# DPC

**Democratization Policy Council**

# Countering the Cultivation of Extremism in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

# The Case for Comprehensive Education Reform

DPC Policy Note

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This policy note argues that while educational policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) do not explicitly encourage radical or extremist thinking, they do decidedly facilitate the emergence of narrow-minded, ethnically exclusive groups of young citizens unequipped to operate in a heterogeneous, complex world. Insufficient measures exist to *promote* critical thinking, media literacy, multiperspectivity and inclusive civic-mindedness. At best, the present educational approach bodes poorly for the socio-economic prospects of BiH's youth in an increasingly competitive global market; at worst, few preventive measures exist that would dissuade vulnerable individuals from gravitating towards extremist worldviews. BiH's ethnically fragmented and exclusivist approaches to education are anathema to the development of critical thinking and analytical skills necessary to open young minds, reduce intolerance and question the ethnic status quo narrative.

While global fears of Islamist extremism dominate discussions on radicalism and terrorism, other forms of extremism (radical nationalist; white supremacy; neo-Nazi; anti-immigrant; etc.) benefit from young minds unable to effectively digest and question messages of hate and intolerance. Young people from the Balkans have gone not only to Syria and Iraq, but also to Ukraine, as part of a perceived ideological, cultural struggle.

There are a number of reasons why the BiH educational system is unequal to the challenge of producing well-rounded thinkers, committed to Euro-Atlantic values:

- The fragmentation of the system is grounded in a commitment to maintain the narrative of narrow party and ethno-national group interests;

- The system largely relies on rote memorization and teaching from the textbook which does not foster intellectual development, analytical thinking skills, critical media literacy and civic citizenship;

- Ethnification promotes an "us vs. them" mentality in a post-war region that has experienced little genuine political or social reconciliation;

- The introduction of religion into the curricula has focused on doctrinal religious instruction, rather than inclusive, non-denominational approaches and education;

- External efforts to support reform have failed to address the root causes and problems throughout the curricula, particularly in the national identity-focused subjects.

Ethnic-based curricula creates a self-reinforcing recipe for extremism.

There have been several knee-jerk reactions by some in the international community to counter this problem through stand-alone, extra-curricular projects, without tackling the systemic drivers, which are political. These have not worked, as demonstrated by over a decade of limited and pilot projects. In fact, such an approach has actually *made the situation worse* by providing a veneer of democratic responsibility and modernity to parties and policy-makers who sign on to "reforms," knowing full well that in the absence of substantial curricular reform – which would itself undermine the nationalist foundations of the political system – the status quo will indeed remain intact.

Opponents of reform – including anti-reform domestic policymakers and timid international actors – will quickly reject the notion of any stronger state role. Republika Srpska (RS) politicians can be expected to reject the recommendations contained herein out of hand. Similarly, Bosniak and Croat politicians in the Federation, seeking to maintain their own educational fiefdoms, will also reject any policy proposals that could weaken their social control. For this reason it is important to frame the issue not in terms of whether competencies will be held at the level of the state, entity or canton, but rather in terms of whether *any* child in BiH can reasonably attend *any* BiH school and study *any* of BiH's curricula, feel at ease in any of the classes, and graduate with a competitive set of skills and a critical worldview. This will require comprehensive curricular reform, which, with limited exception, has not been addressed in over a decade.

The following recommendations are aimed at BiH and international decision-makers and the broader latent constituency of citizens dissatisfied with the educational status quo:

1.  Establish an independent expert coordination group, with principal-level engagement, to develop a short-term (one year) and medium-term (five years) strategy for substantive curricular reform.

2.  Build a popular constituency for substantial education reform, making the case directly to citizens, by tying financial and development aid to progress in this sector.

3.  Undertake a curricular review aimed at teaching in a multiperspective manner. Existing reports and reviews will provide a strong starting point, and can help to avoid recreating the wheel. Expert organizations such as the Georg Eckert Institute can contribute; pluri-lingual teaching techniques should ensure all students are literate in the dialectical variants (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian) and scripts (Latin and Cyrillic).

4.  Put on hold *all* current or planned educational support programs (including those seen as purely "structural" or "technical") to ensure that they are in line with a re-energized system-wide reform effort; withhold funds if reforms are not implemented in good faith. Education funding is fungible; external funding without reform has propped up the current poisonous and dangerous system.

5.  Engage with the religious communities to systematically implement inclusive, multiperspective and non-doctrinal religious education, and ensure that in-school doctrinal religious instruction is implemented in an inclusive (not exclusive) manner in line with good practices, and that acceptable alternatives are offered.

6.  Reconsider civic education initiatives that, while introducing useful concepts, fail to sufficiently counter the messages sent in other classes. Mainstream critical thinking techniques and methods and strengthen critical thinking skills and compulsory media literacy to reduce the potential attraction of extremist worldviews and ideologies.

7.  Recognize that BiH's neighbors can contribute to the reform environment in constructive or destructive ways. As curricular materials are often directly or indirectly taken from Croatia and Serbia, monoperspective narratives in those countries are being imported into BiH. Donor or expert support programs in those countries should also focus on quality, multiperspectivity, and critical thinking.

## Introduction[1]

This policy note reviews the links between education and the development of worldviews that are either conducive to extremist ideology, or grounded in critical thinking and analysis, with a focus on the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While it is clear that every country has an interest in ensuring that its citizens are not attracted to extreme ideologies, and that if they are so inclined do not act to violently promote the spread of such a worldview, BiH and other post-war, fragile states face particular challenges.

BiH's post-war governmental structure has enabled the development of three opposing and often incompatible curricular approaches, school systems and worldviews. While these policies are not explicitly encouraging young people to gravitate towards radical or extremist thinking, education policy-makers are not taking steps to *prevent* the emergence of narrow-minded, ethnically exclusive groups of young citizens poorly equipped to operate in a heterogeneous world, nor are they taking sufficient steps to *promote* critical thinking, media literacy, multiperspectivity or inclusive civic-mindedness. While there are always exceptions – top students winning competitions, teachers willing to take classroom risks, etc. – broadly speaking the educational system and the ethno-national curricula upon which it is built, is generating three separate worldviews among the next generation of BiH's citizens and leaders.

While fears of Islamist extremism currently dominate discussions on radicalism and terrorism, other forms of extremism (radical nationalist; white supremacy; neo-Nazi; anti-immigrant; etc.) benefit as well from young minds unable to effectively digest and question messages of hate and intolerance. The phenomenon of foreign fighters from BiH going to Syria and Iraq has been foremost in the minds of many;[2] however, fighters from the Balkans have also gone to eastern Ukraine, and not just as mercenaries, but as a part of a broader perceived ideological and cultural struggle.[3] The impact of political divisions and extremist discourse in BiH are clear as well. The casual and explicit references to the war and atrocities in football matches,[4] frequent vandalism of religious sites[5] and other cases and

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[1] The author would like to thank Vlado Azinović, Chris Bennett, Marina Bowder, Armina Mujanović and the DPC Editorial Board for their comments and feedback on earlier versions opf the draft. All errors are the author's alone.

[2] The most thorough study of this phenomenon is by Vlado Azinović and Muhamed Jusić. "The Lure of the Syrian War: The Foreign Fighters' Bosnian Contingent." *The Atlantic Initiative*, 2015. Available at http://atlanticinitiative.org/images/THE_LURE_OF_THE_SYRIAN_WAR_THE_FOREIGN_FIGHTERS_BOSNIAN_CONTINGENT/The_Lure_of_the_Syrian_War_-_The_Foreign_Fighters_Bosnian_Contingent.pdf

[3] "Holy Warriors." *The Economist*. 21 August 2014. Available at http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2014/08/balkan-fighters-abroad; "Fight the Good Fight." *The Economist*. 18 April 2015. Available at http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21648697-western-balkans-peace-some-go-abroad-look-war-fight-good-fight; Milekić, Sven. "Some Croats are Fighting in Ukraine Army, Pusić Says." *Balkan Insight*. 12 February 2015. Available at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/croatia-not-prosecuting-fighters-in-foreign-wars; Ristić, Marija. "Serbian Fighters Help 'Russian Brothers' in Crimea." *Balkan Insight*. 6 March 2014. Available at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbian-fighters-head-to-crimea

[4] "Serb Hate Speech Brings Bosnia Match to Halt." *Balkan Insight.* 12 March 2014. Available at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-serbia-match-stopped-over-nationalistic-slogans Eric Gordy writes about "the celebration of crime", including use of "nož, žica, Srebrenica" at football matches, popular music and other expressions, in *Guilt, Responsibility and Denial: The Past at Stake in post-Milošević Serbia*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

incidents demonstrate the social implications of extremist thoughts in action.

This policy note explores a number of reasons why the BiH educational system is failing to proactively and preventively respond, and why this is a matter for concern.

Two key points deserve emphasis from the outset. First, any focus on extremism in BiH should not focus *solely* on the issue of Islamic extremism. The 1992-1995 war was itself a manifestation of not one but multiple and increasingly extremist factions which rose to prominence in the political and intellectual vacuum at the end of the Cold War. Reactionary forces can assume many flavors, and, in fact, often build on and feed off of one another in paradoxical pursuit of conflicting yet shared anti-modern, anti-progressive, anti-civic goals.

Second, there are clearly other countries that face much greater challenges in terms of the close links between education and extremist ideology – in the Middle East and Indonesia, for example.[6] While Azinović and Jusić explore the limited (to date) foreign fighter phenomenon in BiH, others caution against alarmism or exaggeration of the threat posed by BiH, which has always enjoyed a moderate approach to Islam.[7] No country is immune to manifestations of extremist influence on a small or large scale.[8] BiH is a specific case, however, as, while it is in Europe and has a "Euro-Atlantic perspective," it remains a fragile state hobbled by an unconsolidated democracy and minimally resolved post-war political or social reconciliation, facing substantial challenges related to governance, the rule of law and democratic accountability.[9] Other European countries are confronting similar threats, but are

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[5] Various organizations are tracking this. The OSCE together with the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) tracks and reports on such incidents within their hate crimes reporting projects. "See http://hatecrime.osce.org/bosnia-and-herzegovina). "Monitoring and Responses to Attacks on Religious Buildings and Other Holy Sites in BiH." Nansen Dialogue Center Project Review Report (November 1 2011 – October 31 2012), 20 March 2013. Available at https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/UCHS-Bosnia-Pilot-Final-Report-Year-2-FOR-PUBLICATION.pdf

[6] Challenges in the Middle East, and in particular in Iraq and Syria, have been extensively documented. For a summary on challenges in Indonesia, see Timberman, David. "Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Indonesia: A Risk Assessment." US Agency for International Development. 7 January 2013. Available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JSJJ.pdf

[7] Galdini, Franco. "The Myth of Muslim Radicalisation in Bosnia." *Gulf News*. 16 August 2015. Available at http://gulfnews.com/news/europe/the-myth-of-muslim-radicalisation-in-bosnia-1.1565927. See also Bringa, Tone. *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way*. Princeton University Press, 1995.

[8] Two recent stories reported by the *New York Times* attests to the range of individuals that have been targeted and groomed by the Islamic State. Callimachi, Rukmini. "ISIS and the Lonely Young American." *The New York Times.* 27 June 2015. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/28/world/americas/isis-online-recruiting-american.html; Bennhold, Katrin. "Jihad and Girl Power: How ISIS Lured 3 London Girls." *The New York Times*. 17 August 2015, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/18/world/europe/jihad-and-girl-power-how-isis-lured-3-london-teenagers.html

[9] In a 2015 report, "States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions," the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) included BiH and Kosovo in its review of 50 of the most fragile states. In measuring fragility, the OECD proposes a model that consists of five measures: 1) violence; 2) access to justice for all; 3) effective, accountable and inclusive institutions; 4) economic inclusion and stability; 5) capacities to prevent and adapt to social, economic and environmental shocks and disasters. Report available at http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/publications/documentuploads/SOF2015.pdf.

undoubtedly better equipped to respond to such social challenges; however the rise of an increasingly illiberal Hungary, exemplified by its reaction to the recent refugee crisis, vividly illustrates the scope for mainstream extremist rhetoric and action.[10] In terms of education, while BiH is certainly not facing the same educational challenges as Indonesia or the Gulf countries, it is also not enjoying the quality and modernity of Finland. And as a frozen conflict, any dynamics – such as nationalist-oriented, monoperspective education – that impede greater social cohesion and generate division will further jeopardize long-term stability.

This policy note explores these issues. First, several general concepts related to extremism and efforts to counter (violent) extremism are introduced, to provide a framework for understanding drivers and response options. This is followed by a review of the post-Dayton BiH educational governance environment, to understand the linkages to the politics that drove the war, that continue to shape the post-war environment and that have hobbled genuine education reform. The concepts of monoperspectivity and multiperspectivity are introduced and reviewed, in general and as experienced in BiH. Finally, concluding thoughts and recommendations are offered to BiH policymakers and international actors (the EU, international organizations, embassies and donors) who by engaging on education without seeking fundamental change are – unwittingly or otherwise – supporting a status quo that does little to either promote civic values and social tolerance or prevent the potential spread or absorption of extremist ideologies.

References to "education" in this paper refer to compulsory primary and secondary education; while interest in higher education, lifelong learning and the need for vocational links to the job market are also important, it is impossible to talk of quality tertiary or professional education if the lower educational levels are substandard.[11] Further, it is through compulsory education that a community's values are transmitted to the next generation. Each section of this paper admittedly merits more detailed analysis and attention; the aim of this paper, however, is to reignite discussion on these topics and to return substantial education reform to the agenda. Citations provide information on additional resources and references.

Throughout this paper, the main sections are preceded by quotations from a 2012 report on an OSCE-ODIHR (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) roundtable, "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that

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[10] Bíró Nagy, András, Tamás Boros and Áron Varga. "Right-Wing Extremism in Hungary." Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. December 2012. Available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/09566.pdf; Simon, Zoltan. "Orban Says He Seeks to End Liberal Democracy in Hungary." Bloomberg. 28 July 2014. Available at http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-07-28/orban-says-he-seeks-to-end-liberal-democracy-in-hungary.

[11] At a conference on "The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism," "Several participants believed that programs that support critical thinking skills should be integrated into educational curricula in primary school – that introducing these skills in secondary school or at the university level was too late." Meeting Note. December 2013, p. 4. Available at http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Dec13_Education_Expert_Meeting_Note.pdf

Lead to Terror."[12]The findings and recommendations from that report encapsulate the link between weak, intolerant monoperspective education and the cultivation of extremist thinking. They also mirror the weaknesses currently evident in BiH's education system. The excerpts are therefore useful in reinforcing the connection between education and ideological extremism of any stripe; something appreciated by experts, but equally and instinctually understood by these participants. While the OSCE continues to maintain a substantial presence through its Mission to BiH, and continues to support targeted history textbook reform efforts in particular, there is no requirement for school curricula to actually require or *use* the new, more multiperspective methods and textbooks, and broader curricular reform has fallen from the radar screen in the absence of both domestic and international political will.[13]

While there are indeed micro-level examples of good practices – discrete teacher-training workshops, youth camps, reconciliation-minded arts programs, etc. – these are the exceptions that prove the rule. They are also nearly always externally proposed and funded *extra*-curricular options. In terms of compulsory education and the curricula that shape formal education, the monoperspective, "us vs. them" narrative continues. Only by ensuring that *every student* in the country can receive an education that is inclusive, multiperspective and multi-sourced; where critical thinking skills and media literacy are mainstreamed; and where *any* child can with confidence go to *any* school and learn together with their peers, will the attraction of extremist agendas be effectively diminished.

### 1.  The Appeal of Extremist Thought: Some Basics

*"Terrorist radicalization and recruitment of youth to violent extremism and terrorism appear, in many instances, based on social bonding rather than ideological grounds [sic]. Young people may initially turn to violent extremist groups to find a sense of recognition, fellowship, and identity. Youth may also join these groups because they offer forms of support that meet their material and socio-psychological needs, e.g., money, protection, and solidarity….. Violent extremist groups tend to rely on 'black and white' thinking to create an identity and a sense of belonging in opposition to an 'other' who is vilified and dehumanized. They do not give any space to doubt, critical thinking or self-criticism, and attribute the entire responsibility for an individual's situation, in particular real or perceived grievances, to the 'others' and the society at large."[14]*

Much has been written on the underlying causes of extremism, and, inter alia, appropriate responses to

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[12] "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terror: Report on Findings and Recommendations." Joint OSCE Secretariat – OSCE ODIHR Expert Roundtable. 23-24 October 2012, p. 4. Available at http://www.osce.org/secretariat/103352?download=true

[13] The OSCE and the Council of Europe have been the most involved in education issues, in terms of either projects or statements noting the need for reform. As education is generally considered to be a domestic issue, and is not included in the *acquis communautaire*, the EU has tended to limit itself to providing "technical support" to education projects, avoiding the more overtly political issues associated with curricula.

[14] "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terror: Report on Findings and Recommendations," p. 4.

this phenomenon. Although a thorough review is beyond the scope of this paper,[15] it is useful to review a few relevant concepts.

The dictionary definition of extremism is simple: "belief in and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable." Radicalism brings in a political or governmental aspect: "the opinions and behavior of people who favor extreme changes especially in government."[16] In the contemporary global political context, the explicit role of individuals willing to *operationalize* a certain ideology may be further defined. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines violent extremists as "individuals who support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals."[17] Some scholars, while deconstructing causes and dynamics of extremism, have noted the subjective nature of these terms (the age-old "freedom fighters or terrorists" debate), urging a holistic understanding of this phenomenon.[18]

There is a spectrum of engagement among those who hold extremist views. Individuals who hold extreme views do not always act to promote these views; they may be closely held, yet intensely personal views with little broader social impact. Other individuals may hold these views and tacitly support the actions of others to make social changes in support of this worldview; even broad passive support can provide the social legitimacy needed for an extremist movement to gain adherents and standing. Some may directly support the use of violence without engaging in violent acts themselves. And, finally, there are those who are willing to kill others and themselves in pursuit of their goals.[19]

Therefore, there is space on the spectrum between internalization of extremist views and mobilization. Fortunately, few who dabble in or embrace radical or extremist ideology go on to commit terrorist acts of violence in the name of their cause. Preventing radicalization, or seeking to reverse the process of pre-mobilized radicalization, can therefore be seen not just as a "soft" response, but as a critical element of comprehensive security.[20]

The causes – and in turn the needed prescriptions – can be broadly broken into two camps. The first

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[15] *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*. US Agency for International Development. February 2009; Taspinar, Omer. "Fighting Radicalism, not Terrorism: Root Causes of an International Actor Redefined." *SAIS Review*. Vol. 29, no. 2, Summer-Fall 2009; United States Institute of Peace Insights. Issue 1, Spring 2014.

[16] Definition at www.merriam-webster.com.

[17] Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security. Available at http://www.dhs.gov/topic/countering-violent-extremism

[18] Bartoli, Andrea and Peter T. Coleman. "Dealing with Extremists." *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. September 2003. Available at http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/dealing-extremists.
Available at http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/dealing-extremists

[19] McCants, Will and Clinton Watts. "U.S. Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism: An Assessment." *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes*. December 2012. Available at http://www.fpri.org/articles/2012/12/us-strategy-countering-violent-extremism-assessment; *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*. US Agency for International Development, February 2009.

[20] "The OSCE Concept of Comprehensive and Co-operative Security: An Overview of Major Milestones." OSCE Secretariat Conflict Prevention Center. 17 June 2009.
Available at http://www.osce.org/cpc/37592?download=true

consists of those who see socio-economic and environmental drivers creating fertile ground for disaffected persons (often youth) to seek to change the status quo by any means. This camp advocates for a development approach to prevention which would increase educational and employment opportunities and thereby reduce or substantially eliminate the conditions perceived to be facilitating the emergence of alienated individuals and groups embracing extremist views. The second camp rejects this argument, arguing that in fact many extremists (particularly in leadership roles) lack neither economic nor educational means. Instead, this side views the struggle as an ideology-based security threat that is at its core political and which requires a strict military and law enforcement approach.[21]

There is an increasing recognition that the boundary between these two approaches is porous.[22] Taspinar integrates others' theories of relative deprivation (e.g., Ted Robert Gurr) and human development (e.g., Amartya Sen) into his analytical toolbox to understand and counter radicalization. Nearly all agree that the causes are multiple, intertwined and complex. "Push factors" (broader socio-economic characteristics, such as poverty, social exclusion, unemployment/underemployment, etc.), and "pull factors" (the appeal of an extremist group or leader, campaigns, active recruitment, etc.), must combine to entice or encourage an individual to not just internalize but seek to operationalize extremist goals through violent means.

While the Islamic State (ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh) is the first thing that comes to mind in 2015 when thinking about violent extremism (demonstrating its successful, though deplorable, media outreach efforts), violent extremism is not new. Every society has its radicals: consider, for example, the recent white supremacy-inspired murders in a prominent African-American church in the United States; anti-government radicalism in the U.S. from Waco to the present; and the Anders Breivik rampage in Norway in 2011.[23] The EU has recognized the broad nature of radical threats: "…terrorism in Europe now finds its inspiration in a larger variety of ideologies, as illustrated by the 2013 Europol TE-Sat report. These include nationalist and separatist ideologies, those inspired by Al Qaida, violent left-wing, anarchist, and right-wing ideologies."[24] The most overt form of mobilization – the emergence of foreign fighters – is

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[21] *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*. US Agency for International Development. February 2009. One analysis notes 6 main perspectives on the source of extremism: 1) extremism is grown; 2) extremism is constructed; 3) extremism is an emotional outlet for severe feelings; 4) extremism is a rational strategy in a game over power; 5) extremism emerged from apocalyptic, eschatological (end of life) ideologies; and 6) extremism is a pathological illness. See Bartoli and Coleman, 2003.

[22] *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*; Taspinar, Omer. "Fighting Radicalism, not Terrorism: Root Causes of an International Actor Redefined." SAIS Review. Vol. 29, no. 2, Summer-Fall 2009; *United States Institute of Peace Insights*. Issue 1, Spring 2014.

[23] Horowitz, Jason, Nick Corasaniti and Ashley Southall. "Nine Killed in Shooting at Black Church in Charleston." *The New York Times*. 17 June 2015. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/church-attacked-in-charleston-south-carolina.html?_r=0; Graham, David A. "Deadly American Extremism: More White than Muslim." *The Atlantic*. 25 June 2015. Available at http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/terrorism-threat/396749/; Lewis, Mark and Sarah Lyall. "Norway Mass Killer gets the Maximum: 21 Years." *The New York Times*. 24 August 2012. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/25/world/europe/anders-behring-breivik-murder-trial.html

[24] "Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response."
Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social

also not new.[25] Such individuals exist in societies both rich and poor.

However what distinguishes the odd, unpredictable "lone wolf" from more systematic and more dangerous threats is whether or not they enjoy a critical mass of public support (including online) and legitimacy, and whether the societies from which they come are able to both effectively counter extremism and offer an alternative. Well managed, democratically legitimate societies have an easier time preventing and overcoming terrorism. This is where both camps – the development camp and the security response camp – agree: that the role of effective and legitimate good governance is critical in preventing, countering and responding to extremist groups and acts.

The nature and quality of a government's ability to meet the needs and aspirations of all of its citizens is the cornerstone of good governance. The critical word to keep in mind here is *all:* any group that perceives itself to be systematically disenfranchised, for any reasons (economic, racial, ethnic, religious, etc.),  constitutes a disaffected and potentially alienated population which, if it cannot seek change through "traditional" or peaceful means, is susceptible to finding other means of satisfaction in the short- or long-term. "Controlling for other variables, the more exclusionary the political system, the more unresponsive it is to citizens' demands, the more it denies them basic civil liberties, the greater the vulnerability to VE [violent extremism]."[26]

The weaker the state, the more difficult it is to ensure good governance. Fragile, conflict-affected and post-war societies are particularly vulnerable. "While no causal link between poverty and terrorism has been established, research suggests that conditions such as sociopolitical inequality, prolonged violence and conflict repression of civil liberties and negative experiences with law enforcement and security officials may be drivers of violent extremism."[27] In an increasingly flat and globalized world, it simply is not possible to assume or hope that extremist ideas or actions in some other part of the world will not affect one's own security, in either direct or indirect ways. "Armed with newly acquired combat skills, many of these European 'foreign fighters' could pose a threat to our security on their return from a conflict zone. In the longer term they could act as catalysts for terrorism. The phenomenon of foreign fighters is not a new one, but as fighting in Syria continues, the number of extremists travelling to take part in the conflict is rising. And as the number of European foreign fighters rises, so does the threat to our security."[28]

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Committee and the Committee of the Regions. COM (2013)941 Final, Brussels, 15 January 2014, p. 2. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/crisis-and-on_preventing_radicalisation_and_violence_promoting_extremism_201301_en.pdf

[25] Azinović, Vlado and Muhamed Jusić, 2015.

[26] *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*, p. v

[27] Chowdhury Fink, Naureen, Karin Deutsch Karlekar and Rafia Barakat. 2013. "Mightier than the Sword? The Role of the Media in Addressing Violence and Terrorism in South Asia." Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation. 2013. p. 3. Available at:
http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2013Oct_CGCC_MightierThanTheSword_Report.pdf

[28] "Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response." Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. COM (2013)941 Final, Brussels, 15 January 2014. p. 2. Available at

## 2. Countering the Development of Extremist Worldviews

*"Terrorist radicalization among youth can and should be prevented, starting at an early age, in formal schools settings. Particular efforts are needed with respect to teenagers, a group that is generally harder to engage with as they have specific interests and may avoid or oppose those they perceive as figures of authority. However, teachers often do not have the confidence and specialized skills needed to address issues such as violent extremism, and a segregated school system may reinforce ignorance and intolerance as opposed to promoting living together. Informal education plays a key complementary role and youth work by civil society organizations can support peace-building and promote tolerance based on positive and enjoyable activities."[29]*

In light of the various opinions and interpretations of the drivers of radicalization and violent extremism, it is no surprise that there is still no consensus on how states can most effectively counter the development of such outlooks and the decision of adherents of such extremist views to mobilize (referred to as countering violent extremism, or CVE). Some approaches emphasize law enforcement and military action, while others urge prevention. As noted above, long-term options likely lie somewhere in the middle, and include aspects of both. "Definitions [of CVE] range from stopping people from embracing extreme beliefs that might lead to terrorism to reducing active support for terrorist groups."[30] Another definition emphasizes "reducing the number of terrorist group supporters through non-coercive means."[31] A United Nations definition of counter-radicalization reflects the appreciation of a spectrum of passive and active support to extremist views, defining efforts to counter such trends broadly, as "deter(ing) disaffected (and possibly already radicalized) individuals from crossing the line and becoming terrorists."[32] (For reasons of space and scope, this paper is limited to considering the elements of proposed prevention approaches aimed at root causes and not those of a strict law enforcement reaction or military response.)

The Center on Global Counterterrorism Response notes that CVE programming can be divided into three broad categories:[33]

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http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/crisis-and terrorism/radicalisation/docs/communication_on_preventing_radicalisation_and_violence_promoting_extremism _201301_en.pdf

[29] "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terror: Report on Findings and Recommendations." Joint OSCE Secretariat – OSCE ODIHR Expert Roundtable. 23-24 October 2012, p. 3.

[30] McCants, Will and Clinton Watts. "U.S. Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism: An Assessment." *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes*. December 2012, p. 1. Available at http://www.fpri.org/articles/2012/12/us-strategy-countering-violent-extremism-assessment

[31] McCants, p. 1

[32] See United Nations, *First Report of the Working Group on Radicalization and Extremism that Lead to Terrorism: Inventory of State Programmes*. Available at: http://www.un.org/terrorism/pdfs/radicalization.pdf

[33] Chowdhury Fink, Naureen, Karin Deutsch Karlekar and Rafia Barakat. 2013. "Mightier than the Sword? The Role of the Media in Addressing Violence and Terrorism in South Asia." Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation. 2013, p. 5. Available at:

- Public engagement: media campaigns, cultural and sports activities;

- Targeted interventions against identified vulnerable individuals or communities: social/health services, education, law enforcement, and demobilization/rehabilitation programs;

- Institutional capacity building: government (police), NGOs, conflict/peace building.

Such efforts clearly are closely intertwined, and linked in with the full toolkit of initiatives aimed at consolidating democratic systems grounded in the rule of law.[34] It is the holistic nature of the problem that makes easy solutions elusive. However, beyond the broad institutional/structural drivers, preventive activities very often focus on youth. In 2011, the European Commission established the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), to better understand the causes of radicalization and develop and share effective responses.[35] RAN's recommendations include many related to the role of starting prevention among young people at an early stage:

*"People are at their most impressionable in adolescence and early adulthood, and many of the values and attitudes they develop at this stage stay with them for much of their lives. Not surprisingly, therefore, those most at risk from radical propaganda are adolescents and young adults…….. Steps need to be taken to encourage young people not to remain passive but to think critically, to challenge extremist views and pick them apart. The RAN has identified intercultural dialogue and personal exchanges between young people as a key method of building resilience to extremist propaganda. Civic engagement and participation in communities also helps build up positive attitudes. The RAN has recognized that education, training, and youth work sectors are often best placed to help young people develop their critical thinking skills."[36]*

Education and outreach are important activities for both promoting and countering extremist ideology. Depending on the setting, such processes can be formal and state-sanctioned or informal and unofficial; grounded in compulsory educational curricula or optional and extra-curricular; "real world" or online.[37] An expert roundtable on "The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism," held in autumn 2013 explored these complex and interrelated issues. While showing support for cultural and sports programming for youth, there was also an emphasis on the importance of a well-rounded educational experience [which], "increases exposure to diversity, critical thinking, and collaboration. Educational institutions, particularly universities, represent a battleground of ideas where many different ideologies, opinions and viewpoints are shared and debated. Curricula and school programs that promote this type

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http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2013Oct_CGCC_MightierThanTheSword_Report.pdf

[34] Carothers, Thomas. *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*. Washington, DC: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999; Ottaway, Marina S., and Thomas Carothers, eds. *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000.

[35] "Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response." p. 3.

[36] "Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response." pp. 9-10.

[37] "Countering Online Radicalization in America." Bipartisan Policy Center Homeland Security Project. December 2012, p. 9. Available at

http://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/default/files/BPC%20_Online%20Radicalization%20Report.pdf

of healthy exchange of ideas could encourage students to broaden their horizons, think critically, and become more self-aware."[38] The European RAN echoes this, noting that "exposing flaws in extremist and terrorist propaganda will encourage young people to challenge the views this propaganda puts forward," including through media literacy within the "Creative Europe Programme."[39] To summarize, a number of educational characteristics that are essential to reducing the potential for narrow-minded thinking at best, and extremist ideological affiliation at worst:

- The active promotion of critical thinking skills;

- Education aimed at promoting tolerance and respect, grounded in peace and dialogue;

- Media literacy to ensure young people can effectively process, filter and analyze the massive amount of information available in the online environment;

- A sense of shared civic responsibility and commitment.

The next section will consider the extent to which such characteristics are present in the education system of BiH.

### 3. Post-Dayton BiH – A Country Grounded in Fragmentation

*"Although terrorist radicalization can happen at any age, young people in search of a sense of belonging, purpose, and/or identity may be more vulnerable to violent extremism and terrorist radicalization. This is often compounded by negative perceptions of state authorities, especially of the police and security forces which are perceived to belong to or support 'the other'. Geographic segregation of communities may further exacerbate the risk of VERLT [note: Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terror] by hindering mutual understanding between the communities and reinforcing mistrust and the fear of 'the other.' Violent extremists exploit and nurture these perceptions to portray themselves as providers of justice and safety for 'their community' and to pressure young people into taking sides."[40]*

BiH is a fragile, post-war state that continues to face numerous socio-economic challenges two decades after the end of the bloodiest war on European soil since World War II. Since the end of the war it has struggled through post-communist, economic and post-war transitions. The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), ended a war that claimed approximately 100,000 lives (the majority of which were civilians) and displaced half the population.[41] The DPA effectively ensured terms for military stabilization, separating

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[38] "The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism." Meeting Note. December 2013. p. 3. Available at http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Dec13_Education_Expert_Meeting_Note.pdf.

[39] "Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response." pp. 9-10.

[40] "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terror: Report on Findings and Recommendations." Joint OSCE Secretariat – OSCE ODIHR Expert Roundtable. 23-24 October 2012, p. 3.

[41] For a thorough review of the demographic changes of the war see *Bosnia Remade: Ethnic Cleansing and its Reversal*, by Gerard Toal and Carl Dahlman, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011; Burg, Steven L. and Paul S. Shoup. *The War in Bosnia –Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*. London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000;

the warring parties, removing artillery and weapons, dismantling internal checkpoints, etc. However, 20 years on it has shown that in terms of a blueprint for peace, it has not so much resolved the political issues at the core of the war as it has frozen them.

Post-Dayton BiH is organized as one country with two entities and three "constituent peoples." This structure largely reflects the military front lines and post-ethnic cleansing demographic reality resulting from the war, and, in particular, from the substantial ethno-territorial changes to facts on the ground that were secured by the Army of the Republika Srpska (RS) in the first months of the war in 1992, and which were then maintained and formalized at Dayton. The country has two entities, the Federation and the RS. The RS (49% of the territory) is highly centralized and substantially homogenous, reflecting the very name and purpose of the entity proclaimed in January 1992. The Federation (51%) emerged from the 1994 Washington Agreement between the Bosniaks and the Croats, and its highly devolved ten canton structure reflects the relative heterogeneity of this entity. (There is also a District of Brčko that enjoys its own specific post-war status.)[42] Various experts have described BiH as an example of multinational federalism, as a consociational federal state, an ethnic democracy, an ethnocracy or as some other hybrid that embeds and prioritizes ethnicity, linking it with governmental competencies, often (but not always) with territorial linkages.[43] It is not a civic democracy, or a civic state. Dayton did not share power so much as it *allocated* it according to the groups enjoying numerical and governing dominance in given areas at the time of the end of the war.

It is impossible to say with certainty the demographic distribution of the country's constituent peoples and others throughout the territory, as there have been no published census results since 1991.[44] A post-war commitment to the right to return to one's pre-war home without regard to ethno-national affiliation was included in Dayton, but only partially fulfilled.[45] Individuals living in a place where they are

Bose, Sumantra. *Bosnia After Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention*. London: Hurst & Company, 2002.

[42] Perry, Valery. "Shepherding Sovereignty: Slow Democratization in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Bologna Center Journal of International Affairs*. Bologna, Italy: Johns Hopkins University, May 2007, pp. 75-87; "Democratic Ends, (un)Democratic Means? Reflections on Democratization Strategies in International Crisis Group. *Bosnia's Brčko: Getting In, Getting On and Getting Out*. Europe Report no. 144, 2 June 2003 and Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Bosnian Security After Dayton: New Perspectives*. Michael Innes (Ed.). Routledge, pp. 51–70, 2006; Moore, Adam. *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in Two Bosnian Towns*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013; Parish, Matthew. *A Free City in the Balkans. Reconstructing a Divided Society in Bosnia*. I.B. Taurus, 2009.

[43] Keil, Soeren. *Multinational Federalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Ashgate: 2013; Mujkić, Asim. *We, the Citizens of Ethnopolis*. Sarajevo, 2008; "Constitutional Reform Processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Top-down Failure, Bottom-up Potential, Continued Stalemate." Keil, Soeren and Valery Perry (Eds.) *Statebuilding and Democratization in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. London: Ashgate, 2015.

[44] Perry, Valery. "The Census in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Basic Review." *Democratization Policy Council Policy Note #3*. October 2013. Available at http://democratizationpolicy.org/uimages/pdf/dpcpolicynotebihnewseries3bihcensus.pdf; Perry, Valery. "How Will the Results of the BiH Census be Used?" *Democratization Policy Council Blog*. 19 December 2014. Available at http://www.democratizationpolicy.org/how-will-the-bih-census-results-be-used-

[45] Toal, Gerard and Carl Dahlman *Bosnia Remade: Ethnic Cleansing and its Reversal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011; Mooney, Erin. "Securing Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons in Georgia: The Experience in Bosnia

a demographic minority live under the rules of that administrative unit. Society is very broadly structured according to the three constituent peoples. While one can declare oneself an "other" or just a "citizen," there are no formal or unspoken yet understood guarantees of political participation for these groups (such as those enjoyed by the constituent peoples).[46] There is no leader who works or even attempts to speak on behalf of all of the country's people(s), there is no election in which all citizens vote for the same set of candidates, and there is no shared vision for the country. Power, policy, money, and patronage lie at the level of the entities and cantons, not only facilitating corruption but thwarting efforts to curb it.[47]

This fragmented, non-cohesive structure results in a fragmented and non-cohesive governance system. In every sector, two decades of experience have illustrated that "coordination" among existentially-opposed bodies that is not legally and institutionally required or enforced is grudging at best, and rarely effective.[48] The results are visible in separate and minimally portable social welfare and health care systems; separate policing jurisdictions and practices; a devolved and dubiously independent judicial system; and divided and ultimately segregated schools.

## 4. Education in BiH – War by Other Means

*"Leveraging formal education to prevent and counter VERLT requires a holistic rethinking of schools as a human rights-based environment, both in terms of methods and curricula and youths as rights-holders. Particular emphasis should be put on teaching human rights to youth in order to contribute positively to*

and Herzegovina." Paper presented at conference, *Conflict and Migration: The Georgian-Abkhazian Case in A European Context.* Istanbul, 18-19 June 2008.

[46] Three cases from BiH have gone to the European Court of Human Rights to challenge the notion of constituent peoples status and the impact on minorities or those who do not declare. In the *Sejdić-Finci vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina* case, the European Court of Human Rights in 2009 found that the BiH constitution discriminated against the country's non-constituent peoples (the "Others") by restricting the ability to run for certain state-level offices to only those who declare as Bosniak, Croat or Serb. In 2014, the Court ruled in the *Zornić vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina* case that the plaintiff was discriminated against for refusing to declare as a member of any particular ethnic group, instead declaring simply as a citizen. Another case, *Ilijas Pilav vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, is pending decision and looks at the impact of requirements of declared constituency in standing for public office. See Jukić, Elvira. "Strasbourg Court Piles Rights Pressure on Bosnia." *Balkan Insight*. 15 June 2014. Available at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/another-human-rights-ruling-pressures-bosnia

[47] Blagovčanin, Srđan and Boris Divjak. "How Bosnia's Political Economy Holds it Back and What to Do About it." Johns Hopkins University Center for Transatlantic Relations. July 2015. Available at http://transatlanticrelations.org/sites/default/files/Blagovcanin%20and%20Divjak_final.pdf; Perry, Valery. "A Cross-Cutting Survey of Corruption and Anti-Corruption Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Overview, Challenges and Recommendations." USAID Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity (MEASURE BiH). February 2015.

[48] One of the few substantive reforms has been in the defense sector, where not only were two armies and ministries of defense integrated into a state-level structure, but the entity level bodies were then dismantled. This often does not happen, resulting in the establishment of weak state bodies side by side with entity and/or cantonal bodies, a process referred to as institutional layering. (Foreign Policy Initiative BH (FPI). *Governance Structures in BiH: Capacity, Ownership, EU Integration, Functioning State,* 2007. Perhaps not surprisingly, when the country was hit by massive flooding in spring 2014, one of the only parts of the government that worked was the Armed Forces of BiH.

*shaping their identity-building process and counteracting negative influence such as violent extremist ideologies. While many participating States pay particular attention to 'knowledge education,' more focus should be put on building key skills and competencies – such as critical thinking, dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution. Such skills are essential to empower youth to reflect, interact with others, peacefully channel and express their opinions, reject calls for violence and intolerance and/or unlearn violent behavior."[49]*

BiH has 12 Ministries of Education (there is an MoE in each canton, and one in each entity) and an Education Department in Brčko. There is no state-level Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) has a small education portfolio that plays a passive, administrative coordinating role. A state Education Agency can develop suggested, non-enforceable standards, and there is an Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance. In practice these bodies can do little without the consent (and financial support) of the entity and canton level authorities. A Conference of Ministers of Education, modeled after a similar Swiss body, exists to coordinate policy but has been demonstrably ineffective in the absence of external pressure, and in fact did not even meet between September 2013 and July 2015.[50] (The meeting finally held in July 2015 offered little concrete; in the current political environment it is unlikely that it will do so, and even less likely that it will take on the curricular reforms truly needed.)[51] While BiH participated in the TIMMS assessment framework in 2007, it has not participated in any international assessment since then.[52] There is a small chance that it could join the next PISA round in 2018, but the possibility is slim, meaning the country would have to wait until 2021 to participate.[53]

With the exception of Brčko District,[54] every school has its own distinct ethnic flavor visible in its curricula, symbols and holidays celebrated. There is technically a "common core curriculum," but this terminology is misleading; it was developed in 2003 by policymakers looking to see what content was already shared (math, science, etc.) and then deemed "shared." The common core is minimal for the sensitive identity-relevant subjects like mother tongue (including literature), history, geography, religion and "music culture." The RS MoE develops and oversees its own curricula. The Federation has an MoE and a Federation curriculum, but the curriculum is seen as Bosniak; therefore the Croat majority areas

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[49] "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terror: Report on Findings and Recommendations," pp. 5-6.

[50] This Conference meeting was focused solely on the controversy surrounding Bosniak students and parents in Konjević Polje and Vrbanjci in the Republika Srpska boycotting the school year due to lack of Bosniak curricular options for certain national subjects. Jukić, Elvira. "Hopes Fade of End to Bosnia School Protest." *Balkan Insight.* 13 December 2013. Available at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-school-protests-continues-despite-cold; Jukić, Elvira. "Hundreds of Bosnian Students Fail to Start School." *Balkan Insight*. 1 September 2014. Available at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/hundreds-of-pupils-in-bosnia-did-not-start-school

[51] "29 July 2015. Available at Sarajevo: Ministri Obrazovanja Razmatrali Plan Reforme Obraznog Sistema u BiH." *BHRT*. Available at
http://www.bhrt.ba/vijesti/bih/sarajevo-ministri-obrazovanja-razmatrali-plan-reforme-obrazovnog-sistema-u-bih/

[52] Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. See http://timss.bc.edu/timss2007/intl_reports.html

[53] The Programme for International Student Assessment, organized by the OECD. See
http://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/

[54] See footnote 42 above.

implement their own Croatian language curriculum, including in the "mixed" cantons. (The Croat canton MoEs have basically ignored the Federation MoE for years and set up their own Croat coordinating mechanism, chaired by the Ministry of Education in Canton 8 (West Herzegovina Canton).[55] Division in the Federation is most visible in the approximately 50 "two schools under one roof" where both the Bosniak and Croat curricula are taught to different "schools" of students in either different shifts or separate floors of the building. However, this does not exonerate the RS, where the national groups of subjects are rarely available to non-Serbs (see below). In those few areas where there are sufficient non-Serb returnees, the main/branch school system often results in non-Serb (mostly Bosniak) students studying in sub-standard rural branch schools with an extremely limited responsiveness to non-Serb groups, while the main (often urban) schools address themselves to Serb students only.

The content of the identity-focused subjects noted above remains the most controversial. Students studying the different curricula learn different histories and different cultures, and while the language variants are – linguistically speaking – dialect differences at best,[56] there is little effort to ensure awareness and understanding of the variants, and in Croat majority areas of the Federation children often do not master the Cyrillic script.[57] A number of reform efforts beginning in 2000 and vigorously pursued until around 2006/2007 did result in some important steps forward.[58] The Interim Agreement on the Rights and Needs of Returnee Children sought to ensure that returnee pupils could study in schools in their pre-war home location (something not always possible previously), removed the most egregious ethnic names and symbols from texts, and created the possibility of the "national group of subjects," whereby if there is a sufficient number of non-majority students, they must be offered their own identity subjects to study separately from their majority peers (a "solution" that underlines the "us vs. them" dynamic of education in BiH, as well as the broader challenges of minority return). An effort to modernize the history textbooks and remove the most egregious stereotypes and misinformation began to improve the quality of these curricular resources.[59] While the country's Law on Religious Freedom requires that religious instruction must be available in public schools, externally-driven efforts to develop and improve non-denominational social science approaches to religious education have been

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[55] In 2010, the Federation Constitutional Court issued a decision regarding the constitutionality of several Federation bodies that founds that several bodies of administration were unconstitutional; this included the Federation Ministry of Education. Federation Constitutional Court decision-29/09.

[56] Greenberg, Robert D. *Language and Identity in the Balkans*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

[57] There is a Cyrillic section included in the common core. In the Federation curriculum (used in Bosniak schools) it is taught quite comprehensively. In the Croatian language curriculum, instruction is minimal.

[58] "Classroom Battlegrounds for Hearts and Minds: Efforts to Reform and Transform Education in Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Bosnia-Herzegovina Since Dayton: Civic and Uncivic Values*. Ola Listhaug and Sabrina P. Ramet (eds.). Longo Editore Ravenna, 2013, pp. 225-246; Valery Perry, *Reading, Writing and Reconciliation*, *ECMI Working Paper #18*, September 2003.

[59] Torsti, Pilvi. "Rival Histories and Textbook reform in Bosnian Textbooks, 1992- 2009." *Bosnia-Herzegovina Since Dayton: Civic and Uncivic Values*. Listhaug, Ola and Sabrina P. Ramet (eds.). Ravenna: Longo Editore Ravenna, 2013, pp. 205-224. Robert Donia, "The Quest for Tolerance in Sarajevo's Textbooks," *Human Rights Review*, (January-March 2000), (1)2, 38-55); Karge, Heike. "20th Century History in the Textbooks of Bosnia and Herzegovina: An Analysis of Books used for the Final Grades of Primary School." Braunschweig, Germany: Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, April 2008.

developed (though spottily implemented, particularly in recent years).[60] There were some steps forward in the management of schools systems, school boards, school financing practices and the democratization of schools through the engagement of parent, student and teacher councils.[61] However, the school systems are still characterized by division and differences.

### 5.  BiH's Educational Deficit: Monoperspectivity

*"The rise of VERLT among youth is often fuelled by issues of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. Fostering feelings of belonging to society and encouraging the development of active, civic and democratic engagement is instrumental in countering terrorist radicalization. It was suggested that encouraging the development of 'hybrid' identities, rather than 'multiple' and possibly competing identities, is more conducive to the promotion of a pluralistic society in which individuals, beyond their diversity, are brought together around shared, universal values of human rights and democracy."[62]*

Systemic reforms that began to confront both administrative and curricular challenges of this nature substantially stopped around 2007, mirroring both the deteriorating reform environment and the loss of attention of key actors on the issue.[63] This is not to say that international engagement was curtailed completely; however, it has since focused on limited pilot projects or "technical support," seeking to skirt the core political issues preventing more comprehensive reform. International engagement is now on the working level and focused on technical matters, rather than on the principal level and focused on policy matters. The most important reforms needed – *what children learn and how they learn it* – have stalled, and in fact, in some cases have begun to regress.[64] So-called "interim solutions" have become permanent."[65]

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[60] The 2004 Law on Religious Freedom seems to try to balance the interests of individual religions to promote their faith with the potential consequences in a divided post-war society. The Law includes the right to religious education in public schools: Article 4, point 1 states, "Everyone shall have the right to religious education, which shall be provided solely by persons appointed to do so by an official representative of his Church or religious community, whether in religious institutions or in public and private pre-school institutions, primary schools and higher education which shall be regulated according to the specific regulations." Article 4, point 2 goes on to seek to ensure that such teaching does not foment or stoke divisive practices: "Churches and religious communities shall not, when teaching religion or in other actions, disseminate hatred and prejudices against any other Churches and religious communities or its members, or against the citizens of no religious affiliation, or prevent their freedom to manifest in public their religion or belief." (Article 4, point 2). The former article is more consistently embraced by the religious communities than the latter.

[61] See various reports by the OSCE Mission to BiH web site, at www.oscebih.org.

[62] "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terror: Report on Findings and Recommendations," p. 6.

[63] McMahon, Patrice C. and Jon Western. "The Death of Dayton: How to Stop Bosnia from Falling Apart." *Foreign Affairs*. September – October 2009, pp. 69-83; Chivvis, Christopher. "Back to the Brink in Bosnia?" *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*. Vol. 52, no. 1, February-March 2010, pp. 97-110.

[64] This typology is developed more fully in Perry, Valery. "Classroom Battlegrounds for Hearts and Minds: Efforts to Reform and Transform Education in Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Bosnia-Herzegovina Since Dayton: Civic and Uncivic Values*. Ola Listhaug and Sabrina P. Ramet (eds.). Longo Editore Ravenna, 2013, pp. 225-246.

[65] "The Permanent Interim: Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ongoing Educational Crisis." *E-International Relations*. October 12, 2014. Available at

There has been no progress in or expansion of efforts to teach religious education in a non-doctrinal, non-exclusive way. The active dissemination of good practices – for example modern, multiperspective textbooks – has withered, leaving the old status quo in place in spite of the availability of more modern curricular tools. Schools and policymakers are under no obligation to use the newer available history textbooks or other supplemental materials. Teachers who want to use modern methods are left to their own devices, with little institutional support or encouragement. Teacher training remains systematically weak. Perhaps most importantly, pre-service teacher education in the country's divided university faculties continues to fail to prepare teachers to teach critical analytical thinking skills, and instead continues to prepare a cadre of teachers who closely follow the ethnically exclusive curricular materials. The situation remains most difficult for returnees.[66] School-age children of returnees basically are faced with three options when sent to a school in which they are not in the majority: be quiet and assimilate into the majority curriculum; travel to another school/branch school to study with their "own" kind; in places with sufficient numbers, study with their peers but separate to learn the national group of subjects. The student's family can try to seek greater rights but by doing so put the student at risk of increased pressure and bullying.

Rather than seeing any progressive change and improvement, the situation has arguably become worse. Even more divisive trends have emerged. As one example, educational demands in Konjević Polje (in the eastern RS) have not been met with any compromise or conciliatory efforts, but have provided a chance for RS authorities to double down. For example, the renewed efforts to refer to "the language of the Bosniak people" in the RS rather than the Bosnian language, which, while in line with a narrow reading of the country's (often convoluted) constitutional frameworks, is meant to be provocative.[67] And in Brčko, there are renewed efforts to introduce doctrinal religious instruction into the schools.

The root of all of these problems is singular and simple: a reliance on monoperspectivity as a teaching method and curricular goal, driven by local political actors interested in maintaining political and territorial control by ideological indoctrination. The opposite of monoperspectivity is multiperspectivity. "Monoperspectivity is a one-sided view; in a plural global world this is not possible. Multiperspectivity relates to tolerance, communication and acceptance: confronting different perspectives is a necessary antecedent to becoming and remaining tolerant, to understanding the heterogeneity of the world, its asymmetries."[68] Monoperspective approaches rely on limited sources viewed as "truth," and discourage critical analysis, thinking and debate. Multiperspective approaches rely on many kinds of sources from various backgrounds, teaching readers to understand context, check source validity, and draw thoughtful and grounded conclusions. By their very nature, monoperspective curricula can only cater to one group of people who feel they share one, homogenous cultural and historical experience, and who emerge with this feeling validated, even hardened in opposition to differing world views. As described

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http://www.e-ir.info/2014/10/12/the-permanent-interim-bosnia-and-herzegovinas-ongoing-educational-crisis/

[66] "Returnees and the Challenges for Education Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Co-authored with Marina Bowder. *Education and Internally Displaced Persons*. Christine Smith Ellison and Alan Smith (eds.) Bloomsbury, 2013, pp.142-164.

[67] See footnote 50.

[68] Palati, Venkat Rao. *All About History Teaching*. Laxmi, 2014, p. 33.

more below, analysis of BiH textbooks and curricula strongly – in cases overwhelmingly – suggests that what is wanted from monoperspective approaches is an ideologically reliable adherent of the respective ethnic group.

While every society and school system can benefit from multiperspective approaches that teach students to think and critically analyze subject matter,[69] such skills are even more important in societies recovering from divisive and violent conflict. Researchers and practitioners have increasingly internalized the critical role of education in post-war reconstruction and long-term reconciliation. Bush and Salterelli outline these issues in "The Two Faces of Education" which examines both the positive and negative potential of education.[70] A UNESCO report examining the impact of war and sectarian, ethno-national and divided politics is similarly clear: "Values inculcated in school can make children less susceptible to the kind of prejudice, bigotry, extreme nationalism, racism and lack of tolerance that can lead to violent conflict. When the discrimination and power relationships that maintain social, political and economic exclusion find expression in the classroom, however, education can have the opposite effect. Schools can act as conduits for transmitting attitudes, ideas and beliefs that make societies more prone to violence."[71]

In sum the main characteristics of monoperspective education include:

- The presentation of one perspective as "truth";

- Reliance on minimal texts and source documents, usually selected for their accordance with the accepted ''truth'';

- The omission of alternative perspectives, or any mention of their existence, or the non-critical dismissal of off-message sources;

- Lack of critical thinking skills aimed at questioning sources, content and arguments.

Not coincidentally, this approach is tailor-made to the cultivation of a worldview in which the favored perspective is central, and alternative views are ignored or actively (yet non-critically) rejected. Monoperspective approaches thrive in an environment in which a reinforcing echo-chamber (including the media) both confirms and promotes those same monoperspective views. The link between such consistent non-critical content and extremist worldviews is the clear consequence. In a discussion of the specific matter of online radicalization, of six factors noted, three are related to the content of messages (educational or otherwise) and an inability and/or unwillingness to critically analyze messages or recognize the multiple perspectives: 1) long-term immersion in extremist content and emotional desensitization to alternative perspectives; 2) creation of a sense of moral outrage based on noted

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[69] The ongoing discussions about civil war history in the United States, and the role of Confederate flags and symbols, shows that every state struggles with this process.
[70] Kenneth D. Bush and Diana Saltarelli, *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children* (Florence, Italy: UNICEF, 2000).
[71] Education for All Global Monitoring report, *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education,* 2011*,* p. 167.

constant content; and 3) an echo chamber of similar extremist views.[72]

The need for comprehensive reform of BiH's multiple yet largely monoperspective educational curricula has been appreciated for years. A 1999 UNESCO study of the various curricula in place throughout BiH for the sensitive national group of subjects revealed some neutral and tolerable elements, but also a high number of troubling trends regarding the "politically socializing tendencies" of each of the Bosniak, Croat and Serb curricula.[73] In 2009, the OSCE Mission to BiH drafted a comprehensive (though unpublished) report on the compulsory curricula used in the country to teach the national group of subjects.[74] While these subjects were less incendiary than they had been in the past, demonstrating that the removal of overtly offensive material had been largely successful, the combination of more subtle nationalist messaging through the selection of emotionally arousing material, combined with a lack of critical thinking-centered teaching methods and the veneer of modernity, made this new approach to monoperspectivity even more insidious, grounded in pervasive underlying assumptions and the active omission of contradictory information or sources.[75] A 2011 report on religious education textbooks examined the texts with a focus on the quality of knowledge transmitted, the norms and values taught, the presence of stereotyping and the extent to which a critical approach was taken. While there were some positive elements, and some textbooks approached modern good practices in terms of pedagogical design, the analysis overall found that the textbooks do not adequately teach about other religions (the Catholic texts being a partial exception), that all textbooks contained problematic sections on national history (including the celebration of armed struggles or the notion of noble victimhood or martyrdom), and examples of negative stereotypes of some religions.[76] In 2005, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights urged the development and implementation of a single curriculum that would be acceptable "to all classes, irrespective of ethnic origins."[77] In 2009, the Council of Europe reiterated its interest in multiperspectivity, noting that, "history teaching can be a tool to support peace and reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict areas as well as tolerance and understanding when dealing with such phenomena as migration, immigration and changing demographics."[78]

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[72] Countering Online Radicalization in America, pp.17-19. The other three factors noted are a sense of anonymity, the act of role playing one's "idealized self," and networking.

[73] Stabback, Philip. "Common curriculum, core curriculum or common curriculum standards – finding a solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Prospects*. Vol. 37, 2007, pp. 455-456.

[74] "Primary School Curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Thematic Review of the National Subjects." OSCE Mission to BiH, 2009.

[75] *Analysis of the National Group of Subjects in the Compulsory Curricula of Bosnia and Herzegovina,* OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010.

[76] Moe, Christian. "Religious Education Textbooks in BiH: A Human Rights-Based Analysis of Inter-Religious Contents." Unpublished report for the OSCE Mission to BiH. June 2011.

[77] Concluding Observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 35th Session, November 2005, Point 50, available at
http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/e28e94adf27d0abdc12571100030f0d1/$FILE/G0640201.pdf.

[78] "History Teaching in Conflict and post-Conflict Areas." The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Doc. 11919. 25 May 2009, p. 3. Available at
http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=12299&lang=en.

However, little has been done to rectify the problem of citizens of the same country systematically learning three different curricula. The prevalence of incompatible worldviews based on contradictory and incompatible "truths" has become particularly clear in 2015. A number of commemorations, anniversaries and political developments have illustrated the reliance on history in building new contemporary narratives and memories.[79] Croatia and Serbia interpret differently the beginning of their war in the 1990s and the destruction of Vukovar, as well as the ending of that war with Operation Storm in 1995.[80] Srebrenica commemorations lead to debates on the definition of genocide, and have become a hot button issue among both Bosniaks and Serbs who tend to hold diametrically opposed interpretations of the event and context; the extent to which these differing worldviews hold real potential for real-world unrest was made clear during the July 2015 ceremony marking the occasion.[81] As if this were not enough, countries in the region are actively and differently commemorating World War II, and historians have convincingly made the link between unresolved historical and political reconciliation in the decades after WWII and the turmoil and violence of the 1990s. Monoperspective narratives selectively cite facts; historical memory and interpretation is a zero-sum game.

## Conclusions and Recommendations: Towards Multiperspectivity and Critical Thinking

*"VERLT is a co-product of society. It finds a fertile ground in growing intolerance, racism and xenophobia, including as a result of counter-terrorism policies which have stigmatized and discriminated against certain individuals based on characteristics such as religion, racial or ethnic origins. Such discrimination is not only a factor conducive to VERLT but also a practical obstacle to the engagement of youth against VERLT as it risks undermining their interest and willingness to contribute to the prevention of terrorism. Intolerance and discrimination should be effectively combated, starting by ensuring that counter-terrorism measures are not discriminatory in their formulation or implementation. Society should offer credible alternatives to violent extremism, including in terms of narratives, role models and opportunities for mobilization, such as democratic participation, civic engagement, access to health and social services and employment opportunities. The state has a primary responsibility in this regard and a broad range of public authorities need to co-ordinate their actions at both national and local levels, to deepen and share their understanding of VERLT. Front-line actors, such as the police, teachers and social workers, have a*

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[79] Moll, Nicolas. "Fragmented Memories in a Fragmented Country: Memory Competition and Political Identity-Building in Today's Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Nationalities Papers*. Vo.41, No. 6, November 2013, pp. 910 – 935.

[80] Milekić, Sven. "Croatia Celebrates Operation Storm Anniversary; Serbia Mourns." *Balkan Insight*. 5 August 2015.Available at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/croatia-throws-a-military-parade-for-operation-storm--08-04-2015; Sven Milekić, Saša Dragojlo, Katarina Panić, Srećko Latal. "Nationalist Commemorations Threaten Balkan Reconciliation." Balkan Insight. 7 August 2015. Available at http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/nationalist-commemorations-threaten-balkan-reconciliation-08-07-2015

[81] Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić attended the commemoration on 11 July, and was forced to flee when he was pelted with rocks and other objects. While Vučić today speaks of building friendship, during the war he famously said, "For every Serb killed, we will kill 100 Muslims." The BiH government has promised an investigation. Sito-Sucić, Dario and Maja Zuvela. "Serbian PM Forced to Flee Srebrenica Massacre Memorial." *Reuters*. 11 July 2015. Available at http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/12/us-bosnia-srebrenica-idUSKCN0PL00720150712

*special role to play as they may come in first-hand contact with individuals on the path to VERLT. The state should empower and support these actors on a continued basis through the development of tools and provision of training on how to prevent and respond to complex situations involving VERLT."[82]*

There will be a knee-jerk impulse to develop projects to try to counter such trends in BiH. If the past twenty years are any indication, calls for proposals from donors both large and small will seek local governmental and non-governmental implementing partners to create counter-narrative web sites; offer pilot teacher training workshops; organize youth summer camps; conduct peer education "training of trainer" sessions; arrange inter-religious field trips, etc.

However, while participation in such activities may benefit the narrow group of self-selected participants, *none* of these actions will be able to put a dent in an educational ecosystem in which monoperspective separation and exclusivity is a part of the policy DNA. "Just adding a CVE dimension on a weak base will not work."[83]  Therefore, any serious efforts to address the noted weaknesses need to be comprehensive, systematic and structural; they need to be focused on policy rather than technical tinkering; and they need to be focused on content, curricula and critique.[84]

Reform efforts must be targeted directly to citizens – to teachers, students and parents – to build a bottom-up constituency for this important and critically necessary reform. Critics – including domestic politicians opposed to reform and timid international actors - will quickly reject the notion of any stronger state role. While the RS can be expected to reject these recommendations out of hand, Bosniak and Croat politicians seeking to maintain their own educational fiefdoms will equally reject any policy proposals that could threaten to weaken their social control.

For that reason it is important to frame the issue not in terms of whether competencies will be held at the level of the state, entity or canton, but whether any child can honestly and reasonably attend any school and study any curriculum and feel at ease in class, and then later graduate with a set of useful skills and a multiperspective and critical worldview. If such outputs are achieved, then the options for administering such an educational system can be structured in many different ways (though efficiencies in public spending should ultimately also be a factor.)

A statement made in 2007 is unfortunately even more true today: "The pendulum in BiH remains obstinately slanted in favor of the ideologues. For the good of the country and the future prosperity of

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[82] "Youth Engagement to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terror: Report on Findings and Recommendations." Joint OSCE Secretariat – OSCE ODIHR Expert Roundtable. 23-24 October 2012, pp. 4-5.

[83] "The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism." Meeting Note. December 2013. p. 7. Available at http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Dec13_Education_Expert_Meeting_Note.pdf

[84] Weinstein et.al. note there is a general tendency in development and conflict affected areas to implement modules and "extras" rather than engage in the much more difficult task of comprehensive reform; something often opposed by policy makers in countries resistant to reform. The authors ponder, "whether integrated classrooms with challenging curricula and the long-term development of critical thinking skills might do much more than special classes in conflict resolution or in the ancient Greek roots of democracy," Harvey M. Weinstein, Sarah Warshauer Freedman and Holly Hughson, "School Voices: Challenges Facing Education Systems After Identity-Based Conflicts," in *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 2009), p. 45.

its people, the pendulum needs to swing, dramatically and quickly, towards the interests of its children."[85] However, long-term peace and reconciliation will only ever be possible and stable if new generations of young people are not poisoned against one another, and are equipped with multiperspective and critical thinking skills. The following recommendations provide a broad agenda for meaningful educational reform, largely harking back to unfulfilled efforts and promises made over a decade ago. None can be properly tackled on its own, as they are interdependent. However, they offer a starting point for domestic and international actors who should be concerned about this issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations recognize the need for systemic and comprehensive reform focused on reversing the monoperspectivity that characterizes BiH education rendering it susceptible to extremist manipulation. They are aimed at BiH and international decision-makers and the broader latent constituency of citizens dissatisfied with the educational status quo:

- Establish an independent expert coordination group, with principal-level engagement, to develop a short-term (one year) and medium-term (five years) strategy for substantive curricular reform.

- Build a popular constituency for substantial education reform, making the case directly to citizens, by tying financial and development aid to progress in this sector.

- Undertake a curricular review aimed at teaching in a multiperspective manner. Existing reports and reviews will provide a strong starting point, and can help to avoid recreating the wheel. Expert organizations such as the Georg Eckert Institute can contribute; pluri-lingual teaching techniques should ensure all students are literate in the dialectical variants (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian) and scripts (Latin and Cyrillic).

- Put on hold *all* current or planned educational support programs (including those seen as purely "structural" or "technical") to ensure that they are in line with a re-energized system-wide reform effort; withhold funds if reforms are not implemented in good faith. Education funding is fungible; external funding without reform has propped up the current poisonous and dangerous system.

- Engage with the religious communities to systematically implement inclusive, multiperspective and non-doctrinal religious education, and ensure that in-school doctrinal religious instruction is implemented in an inclusive (not exclusive) manner in line with good practices, and that acceptable alternatives are offered.

- Reconsider civic education initiatives that, while introducing useful concepts, fail to sufficiently counter the messages sent in other classes. Mainstream critical thinking techniques and methods and strengthen critical thinking skills and compulsory media literacy to reduce the potential attraction of extremist worldviews and ideologies.

- Recognize that BiH's neighbors can contribute to the reform environment in constructive or

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[85] Stabback, Philip. "Common curriculum, core curriculum or common curriculum standards – finding a solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Prospects*. Vol. 37, 2007, p. 465.

destructive ways. As curricular materials are often directly or indirectly taken from Croatia and Serbia, monoperspective narratives in those countries are being imported into BiH. Donor or expert support programs in those countries should also focus on quality, multiperspectivity, and critical thinking.