.⁵² The relationship between Kosovo’s government and its Western partners has also been troubled because of internal political infighting (as when rival Kosovar parliamentarians attacked each with tear gas in 2015 and 2016).⁵³ The combination of internal political feuding, the unresolved international status of Kosovo and Serbia’s non-recognition of the country, as well as endemic economic and social challenges all negatively affect the country’s institutional capacity to deal with important but not essential challenges like Islamic extremism. However, as of late 2017, Kosovo had still avoided any sort of political transition, with former wartime allies Hashim Thaci and Ramush Haradinaj remaining key state leaders, under Western control.

Amid the turmoil, one country that also saw considerable turmoil in 2016—Turkey—has sought to increase its presence in Kosovo. Unlike Saudi Arabia and other Muslim states, Turkey has a historic and cultural legacy in Kosovo, and thus significant legitimacy there. Since 1999, it has performed considerable development work, investment and political engagement within Kosovo, with significant impact. Among other things, the Erdogan government’s Justice and Development Party was the model for Kosovo’s Justice Party (Partia e Drejtësisë). Although it was not significantly represented in parliament, its leader was given a cabinet minister post in the previous government. In 2010, the party attempted to pass legislation calling for an introduction of religious education and an end to the state ban on the hijab in public schools. While these attempts failed, the closeness of the vote result indicated that individual parliamentarians from a wide range of parties have sympathies with Islam on social grounds.

Kosovo’s relationship with Turkey has also been complicated by the failed July 2016 military coup against President Erdogan. As elsewhere in the Balkans, in its aftermath Kosovo was asked by Ankara to close schools linked with the alleged coup mastermind, U.S.-based cleric Fethulah Gulen. The Turkish government also demanded that Kosovo punish a local journalist who had made satirical comments about the coup attempt.⁵⁴ The Kosovo government did not do either, and many in the country bristled against the perceived intrusiveness. However, the quashed coup has only increased Erdogan’s popularity among average Muslims in the Balkans—and Turkey runs Kosovo’s airport and electricity supply, while Turkish companies are heavily involved with its road infrastructure development. Kosovo thus faces a delicate balancing act in preserving relations with Turkey, the West and the Islamic world in the years ahead.

Indeed, in May 2017 a German parliamentarian of Turkish background upbraided her government over its perceived unwillingness to tackle Islamic extremism funded by Arab states in Kosovo, despite still keeping a German KFOR brigade there. She also noted that the Erdogan-Gulen rift has given the former “a free hand” to win support for his govern-

ment among Kosovars. The German MP, Sevim Dagdalem, charged that “it is scandalous that, thanks to the presence of German troops, Saudi preachers of hate and violence have been able to, unimpeded, set up the ideological foundation” for radical Islam.⁵⁵ The hands-off attitude of Kosovo’s international minders has been brought up time and time again since 1999, in the early years regarding tolerance of Albanian violence against Serbs, but since then increasingly in regards to turning a blind eye to Islamic radicalization trends.

A major issue going forward will be whether Kosovo can develop the economic and educational conditions for retaining its young and restless population. While a strong spirit of optimism characterized the country following the February 2008 unilateral declaration of independence, this spirit has long since waned as the reality of economic torpor remains. Illustrating this trend is the fact that Kosovo Albanians (along with their kin from South Serbia, Macedonia and Albania proper) comprised a significant number of asylum-seekers in Western Europe during and after the 2015 migration crisis. While many were sent home immediately, official Pew research data showed that by the beginning of 2017, some 77% of Kosovar asylum applicants in countries like Germany, Switzerland and Sweden were still awaiting a decision on their asylum applications.⁵⁶

Kosovo’s major problem, therefore, will remain creating an economically- and educationally-developed society, one in which a large young population can feel a sense of belonging and purpose. National and international authorities have identified social, economic and educational shortcomings as main drivers of radicalization here, so we can expect that counter-terrorism programs in the years ahead will continue to have this wider scope. At the same time, the proven ability of Kosovo-born radicals in Western Europe to plan and operate freely, under their own direction or from commanders in the Middle East, will pose the most significant hard security challenge to Europe and the U.S. from Kosovo-related extremists in the years ahead.

ENDNOTES

1. Joanna Paraszczuk, “Report Finds Alarming Outflow Of Kosovars To Islamic State,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 15, 2015, <http://www.rferl.org/content/islamic-state-kosovars-fighting-syria-iraq/26957463.html>.
2. A detailed contemporaneous description of the specific Kosovar refugee relief operations undertaken by Arab groups in Albania, and their subsequent entrance from there into Kosovo, is found in Hussein Saud Qusti, “Unsung Heroes,” *Saudi Aramco World*, July/August 1999. Regarding the role of U.S. and Albanian authorities targeting Islamist groups in Albania during the mid-1990s, see the *World Almanac of Islamism* chapter on Albania.
3. Carlotta Gall, “How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS,” *New York Times*, May 21, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/world/europe/how-the-saudis-turned-kosovo-into-fertile-ground-for-isis.html?_r=0.
4. See the official list, which is updated periodically, here: <http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,157>.
5. “Kosovo Hails Sharp Drop in Middle Eastern Fighters,” *Balkan In-*

- sight, October 24, 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-pledges-to-work-closer-to-islamic-community-to-fight-radicalism-10-24-2016>.
6. Paraszczuk, "Report Finds Alarming Outflow Of Kosovars To Islamic State."
 7. Adrian Shtuni, "Dynamics of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo," United States Institute of Peace, December 19, 2016, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/12/dynamics-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-kosovo>.
 8. Adrian Shtuni, "Dynamics of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo," United States Institute of Peace, December 19, 2016, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/12/dynamics-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-kosovo>
 9. Adrian Shtuni, "Dynamics of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo," United States Institute of Peace, December 19, 2016, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/12/dynamics-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-kosovo>.
 10. Shtuni, "Dynamics of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo."
 11. Nick Squires, "Italian police break up alleged jihadist cell that planned to attack Venice's Rialto Bridge," *The Telegraph*, March 30, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/30/italian-police-break-alleged-jihadist-cell-planned-attack-venices>.
 12. Squires, "Italian police break up alleged jihadist cell that planned to attack Venice's Rialto Bridge."
 13. Allan Hall and Dan Warburton, "ISIS seizes £4bn drug ring from the Mafia to fund its brutal terror campaign," *Daily Mirror* (UK), January 17, 2016, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/isis-seizes-4bn-drug-ring-7191800>.
 14. "Ekskluzive: Biografia e Lavdrim Muhaxherit" [Exclusive: Biography Lavdrim Muhaxheri]. *KosovaPress.com*, January 28, 2014.
 15. "Kosovo Albanian Who Beheaded a Man Says He Is Doing the Same Thing KLA Did," *Independent*, August 2, 2014, <http://www.independent.mk/articles/7931/Kosovo+Albanian+Who+Beheaded+a+Man+Says+He+Is+Doing+the+Same+Thing+KLA+Did>.
 16. In the Matter of the Designation of Lavdrim Muhaxheri, also known as Ebu Abdullah el Albani, also known as Abu Abdullah al Kosova, also known as Abu Abdallah al-Kosovi, also known as Abu Abdallah al-Kosovo as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Pursuant to Section 1(b) of Executive Order 13224, as Amended, Federal-Register.gov. October 2, 2014, <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/10/02/2014-23534/in-the-matter-of-the-designation-of-lavdrim-muhaxheri-also-known-as-ebu-abdullah-el-albani-also>.
 17. Fatos Bytyci, "Kosovo Islamic State Commander Killed, Police and Family Say," *Reuters*, June 8, 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-06-08/kosovo-islamic-state-command>

- er-killed-police-and-family-say.
18. Labinot Leposhtica, "Kosovo Jails Hard-line Imam for 10 Years," *Balkan Insight*, May 20, 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-hard-line-imam-sentenced-to-10-years-in-prison-05-20-2016>.
 19. Fatos Bytici, "Kosovo charges 9 men with plotting attacks at Albania-Israel World Cup match," *Reuters*, June 14, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kosovo-israel-security/kosovo-charges-9-men-with-plotting-attacks-at-albania-israel-world-cup-match-idUSKBN1951PZ>.
 20. *Sputnik News*, "One of most radical Islamic State women comes from Kosovo," B92, July 17, 2017, http://www.b92.net/eng/news/world.php?yyyy=2017&mm=07&dd=17&nav_id=101825.
 21. Carlotta Gall, "How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS," *New York Times*, May 21, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/world/europe/how-the-saudis-turned-kosovo-into-fertile-ground-for-isis.html?_r=0.
 22. "Kosovo Says No New Cases Of Citizens Joining IS In Iraq, Syria," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 24, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/kosovo-islamic-state-iraq-syria/27943383.html>.
 23. The full story of this interaction is reported only partially, and in various sources. See "Kosovo Drug Baron among Terrorists," *Blic* (Belgrade), September 27, 2006. See also Genc Morina, "Radical Islam: Wahhabism a Danger to Kosovo's Independence!" *Express* (Pristina), October 15, 2006. For official reactions to the acquittal, see Nina Berglund, "Reaction Mixed to Terror Acquittal," *Aftenposten* (Oslo), June 4, 2008.
 24. Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, U.S. Department of State, July 2017. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/272488.pdf>
 25. Geoff Mulvihill, "Man pleads guilty in Fort Dix plot case," Associated Press, October 31, 2007.
 26. See Gerry J. Gilmore, "FBI, Navy Foil Alleged Terror Plot on Quantico," American Forces Press Service, September 25, 2009. See also U.S. Department of Justice, "Kosovar National Charged with Terrorism Violations," June 17, 2010.
 27. "Kosovo Group Claims Hack of US Weather Service," Agence France-Presse, October 19, 2012.
 28. "ISIS threatens terror campaign in the Balkans," *Balkan Insight*, June 8, 2017, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/isis-wows-to-wreak-vengeance-on-balkans-in-new-threat-06-08-2017>.
 29. 'Hapšenje na Kosovu: Uhapšeni Albanci pripremali TERORISTIČKE napade.' ('Arrests in Kosovo: Albanians Preparing Terrorist Attacks Arrested,' *Srbija Danas*, May 25, 2017, <https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/info/hapsenje-na-kosovu-uhapseni-albanci-pripremali-teroristicke-napade-2017-05-25>).

30. See <http://www.geoba.se/country.php?cc=XK&year=2015>.
31. Sewell Chan, "How a Record Number of Migrants Made Their Way To Europe," *New York Times*, December 22, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/23/world/europe/migrant-crisis-europe-million.html>.
32. The 2011 Kosovo census was the first internationally-recognized tally since 1981. Despite the Serb boycott, the EU (which donated 6 million euros to the project) found it generally to have met quality standards. The official Kosovo government statistical office web page for the census is <http://esk.rks-gov.net/rekos2011>.
33. The official web site of the BIK is www.bislame.net.
34. Gall, "How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS," op. cit.
35. Ebi Spahiu, "Jihadist Threat Persists in Kosovo and Albania Despite Government Efforts," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 14, iss. 13, June 24, 2016, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45551&no_cache=1#.V77LZ6KgA3j.
36. Linda Karadaku, "Inter-faith Dialogue Expected To Advance Reconciliation," *SETimes.com*, August, 14, 2013.
37. The group's official website is <https://www.facebook.com/Inter-faith-Kosovo-403629399719855/>.
38. This could be seen in media pieces printed immediately after the independence declaration, such as "Kosovo Touts 'Islam-lite,'" *Associated Press*, February 21, 2008.
39. Several telling examples of this trend are provided in Frud Bezhan, "A Growing Split Between Islamic, Secular Identities In Kosovo," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 7, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/kosovo-split-islamic-identity-secular-traditions/27906304.html>.
40. Perpatim Isufi, "Kosovo Abandons Bid to Join Interpol This Year," *Balkan Insight*, September 21, 2017, <https://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-abandons-bid-to-join-interpol-this-year-09-21-2017>.
41. Isufi, "Kosovo Abandons Bid to Join Interpol This Year."
42. Violeta Hyseni Kelmendi, "Kosovo mobilizes to fight religious radicalism and terrorism," *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, August 25, 2014, <http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Kosovo/Kosovo-mobilizes-to-fight-religious-radicalism-and-terrorism-155153>.
43. Una Hajdari, "Kosovo to Jail Fighters in Foreign Conflicts," *Balkan Insight*, March 13, 2015, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-law-to-punish-fighting-in-foreign-conflicts>.
44. Gall, "How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS," op. cit.
45. Leposhtica, "Kosovo Jails Hard-line Imam for 10 Years," op. cit.
46. Frud Bezhan, "Charges Against Cleric Put Iran's Balkan Activities Under Spotlight," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 1, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/kosovo-iran-cleric-arrest/27886917.html>.
47. Pete Baumgartner, "Kosovo Seeks To Root Out Radical Islam In Pris-

- on System," *RFE/RL*, March 7, 2017. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-root-out-radical-islam-from-prisons/28356290.html>.
48. Nina Teggarty, "Kosovo Looks To ISIS Wives In Order To Fight Extremism," *Huffington Post*, March 9, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/kosovo-looks-to-isis-wives-in-order-to-fight-extremism_us_58c1ae33e4b054a0ea6900dd.
 49. Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, *Ibid*.
 50. Matteo Albertini, "Italy and Kosovo Intensify Actions against Another ISIS-linked Group," *Balkananalysis.com*, December 6, 2015, <http://www.balkananalysis.com/kosovo/2015/12/06/italy-and-kosovo-intensify-actions-against-another-isis-linked-group/>.
 51. "Offer Kosovar Fighters 'Jihadi Rehab' to Combat Extremism," *Balkan Insight*, March 24, 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/offer-kosovar-fighters-jihadi-rehab-to-combat-extremism--03-23-2016>.
 52. Julian Borger, "EU accused over its Kosovo mission: 'Corruption has grown exponentially,'" *Guardian* (London), November 6, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/06/eu-accused-over-kosovo-mission-failings>.
 53. "Opposition MPs let off tear gas in Kosovo parliament," *BBC*, February 19, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35616745>
 54. Fatos Bytyci, "Turkey asks Kosovo to punish journalist over coup comments," *Reuters*, July 26, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-kosovo-turkey-journalist-idUSKCN1061A1>.
 55. "Arabs are Islamizing Kosovo before KFOR's eyes," *B92*, May 18, 2017, http://www.b92.net/eng/news/world.php?yyyy=2017&m=05&dd=18&nav_id=101302.
 56. Phillip Connor, "Still in Limbo: About a Million Asylum Seekers Await Word on Whether They Can Call Europe Home," *Pew Global*, September 20, 2017, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/09/20/a-million-asylum-seekers-await-word-on-whether-they-can-call-europe-home>.