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In many works about south-eastern Europe, Balkan Islam is defined as a “genuine European Islam”, since its followers are autochthonous and largely secularized Muslims. Implicitly, this “European Islam” is then contrasted with a “non-European Islam” encompassing not only those countries with a Muslim majority, but also the Muslim migrants who settled in western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. At the same time, Balkan Muslims are seldom mentioned in the books dealing with the rise of a “Euro-Islam”, as if the Balkan countries were not really part of Europe, and as if the European Union itself did not experience an enlargement process whose pace and final extent remain unknown.

In order to better understand the role of the Balkan Muslims in the possible formation of a pan-European Islamic public sphere, one has to replace such culturalist divides by a more nuanced approach to the realities of Islam in both western and south-eastern Europe. It is also necessary to take into account the links that already exist between the Muslims of the EU and the Balkans. One possible way to do this is to study the Balkan Muslim diasporas living in western Europe, as well as their influence on their countries of origin. This paper seeks to outline such an analysis, and to prompt its further discussion.¹

The Migration Patterns of the Balkan Muslim Populations

Migration, be it a temporary or a definitive one, is nothing new for Balkan Muslims. Already in the Ottoman period, men from mountainous areas left their villages each year for several months (*gurbet*), in order to find work in the lowlands and the cities.² Following the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans, between 1,700,000 and 2,000,000 Muslim refugees (*muhacirs*) settled in Istanbul and Anatolia between 1878 and 1913,³ with an additional 850,000 additional arriving between 1923 and 1945,⁴ thereby becoming a major

¹ Due to the limited length of this paper, it is not possible here to take fully into consideration the diversity of Balkan Muslims, be it at the ethno-national level (Albanians, Bosniaks, Turks, Roma, etc.), at the socio-cultural level (urban vs. rural populations, etc.), or – *last but not least* – at the religious one (believers vs. non-believers, etc.). In order to avoid misunderstandings, I propose in this text a distinction be made between Islamic believers (people practicing Islam), Muslims (people having a Muslim cultural and family background) and Bosniaks (Slavic-speaking Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandžak). On Balkan Islam and Balkan Muslim populations, see Alexandre Popovic, *L’islam balkanique. Les musulmans du sud-est européen dans la période post-ottomane*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz (1986); Hugh Poulton and Suha Taji-Farouki (eds), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, London: Hurst (1997); Xavier Bougarel and Nathalie Clayer (eds), *Le nouvel Islam balkanique. Les musulmans, acteurs du post-communisme (1990–2000)*, Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose (2001).

² See Olga Katsiardi-Hering, “Migrationen”, in Karl Kaser, Siegfried Gruber and Robert Pichler (eds), *Historische Anthropologie im südöstlichen Europa. Eine Einführung*, Wien: Böhlau (2003), pp. 83–101.

³ Alexandre Toumarkine, *Les migrations des populations musulmanes balkaniques en Anatolie (1878-1913)*, Istanbul: Isis (1995), p. 30. See also Justin MacCarthy, *Death and Exile. The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims (1821–1922)*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1996).

⁴ Kemal Kırışçı, “Post Second World War Immigration from Balkan Countries to Turkey”, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 12 (Spring 1995), pp. 61–77.

component of contemporary Turkish society.⁵ These different waves of migration correspond in time to various historical events affecting the Balkan Muslim populations, such as wars, campaigns of ethnic cleansing, land reforms, and overall economical and cultural marginalisation. During the interwar period, such population movements were most often regulated by inter-state agreements: besides the well-known Treaty of Lausanne organizing the Greek–Turkish population exchange (1923), several treaties were concluded between Turkey on one hand, and Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Romania on the other, aimed at encouraging the emigration of Balkan Muslims (collective resettlement of village communities, free distribution of land in Anatolia, etc.).⁶

In some cases, the migration of the Balkan Muslims led to a drastic decrease in their share of the population: in Bulgaria, for example, local Muslims constituted 30 per cent of the total population in 1878, but only 14 per cent in 1910. More generally, migration resulted in important sociological differences between the Muslim communities of the western and eastern Balkans. In the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula (Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece), the traditional urban elites have almost completely disappeared, due to their massive emigration to Istanbul and Anatolia. Muslim populations remain concentrated in underdeveloped rural areas, whose Christian inhabitants, for their part, migrated to the larger urban centres in the second half of the twentieth century. By contrast, in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia) the share of Muslim populations in the cities is much higher, and the presence of the traditional urban elites is still perceptible.⁷

In the 1950s, migration to Turkey remained widespread among Balkan Muslims. Admittedly, in the immediate post-war period, some Albanian and Bosniak political émigrés took refuge in western Europe or in the United States.⁸ A few years later, however, when urban Muslims ruined by the Communist nationalisation of craft industry and small trade left in large numbers from Bulgaria (150,000 persons in 1951) and Yugoslavia (100,000 persons in 1952), this migration once again took place within the framework of bilateral treaties with the Turkish state.⁹ The major turn in the migration patterns of the Balkan Muslims happened in the 1960s: Communist Yugoslavia allowed its citizens to travel and work abroad from 1963, and afterwards signed framework agreements regulating the immigration of Yugoslav workers with Germany, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries.¹⁰ From the 1960s

⁵ See, among others, Kemal Karpat, “The *Hijra* from Russia and the Balkans: The Process of Self-Definition in the Late Ottoman State”, in Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori (eds), *Muslim Travellers. Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1990), pp. 131–152; Nergis Canefe, “Turkish Nationalism and Ethno-Symbolic Analysis: The Rules of Exception”, *Nations and Nationalism*, VIII, no. 8 (April 2002), pp. 133–155.

⁶ See, among others, Avdija Avdić, “Jugoslovensko-turski pregovori o iseljavanju muslimanskog stanovništva u periodu između dva svetska rata”, *Novopazarski zbornik*, no. 15 (1991), pp. 112–124.

⁷ See, for example, Burcu Akan Ellis, *Shadow Genealogies. Memory and Identity among Urban Muslims in Macedonia*, Boulder: East European Monographs (2003).

⁸ See Isa Blumi, “Defining Social Spaces by Way of Deletion: The Untold Story of Albanian Migration in the Post-War Period”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, XXIX, no. 6 (November 2003), pp. 949–965; Altay Manço, Karim Merbah and Luan Abedinaj, “Sociodémographie de la population ‘albanophone’ de Belgique”, in Michèle Vatz-Laarousi and Altay Manço (eds), *Jeunesses, citoyennetés, violences. Réfugiés albanais en Belgique et au Québec*, Paris: L’Harmattan (2003), pp. 115–137; Mustafa Imamović, “Bosanskomuslimanska dijaspora u SAD”, in Ilijas Hadžibegović and Ibrahim Bakić (eds), *Migracije i Bosna i Hercegovina*, Sarajevo: Institut za historiju / Institut za proučavanje međunarodnih odnosa (1990), pp. 349–356.

⁹ Akan Ellis, *Shadow Genealogies*; Kırışçı, “Post Second World War Immigration”

¹⁰ See, among others, Carl-Ulrich Schierup, *Migration, Socialism and the International Division of Labour: The Yugoslav Experience*, Aldershot: Avebury (1990).

onwards, migration patterns of the Yugoslav Muslims reoriented themselves towards northern Europe and, to a lesser extent, North America and Australia. The same happened with Muslims from western Thrace, following the conclusion of a framework agreement between Greece and Germany in 1969, and the admission of Greece into the European Community in 1981. During this period, the personages of the *gurbetçi* and the *muhacir* were replaced by that of the *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker) in the imagery of Balkan Muslim migration.

The collapse of the Communist regimes at the end of the 1980s only reinforced this turn. During the summer of 1989, the violent assimilation campaign of the Bulgarian Turks provoked the exodus of about 370,000 refugees to Turkey. And yet, contrary to what happened with the previous migration waves from Bulgaria, these new *muhacirs* did not merge easily into a Turkish society that they considered to be too conservative, and half of them returned to Bulgaria over the following years.¹¹ In the 1990s, the impoverishment of post-Communist countries, the opening of Albania's borders, and the violent break-up of Yugoslavia have all led to a rapid increase in the number of Balkan Muslims living in western Europe. In Albania, about 800,000 persons – i.e., one quarter of the total population – have left the country to look for legal or illegal employment in Greece (500,000), Italy (200,000) and other European countries (50,000).¹² Since about two thirds of Albania's citizens have a Muslim family background, one may assume that about 500,000 “sociological Muslims” from Albania have migrated to western Europe.

Similar patterns can be discerned for Yugoslav Muslims. During the Communist period, Bosniaks and Albanians¹³ had a lower emigration rate from Yugoslavia than other national groups: in 1981, out of 875,000 Yugoslav citizens living abroad, just 63,000 (7.2%) were Albanians, and 58,000 (6.6%) were Bosniaks.¹⁴ In the 1990s, however, war and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina, political discrimination, and violent repression in Kosovo have resulted in the emigration of hundred of thousands of Bosniaks and Kosovo Albanians to western European countries like Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, and Belgium. Many of them have permanently settled in their host countries, despite state policies encouraging the return or expulsion of refugees after the Balkan wars of the 1990s had ended. Turkey, for its part, has taken in only a few thousand refugees, most of whom had relatives there who were already long-term residents.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, sizeable Balkan Muslim diasporas exist in western Europe: Bosniaks, Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia, and Turks from western Thrace in Germany; Bosniaks in Scandinavia and Switzerland; Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia in Belgium; Albanians from Albania in Italy and Greece. Their exact number, however, is difficult to estimate, since these communities are not differentiated in the host

¹¹ See Darina Vasileva, “Bulgarian Turkish Emigration and Return”, *International Migration Review*, XXVI, no. 2 (Summer 1992), pp.342–352 ; Petar Krasztiev “Understated, Overexposed: Turks in Bulgaria, Immigrants in Turkey”, *Balkanologie*, V, no. 1–2 (December 2001), pp. 199–227.

¹² Nicola Mai and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, “Albanian Migration and New Transnationalisms”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, XXIX, no. 6 (November 2003), p. 941.

¹³ In former Yugoslavia, most of the Albanians have an Islamic family background. In the population census of 1953, 93.6% of the Albanians living in Kosovo, and 97.7% of the Albanians living in Macedonia, declared themselves to be active or passive members of the Islamic religious community. Only Montenegro had a sizeable Catholic Albanian population (35.5%, compared to 61.2% of Muslim Albanians).

¹⁴ In 1981, Bosniaks represented 8.9% and Albanians 7.7% of the Yugoslav population respectively (Savezni zavod za statistiku, *Nacionalni sastav stanovništva po opštinama*, Belgrade: SZS, 1992). See also Centar za demografska istraživanja, *Demografska kretanja i karakteristike stanovništva Jugoslavije prema nacionalnoj pripadnosti*, Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka (1978), pp. 57–83.

countries' official statistics, and communities' own representatives tend to overestimate their numbers: according to their calculations, 665,000 Bosniaks,¹⁵ 380,000 Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia,¹⁶ and 20,000 Turks from Thrace¹⁷ were living in western Europe at the end of the 1990s.

Finally, in order to get a complete overview of the situation, it is necessary to mention some "semi-diasporic" situations, that is the migration, within the boundaries of a Balkan state, of rural Muslims towards urban centres lacking any autochthonous Muslim population. Several examples of such situations could be found in Yugoslavia before 1991, since tens of thousands of Muslims had settled during the Communist period in larger cities like Belgrade (with 19,000 Bosniaks and Albanians in 1991), Zagreb (18,000), Ljubljana (9,000), and, to a lesser extent, in some Croatian ports and Slovenian mining centres.¹⁸ Following the break-up of Yugoslavia, many of these Muslims have lost the benefit of a common Yugoslav citizenship, and have been faced with legal measures limiting them access to the citizenship of their "new" host countries. Another "semi-diasporic situation" can be found in Athens. In the 1970s, Muslims from western Thrace started to look for job opportunities in the Greek capital. Thirty years later, between 15,000 and 25,000 of them live in Athens, along with tens of thousands of Albanian, Pakistani, and north African immigrants.¹⁹ The case of Athens illustrates therefore another important and recent turn in the migration patterns in the Balkan Peninsula: namely, that, for the first time in centuries, this region has become an attractive destination for immigrants with a Muslim cultural background.

The Role of the Diasporas in the Political Mobilisations of the 1990s

The Balkan Muslim diasporas maintain close links with their countries of origin, but are also influenced by the social and political contexts of their host countries, and have complex relationships with the other Muslim populations living there. This explains why the Balkan Muslims living in western Europe have played a key role in the political mobilizations of the 1990s, as well as in the diffusion of some religious innovations, and why their ethno-national and religious identities exhibit some distinctive features.

Like their communities of origin, the Balkan Muslim diasporas experienced a rapid crystallisation of their ethnic and national identities in the second half of the twentieth century.²⁰ Before World War II, the *muhacirs* arriving in Istanbul and Anatolia merged

¹⁵ Mustafa Klanco, "Muslimanske zajednice Bošnjaka u zapadnoj Evropi sa posebnim osvrtom na Njemačku", in Islamski centar Zagrebačke džamije, *Islam u zapadnom svijetu*, Zagreb: Islamski centar (1997), p. 96.

¹⁶ Muhamet Shatri and Hafiz Gagica, "Kontributi i Shqiptarëve në vendet e Evropës Perëndimore për çeshtëjën kombëtare", in *Çështja e Kosovës – Një problem historik dhe aktual*, Tiranë: Eurorilindja (1996), pp. 413–416, quoted in Nathalie Clayer, "L'islam, facteur des recompositions internes en Macédoine et au Kosovo", in Bougarel and Clayer, *Le nouvel Islam balkanique*, p. 214.

¹⁷ Jeanne Hersant, "L'élaboration d'un discours identitaire dans l'espace migratoire des Turcs de Thrace occidentale", *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, no. 34 (July 2002), p. 236.

¹⁸ See Savezni zavod za statistiku, *Nacionalni sastav stanovništva po opštinama*, Belgrade: SZS (1992).

¹⁹ See Sevasti Trubeta, "Minorization and Ethnicization in Greek Society: Comparative Perspectives on Moslem Migrants and the Moslem Minority", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas*, V (2003), pp. 95–112; Dimitris Antoniou, "Muslim Migrants in Greece: Religious Organization and Local Responses", *Immigrants and Minorities*, XXII, no. 2–3 (July 2003), pp. 155–174.

²⁰ See, among others, Marco Dogo, "The Balkan Nation-States and the Muslim Question", in Stefano Bianchini and Marco Dogo (eds), *The Balkans. National Identities in a Historical Perspective*, Ravenna: Longo Editore (1998), pp. 61–74; Baskin Oran, "Religious and National Identity among the Balkan Muslims: A Comparative Study of Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Kosovo", *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde*

rapidly into the new Turkish nation, although they remembered their ethnic and regional origins. Similarly, in the 1950s and 1960s, the first Albanians from Yugoslavia arriving in Belgium participated to the social and cultural life of the Turkish community, where they met other Albanian-speakers, the descendants of *muhacirs* who had settled in Turkey some decades before.²¹ Forty years on, however, the different Albanian Islamic centres in various western European countries insist on their distinctiveness of their national origins,²² and the attempt of the Turkish organization *Milli Görüş* to bring the Union of the Bosniak Islamic Jama'ats (*Verein Islamischer Gemeinden Bosniaker* –VIGB) under its control has met with strong resistance. Neither Islamic faith, nor a possible pan-Turkish solidarity is sufficient to overcome the ethno-national and regional divides that exist among Balkan Muslims: in Germany, even the Turks from western Thrace have different associations from the Turks from Turkey, and organise their own cultural events. Thus, they venerate equally Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, and Sadık Ahmet, the independent deputy to the Greek Parliament killed in a car accident in 1995.²³

This primacy of ethno-national divides has become apparent with the break-up of Yugoslavia.²⁴ Since 1963, one of the most important functions of the Yugoslav consulates and the Yugoslav clubs linked to the Communist regime had been to maintain strict control over the Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter*, and to prevent them from entering into contact with political émigrés. At the religious level, the Islamic Community (*Islamska zajednica*) of Yugoslavia exerted its own control over the first Islamic centres created during the 1980s in western Europe, the United States, and Australia, and appointed their imams. At that time, many Bosniak and Albanian *Gastarbeiter* frequented the Yugoslav clubs, and belonged to the same *jama'ats* (local Islamic congregations). In the 1990s, however, this associative landscape has been drastically transformed. While the Yugoslav clubs disappeared, or reduced their activities solely to serve the Serb diaspora, a large array of associations was created by the other diasporas originating from the region.²⁵ When the Islamic Community fell apart in 1993, the Yugoslav *jama'ats* in the diaspora split as well: Bosniak and Albanian believers ceased to frequent the same prayer rooms, and established direct links with the newly-created Islamic Communities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, or Macedonia. At the same time, the claim of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina that its authority extended to all Islamic believers of Croatia and Slovenia could not prevent the muftis of Zagreb and Ljubljana from acquiring an increasing autonomy, with the discreet support of the Croatian and Slovenian state authorities.

turco-iranien, no. 18 July 1994), pp. 307–323; Fikret Karčić, “Islamic Revival in the Balkans 1970–1992”, *Islamic Studies* (Islamabad), XXXVI, no. 2–3 (Summer–Fall 1997), pp. 565–581.

²¹ See İlhan Başgöz and Norman Furniss (eds), *Turkish Workers in Europe: an Interdisciplinary Study*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press (1985); Ural Manço (ed.), *Voix et voies musulmanes de Belgique*, Bruxelles: Presses des facultés universitaires Saint-Louis (2000).

²² See Denisa Kostovicova and Albert Prestreshi, “Education, Gender and Religion: Identity Transformations among Kosovo Albanians in London”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, XXIX, no. 6 (November 2003), pp. 1079–1096.

²³ Hersant, “L’élaboration d’un discours identitaire”.

²⁴ On the Bosniak case, see Marita Eastmond, “Nationalist Discourses and the Construction of Difference: Bosnian Muslim Refugees in Sweden”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, XI, no. 2 (1998), pp. 161–181; Nadije Al-Ali, Richard Black and Khalid Koser, “Refugees and Transnationalism: The Experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, XXVII, no. 4 (October 2000), pp. 615–634; Ellen Wight, *Bosnians in Chicago: Transnational Activities and Obstacles to Transnationalism*, Sussex: Centre for Migration Research (2000).

²⁵ See, for example, Nadège Ragaru, “Recompositions identitaires et passage au politique des Albanais aux Etats-Unis”, *Balkanologie*, VII, no. 1 (June 2003), pp. 87–109.

Diasporas do not only reproduce the identity changes of their communities of origin: they play an active part in them.²⁶ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the movement for the autonomy of Islamic religious institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina was led from Istanbul by Ali Džabić, the mufti of Mostar expelled by Austro-Hungarian authorities. In the 1960s and 1970s, small groups of political émigrés prepared the ground for the nationalist ideologies that were to dominate the following decades. Adil Zulfikarpašić, the founder of the Bosniak Institute (*Bošnjački institut*) in Zurich, became the tireless advocate of the Bosniak national idea (*bošnjaštvo*),²⁷ and Teufik Velagić, a political émigré living in Vienna, organized the first visit of Bosniak Islamist activists to Teheran in 1983. In a similar way, the idea of a Greater Albania was kept alive by the anti-Communist movements exiled in the United States after World War II, and by the Marxist-Leninist activists who took refuge in western Europe after the repression of the first Albanian protests in Kosovo in 1968. Finally, in the 1980s, the Federation of Turks from Western Thrace in Europe has provided an important financial and institutional support to Sadik Ahmet, and its own short-lived Party for Friendship, Equality and Peace (DEB).

In the former Yugoslavia, the relationship between the local political elite and the diaspora has been much less harmonious and, in 1990, political émigrés played only a secondary role in the creation of the political parties representing the main Muslim populations: Adil Zulfikarpašić was expelled from the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) by its Islamist leadership, only a few months after he joined – and sponsored – this political party; and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) rejected the military option that was already promoted by the Albanian nationalist organisations in exile. Nevertheless, both the Bosniak and Albanian diasporas have remained a major financial and symbolic stake during the 1990s, over which fierce battles for control have been fought.

In 1990, the SDA created local branches in Croatia, Slovenia, western Europe, North America, and Australia. During the Bosnian war (1992–1995), the associations of the Bosniak diaspora took on diverse tasks: assisting refugees, collecting money and humanitarian aid, lobbying foreign governments and public opinions, etc.²⁸ This mobilisation of the Bosniak diaspora has been characterised by the withering away of the former generation of associations, based on common local origins, and the rise instead of more centralised organisations linked to the SDA, such as the charity *Merhamet* (Generosity) and the cultural association *Preporod* (Rebirth). Gradually, the SDA managed to gain control over the collection of money and humanitarian aid, and to discipline those *jama'ats* that did not recognise the authority of Mustafa Cerić, the new Bosnian *Reis-ul-Ulema* supported by the SDA leadership. This political instrumentalisation of the diaspora, however, gave rise to serious tensions with the host countries. In 1994, in particular, a new income tax was legislated in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which applied also to Bosnian citizens living abroad. The German government denounced this double taxation as contrary to international law, and the Bosnian government had to withdraw this measure. Regardless, other ways to harness the financial resources of the diaspora were set up, like the rise of the taxes paid for passports and other official documents, or the collection of “voluntary contributions” by the SDA, *Merhamet*, and the Islamic Community.

²⁶ See, among others, Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling. Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2003).

²⁷ See Christiane Dick, “Aus Muslimen werden Bosniaken. Der Beitrag Adil Zulfikarpašićs zur Konstruktion und Annerkennung des ‚Bosniakentums’”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas*, IV (2002), pp. 109–129.

²⁸ See Al-Ali, Black and Koser, “Refugees and Transnationalism”; Wight, *Bosnians in Chicago*.

Whereas the SDA has managed to reinforce its grip on the Bosniak diaspora, as is shown by the electoral results of the first post-war elections in September 1996, the opposite happened with the main Albanian political parties. Already in the mid 1990s, tensions broke out between Ibrahim Rugova in Pristina, the “President” of the self-proclaimed “Republic of Kosova”, and Bujar Bukoshi, the “Primer Minister” exiled in Bonn. The latter was in charge of collecting a “tax” meant to finance the institutions of the “Republic of Kosova” but, in 1999, he used one part of the collected money to launch his own private foundation. At the same time, the political hegemony of the LDK was put into question by the Marxist-Leninist organisations created in Germany and Switzerland, which participated to the creation of the Kosova Liberation Army (UÇK), and established their own tax collection system.²⁹ After the Kosovo war (1998–1999), the LDK was still the most popular political party in Kosovo, but the two parties created by former UÇK leaders – the Democratic Party of Kosova (PDK) and the Alliance for the Future of Kosova (AAK) – received 34% of the votes at the first post-war elections in October 2000. A similar turn happened in Macedonia, when the National Liberation Army (UÇK) brought the country on the brink of civil war, and the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), launched by the UÇK leader Ali Ahmeti after the signing of the Ohrid agreement (August 2001), became the dominant political party among the Albanians of Macedonia. It therefore appears that, both in Kosovo and in Macedonia, the political and military elites that derive from the diasporas are more radical than the local ones, and have played a key role in events since the second half of the 1990s.

The participation of the Bosniak and Albanian diasporas in the political mobilisations of the 1990s are good examples of “long-distance nationalism”,³⁰ but their dynamics should not be misunderstood. Emigration to western Europe gave Bosniak and Albanian nationalists the possibility to escape the repression of Communist Yugoslavia and, in the case of Kosovo, of authoritarian Serbia. At the same time, however, their control over the diaspora and its financial resources depended on the nationalists’ own capacity for coercion. The hegemony of the SDA in the Bosniak diaspora, for example, was also due to its control of the consulates and thus over the delivery of passports and other documents on a clientelistic basis. Bosnian opposition parties, for their part, did not have the network of associations and activists that would have enabled them to influence the votes of the diaspora. In the Albanian case, the networks supporting the UÇK have often been suspected of collusion with organised crime, and the struggle for power in Kosovo has sometimes had deadly consequences: in September 1998, Ahmet Krasniqi, the “minister of defence” for Bujar Bukoshi and commander-in-chief of the “Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosova” (FARK), was assassinated in Albania’s capital, Tirana.

More generally, resentment and frustration were probably stronger among those Bosniak refugees who had been forced to leave their country due to war and ethnic cleansing campaigns, or among the Albanian *Gastarbeiter* paying large amounts of money for the parallel institutions of the “Republic of Kosova”, without seeing any tangible result. Yet the control exerted by radical nationalists on the associative and financial networks of the Bosniak and Albanian diasporas was also due to the fact that most Bosniaks and Albanians living in western Europe had been primarily preoccupied with integration into their host societies, and had thus left the responsibility for organising the political and military support

²⁹ See Stephan Lipsius, “Kosovo: Politische Führung zerstritten”, *Südosteuropa*, XLVIII, no. 7–8 (July–August 1999), pp. 359–372.

³⁰ Benedict Anderson, “Long-Distance Nationalism”, in Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, London: Verso (1998), pp. 58–76.

for their communities of origin to these active minorities of nationalists. This reality is clearly apparent from the low participation rate of the Bosniak and Albanian diasporas in the elections of the early 2000s. It also explains why, in the diasporic context, the rise of Bosniak and Albanian nationalisms does not coincide with a stronger presence of Islam in the public space.

The Diasporas as an Interface between Balkan Islam and the Muslim World

At the religious level as well, the evolution of Balkan Muslim diasporas does not radically differ from that of their communities of origin. The level of religiosity among the Balkan Muslims living in western Europe is rather low: for example, the Union of the Bosniak Islamic Jama'ats (*Verein islamischer Gemeinden Bosniaker* – VIGB) estimates that only 6% of the Bosniaks living in Germany pay the *zaka'at* (Islamic ritual alms).³¹ Important differences seem to exist, however, between people of urban and rural origin, Albanians from Albania and from the former Yugoslavia, and Bosniaks from Bosnia-Herzegovina and from the Sandžak region.³² Moreover, like in the Balkan countries themselves, religious activities linked with the affirmation of distinct national identities have experienced a clear renewal since the end of the 1980s.³³ A good illustration of this phenomenon is the opening of new Islamic centres. The number of Bosniak Islamic centres in Germany, for example, has increased from 14 in 1992 to 53 in 1997; at that time, a total of 66 Bosniak Islamic centres existed in other western European countries (18 in Sweden, 18 in Austria, 15 in Switzerland, 8 in Norway, etc.).³⁴

The religious organisation of rapidly-growing diasporas has been a major challenge for the Islamic religious institutions, which strove to bring under control Islamic centres and prayer rooms that had been opened in a spontaneous way, and also to preserve their monopoly on the collection of *zaka'at*, the organisation of *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) and the sale of sheep for *kurban bayram* (Day of the Sacrifice). It is all the more true that, at the same time, various cultural associations and private businesses have organised collective *iftars* (evening meals) during Ramadan, concerts and other kinds of festive gatherings for major religious feasts, and bus journeys to the neo-Sufi pilgrimages during the summer. The de-institutionalisation of Islam and the diversification of religious practices that are characteristic of the post-Communist Balkans³⁵ both are also perceptible in the diasporic context. In western Europe, these trends are even furthered by the lack of official religious institutions recognised by the state, the presence of proselyte movements linked to various doctrinal orientations, and the difficulties met by every diaspora in the control of its members, and especially of the younger ones.³⁶

Against this background, the main specific feature of the Balkan Muslim diasporas, in comparison to both their communities of origin and to the other Muslim populations settled in western Europe, is their religious “invisibility”. The only mosque of the Bosniak diaspora that has a minaret is the one in Kamp-Linfort, close to Duisburg in Germany, and most religious

³¹ Fikret Arnaut, “Neravnopravnost članova Islamske zajednice u domovini i dijaspori”, available at the website of the Bosniak *jama'at* in Munich <<http://www.sabur.de>>.

³² Sandžak is a region located on the boundary between Serbia and Montenegro, and inhabited by Bosniaks (51.4%), Serbs (25.7%) and Montenegrins (19.2%).

³³ See Eastmond, “Nationalist Discourses and the Construction of Difference”; Nadje Al-Ali, “Gender Relations, Transnational Ties and Rituals among Bosnian Refugees”, *Global Networks*, II, no. 3 (July 2002), pp. 249–262.

³⁴ Klanco, *Muslimanske zajednice Bošnjaka u zapadnoj Evropi*, p. 96.

³⁵ See Bougarel and Clayer (eds), *Le nouvel Islam balkanique*.

³⁶ See for example Vatz-Laarousi and Manço (eds), *Jeunesses, citoyennetés, violences*.

events of the Balkan Muslims take place in closed, private, or strictly community-controlled spaces. In a similar way, Bosniak and Albanian Islamic *jama'ats* and associations participate in the Islamic representative bodies created at the local or national level, but do not actively support the religious demands put forth by these bodies, and play only a marginal role in them. Thus, in the case of Balkan Muslim diasporas, the renewal of religious activity does not go hand-in-hand with a stronger visibility of Islam. This specificity can be explained in different ways. On the one hand, Balkan Muslims have an experience of being a religious minority in a secularised society already preceding their arrival in western Europe. Therefore, their diasporic condition does not imply important adaptation efforts and renegotiations regarding the place of Islam in the public space. On the other hand, their political parties, cultural associations and religious leaders give an absolute priority to the defence of the “national cause” in their countries of origin, and avoid therefore any religious demand that could compromise their community’s reputation in the eyes of the host country’s government or public opinion.

Finally, this religious “invisibility” is linked with the way Balkan Muslims position themselves between the western European societies of non-Islamic tradition and the Muslim populations of non-European origin. Concerned with their integration into their host societies, the Balkan Muslims living in western Europe tend often to dissimulate their Islamic religion and to put forward their European origin. Until the end of the 1980s, for example, Bosniaks and Albanians insisted on their religiously neutral Yugoslav citizenship. In a similar way, many Muslim Albanians working in Greece or Italy use a Christian first name in their relations with state authorities and local people.³⁷ Coming from a country where religious identity and national identity are not directly related, and where family religious traditions had been weakened by three decades of atheistic repression, some Muslim Albanians from Albania even convert to Christianity. Far from positioning themselves as intermediaries between their host societies and the Muslim populations of non-European origin, Balkan Muslims most often strive to distance themselves from the latter. In this aim, they take up the idea of a specific and autochthonous “European Islam”, and avoid contacts with the other Muslim communities (with the partial exception of the Turkish one), in spite of the fact that they live in the same neighbourhoods and occupy similar jobs.³⁸

As is the case with the political and military support of the 1990s, the most important part in the development of religious links between Balkan Muslims and other Muslims living in western Europe has been played by small active minorities. Since the 1990s, for example, several youth organizations and independent *jama'ats* linked to militant Islamist networks have been created by young members of the Bosniak diaspora. These promote fundamentalist ideas and practices, reject the division of the *Ummah* (Community of the Faithful) along ethnic and national lines, and put a strong emphasis on religious solidarity and *jihad*. This development of so-called “wahabbism”, especially within the Bosniac youth,³⁹ has given rise

³⁷ Georgia Kretsi, “‘Shkelqen’ or ‘Giannis’? Namenwechsel und Identitätsstrategien zwischen Heimatkultur und Migration”, in Karl Kaser, Robert Pichler and Stephanie Schwandner (eds), *Die weite Welt und das Dorf. Albanische Emigration am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Wien: Böhlau (2002), pp. 262–284.

³⁸ See Heinz Fassmann, Rainer Münz and Wolfgang Seifert, “Tržista rada za imigrante: usporedba integracije na tržištima rada imigranata iz Turske i bivše Jugoslavije u Njemačkoj i Austriji”, *Migracijske teme*, XV, no. 3 (1999), pp. 347–375.

³⁹ In Bosnia-Herzegovina itself, the Organization of the Active Islamic Youth (*Organizacija aktivne islamske omladine* – OAIO), has been created in 1996 by former Bosniac members of the military unit “*el-Mudžahid*”. Later on, it has developed close links with independent *jama'ats* such as the *jama'ats* “*Tevhid*” (Unity) in Vienna and Munich, and with the Association of the Muslims of Northern America (*Udruženje Muslimana Sjeverne Amerike* – UMSA). On the presence of militant Islamist networks in Bosnia-Herzegovina, see Jérôme

to alarmist comments in the Western media, and to strong reactions by Islamic religious authorities. This should not, however, conceal the fact that the exchanges between Balkan Muslims and other Muslims living in western Europe can also be encouraged by heterodox religious actors like the syncretistic movement *Ahmadiyya* or the Shi'a organization *Ahl-ul-bait*, or that the driving force behind these interactions in many cases are Turkish Sufi orders (*Naqshbandiyya*, etc.) and neo-Sufi movements (*süleymançıs*, *fethullahçıs*, etc.). Despite their limited number, and the fact that they often act without the support of official religious institutions, the individuals taking part to these networks and exchanges constitute an important interface between Balkan Islam, the Muslims of western Europe, and with the Muslim world beyond. Due to this position, these individuals also play a central part in the diffusion of new religious movements, doctrines, and practices into the Balkan countries.

In the Yugoslav case, this role of the diaspora as an interface between Balkan Islam and the Muslim world was already apparent during the 1980s, at a time when religious life was still closely supervised by the Communist regime. In the early 1980s, for example, the initiative for opening the first Yugoslav Islamic centres in Germany was taken by believers who frequented either Arab (Aachen, Munich) or Turkish (Kamp-Linfort) mosques. At the same time, the architectural vision of the new Zagreb mosque was largely influenced by the example of the Islamic cultural centres created in Germany by the *süleymançı*. This mosque, inaugurated in 1987, represents a historical turn for Bosnian Islamic architecture, from the point of view both of function (8,000 m² of interior space, including classrooms, a library, a restaurant, etc.) and aesthetics (high minarets with a double balcony, a split dome with asymmetric halves forming a crescent, etc.).⁴⁰ Adapted to the needs of a “semi-diasporic” population, and criticised (even by some within the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia) for its disproportionate size, it has nonetheless become in the meantime a major source of inspiration for new multifunctional and ostentatious mosques throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. The case of the Zagreb mosque shows how some religious innovations coming from the Muslim world can reach the Balkan countries via western Europe.

This “diasporic detour”, however, would seem to have lost its importance since the collapse of the Communist regime, which has allowed various religious actors from the Muslim world to develop their presence in the Balkan countries directly. On the contrary: Balkan Muslims living in a “semi-diasporic” situation continue to play a central role in the exchanges between Balkan Muslim communities and the Muslim world, and in the transformations of Balkan Islam. From this point of view as well, the case of Zagreb is a paradigmatic one. At the end of the 1980s, several members of the Bosnian Islamist circles came to Zagreb, where the political climate was less repressive than in Sarajevo. From there they then participated in the internal conflicts of the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia and in the creation of the SDA. Thereafter, the Bosniak intellectuals and political activists living in the Croatian capital have never ceased to exert an important influence on the political and religious evolutions of their community as a whole. Before and during the war, the local Zagreb branch of the SDA took the lead of a pro-Croatian current within this party, in spite of its own conflict with the Croatian government over the status of the Bosniak minority in the Croatian Constitution. During the conflict, the staff of the Zagreb mosque, for its part, was very active in providing assistance to refugees, in the call for financial and diplomatic support of the *Ummah*, and in the transfer of volunteers from the diaspora and the Muslim world to

Bellion-Jourdan, “Les réseaux transnationaux islamiques en Bosnie-Herzégovine”, in Bougarel and Clayer, *Le nouvel Islam balkanique*, pp. 429–472.

⁴⁰ On the construction of the Zagreb mosque, see Ševko Omerbašić, *Islam i Muslimani u Hrvatskoj*, Zagreb: Mešihat Islamske Zajednice u Hrvatskoj (1999), pp. 297–366.

Bosnia. In April 1993, Mustafa Cerić, imam of the Yugoslav Islamic cultural centre in Chicago from its opening in 1985 to 1987, and since then head imam of the Zagreb mosque, was appointed *Reis-ul-Ulema* with the support of the SDA leadership. This appointment as the new head of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina underlines the importance of the diasporic and “semi-diasporic” experience in the transformations of Bosnian Islam.

In a different setting, Athens offers another example of members of a “semi-diasporic” population playing an important role in the ongoing transformations of Balkan Islam. The Muslims of Athens, Greek citizens and foreigners alike, are faced with practical difficulties in the practice of their religion. In particular, several makeshift prayer rooms exist in the suburbs of the Greek capital, but the construction of a larger mosque is regularly postponed (despite all the promises made before the Olympic Games), and there is no Muslim cemetery in the city. From this point of view, the situation of the Muslims of Athens is quite similar to the one of some Muslims living in western Europe. The specificity of the Athenian case lies in the fact that some Muslims from western Thrace have started to position themselves as intermediaries between the Greek authorities and the foreign Muslim immigrants. This is particularly the case of the association *Filotita* (Friendship), whose leaders are Pomaks⁴¹ from western Thrace, and who consider such a move as a means to reinforce their own political standing vis-à-vis the Greek authorities and the more influential Turkish associations.⁴² In doing this, the leaders of *Filotita* not only break with the isolationist attitude of the Balkan Muslim diasporas, they may also anticipate some major changes linked with the ongoing institutionalisation of Islam in western Europe and the future enlargement of the EU toward south-eastern Europe.

Being Muslim the EU Way? Balkan Muslims and European Islam as a Process

The study of Balkan Muslim diasporas underlines some major differences between Balkan Muslim populations and the other Muslim populations present in western Europe. First of all, over the last decades, the political mobilisation of Balkan Muslims has been marked by the crystallisation of distinct national identities and nationalist projects. By contrast, common religious demands and symbols have become more and more central in the mobilisation of western European Muslims, whose ethnic and national origins have lost most of their political significance. More than just alleged differences in their level of religiosity,⁴³ this divergent political evolution between Balkan and western European Muslims explains the main distinctive feature of Balkan Muslim diasporas, that is, their religious “invisibility”. Against this background, the ideas of a *sui generis* “European Islam” or a homogenous “Euro-Islam” should be replaced by more nuanced considerations on the formation of a pan-European Islamic public sphere that would enable European Muslims to discuss the status and

⁴¹ Pomaks are Slavic-speaking Muslims whose dialect is close to Bulgarian. There are approximately 160,000 Pomaks in Bulgaria and 30,000 Pomaks in Greece. See, among others, Mario Apostolov, “The Pomaks: a Religious Minority in the Balkans”, *Nationalities Papers*, XXIV, no. 4 (December 1996), pp. 727–745.

⁴² See Antoniou, “Muslim Migrants in Greece”.

⁴³ Data from quantitative surveys neither confirm nor invalidate the widespread idea according to which the level of religiosity among Balkan Muslims is much lower than among western European Muslims. In 1995, 14% of the young Muslims born in France declared that they prayed regularly (Felice Dassetto, Brigitte Marechal and Jorgen Nielsen, *Convergences musulmanes. Aspects contemporains de l’islam dans l’Europe élargie*, Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001, p. 27). A few years previously, the same percentage of young Yugoslav Muslims declared that they went regularly to the mosque for religious reasons (Dragomir Pantić, “Prostorne, vremenske i socijalne koordinate religioznosti mladih u Jugoslaviji”, in Srećko Mihailović (ed.), *Deca krize. Omladina Jugoslavije krajem osamdesetih*, Belgrade: Institut društvenih nauka (1990), p. 222.

practical forms of their religion within the context of secularised European societies. In other words, one has to consider European Islam not as an existing fact, but as an ongoing process.

The actual formation of a pan-European Islamic public sphere is far from certain, as is also the participation of Balkan Muslims in such a sphere. From this point of view, it is telling that a first attempt in the early 1990s to create a Council bringing together the Islamic religious institutions of eastern Europe failed, and that even the exchanges between the institutions of the Balkan countries remain limited. Moreover, the ideological conflicts that have divided the Balkan Muslim communities since the 1990s – such as the secular nature of the state, or the relationship between Islam and national identity⁴⁴ – are sometimes reminiscent of those taking place in Muslim majority countries. Such debates have been going on in Albania, where Muslims have been a majority since 1912; in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, where Muslims became a majority following the Yugoslav wars; and in Bulgaria and in Greece, due to the influence of neighbouring Turkey. In contrast, the intense debates that, from the end of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, dealt with the adaptation of Balkan Muslim communities to their new status of religious minorities, and with the religious reforms that such a traumatic change implied, are now neglected or even concealed. More than a vague “age-old tradition of tolerance”, however, the rich legal and intellectual corpus that resulted from these debates represents probably the main contribution of Balkan Muslims to the definition of a specific European Islam.⁴⁵

The participation of Balkan Muslim communities in the formation of a pan-European Islamic public sphere depends also on wider factors, such as the stabilisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia; the social and political integration of Muslim minorities in Serbia-Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece; and the enlargement of the European Union to include the Balkan countries. In the event that future political developments stir up the feelings of physical insecurity, political marginalisation, and “civilisational illegitimacy” that many Balkan Muslims experience, political and religious movements striving for homogenous territories and obsidional ideologies will be significantly reinforced. On the contrary, a normalisation of the political and symbolical status of Balkan Muslim populations would weaken nationalist passions and agendas. It would also further the open (re)formulation of the dilemmas faced by these populations regarding the place of Islam in the definition of their national identity and of the boundary between public and private space,⁴⁶ and therefore encourage active participation by Balkan Muslims in the ongoing debates on European Islam.

An illustration of this reality is the fact that one of the most important European bodies in the eyes of the representatives of Balkan Muslims and western European Muslims alike is the European Court for Human Rights. This court does not only fight the discrimination experienced by Muslims in all European countries; in questioning the strict control that Balkan states traditionally exert on Islamic religious institutions, it also contributes to the pluralisation of religious life in south-eastern Europe, and to the development of common trends and debates in the transformation of church–state relations all over Europe.

⁴⁴ On the Bosnian case, see Xavier Bougarel, “Trois définitions de l’islam en Bosnie-Herzégovine”, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, XLVI, no. 115 (July 2001), pp. 183–201; Sabine Riedel, “Die Politisierung islamischer Geschichte und Kultur am Beispiel Südosteuropas”, *Südosteuropa*, XLVI, no. 11 (November 1997), pp. 539–561.

⁴⁵ On the Bosnian case, see Fikret Karčić, *Društveno-pravni aspekti islamskog reformizma*, Sarajevo: Islamski teološki fakultet (1990); Enes Karić, “Bosanske muslimanske rasprave za i protiv obnove i reforme u XX stoljeću”, in Enes Karić (ed.), *Bosanske muslimanske rasprave I – Karić, Ljubušak*, Sarajevo: Sedam (2003), pp. 7–82.

⁴⁶ See Bougarel, “Trois définitions de l’islam”.

This common resort to the ECHR by western European and eastern European Muslims alike is all the more significant, given that an Islamic public sphere can only appear on the basis of common intellectual questionings and compatible institutional frameworks, as is shown by the example of the European Council for Fatwa and Research created in London in 1997.⁴⁷ Its leader, Yusuf Qaradawi, an Egyptian *alim* living in Qatar, has written extensively on the need to adapt Islam to the situation of the Muslim minorities living in Europe. Qaradawi's writings have a large audience not only in western Europe, but also in the Balkans. At the institutional level, however, the participation of Balkan Islamic religious institutions in the Council has been hindered by the difference of status existing between the official leaders of nationwide religious institutions coming from the Balkans, and those members of the Council living in Western Europe, who are rather non-representative intellectual figures linked to various Muslim countries. In this domain as well, some members of the Balkan Muslim diasporas could occupy an important mediating role in the future, and it is perhaps not by chance that the only religious leader from the Balkans who is still attending the sessions of the European Council for Fatwa and Research is Mustafa Cerić, also the only one who has also a solid experience of diasporic and "semi-diasporic" contexts.⁴⁸

Finally, the role that Balkan Muslim communities and diasporas could play in the definition of an European Islam depends largely on the treatment of the Turkish candidacy by the European Union. The case of the Balkan Muslim diasporas reveals the links existing between the Balkan Muslim communities and Turkish society, as well as the role of various Turkish religious networks in the exchanges between the Balkan Muslim populations, the Muslim populations living in western Europe, and the Muslim world in general.⁴⁹ In a similar way, Turkey has been an important economical and diplomatic counterweight to Iranian and Saudi influences in the Balkans, and, in 1995, the Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs (*Dyanet*) initiated a Euro-Asiatic Islamic Assembly that brought together the Islamic religious institutions of the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Of course, EU membership would further reinforce this importance of the "Turkish factor" in south-eastern Europe.⁵⁰

For the Balkan Muslims, however, their main stake in the Turkish EU candidacy may be something else. As long as Turkey is relegated outside the legal and mental boundaries of Europe, Balkan Muslims themselves remain at its margins, and their role in the definition of a European Islam can only be a secondary one, as shown by their absence from the literature dedicated to this issue. By contrast, the acceptance of Turkey as a rightful member of the European community of states and nations would weaken the Balkan nationalist discourses that, since the early nineteenth century, have denied any legitimacy to the presence of Islam in the region. By doing this, it would also enable the Balkan Muslim communities to play a more important mediatory role between the minority Islam of western Europe and the majority

⁴⁷ See Alexandre Caiero, "Adjusting Islamic Law to Migration", *ISIM Newsletter*, no. 12 (June 2003), pp. 26–27.

⁴⁸ I am grateful to Alexandre Caiero for providing me with these data concerning the participation of Balkan Islamic religious leaders in the European Council for Fatwa and Research.

⁴⁹ See, among others, Ferhat Kentel, "Les Balkans et la crise de l'identité nationale turque", in Bougarel and Clayer, *Le nouvel Islam balkanique*, pp. 357–395; Faruk Bilici, "Le parti islamiste turc (Refah partısı) et sa dimension internationale", *Les annales de l'autre Islam*, no. 4 (1997), pp. 35–60.

⁵⁰ On the "Turkish factor" in the Balkans, see, among others, Sylvie Gangloff, "La politique balkanique de la Turquie et le poids du passé ottoman", in Bougarel and Clayer, *Le nouvel Islam balkanique*, pp. 317–356; Hugh Poulton, "Turkey as Kin-State: Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Turkish and Muslim Communities in the Balkans", in Poulton and Taji-Farouki, *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, pp. 194–213; Şule Kut, "Turkey in the Post-Communist Balkans: Between Activism and Self-Restraint", *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, no. 3 (1996/1997), pp. 39–45.

Islam of Turkey. Therefore, in an indirect way, the very possibility of a pan-European Islamic public sphere depends on the question of Turkey's EU membership, and it would be illusory to expect the formation of a distinct and legitimate European Islam without first overcoming, in both reality and perceptions, what Westerners used to call the "Eastern Question".