Since the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) the phenomenon of religious extremism has become at the center of political and media coverage. When covered by the media it mainly indicates a radical Islam. The crisis in the Middle East since the rise of ISIS has become even more apparent when was obvious that many young Europeans opt to join the fighters in Iraq and Syria for whom the radical Islam is becoming way of life. From those young Europeans many come from the Western Balkan. Here are shortlisted articles from the print media in Macedonia of how the term religious extremism was covered. In most of the cases the term radical extremism was used to cover the topic of radical Islam.

PRINT MEDIA

**Dnevnik – daily newspaper**

**Islamic radicals** from Macedonia are still joining the fighters in Iraq and Syria. According to Dnevnik, around one hundred people from Macedonia are fighting for the Islamic State. Many of them also bring their families with them; they also get money payments for joining the Islamic State. This is despite the new amendments in the Criminal Code in Macedonia that now postulate imprisonment for up to 4 years for Macedonian citizens that join military or paramilitary fights in other countries or for those that use social networks and other communication channels to subjugate other people to join military or paramilitary fighters in other countries. Beko Idrizi is one such a case from Macedonia, who according to Dnevnik, at the moment is in Syria and posts pictures from Syria on his Facebook profile. Sources close to the newspapers claim that he has travelled many times to Syria and since the New Year of 2015 he has not come back. People who knew Idrizi in Macedonia say that he has attended the prayers in the Jahja-Pasina mosque, which is not under the control of the Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Recruiting young Macedonians** during night lectures in Macedonian mosques to join fighters in Syria and Iraq. According to Ibrahim Sabani, mufti from Skopje, unknown Islamic theologians from different countries from the region come in the mosques in Skopje that are not under control of the Islamic Religious Community (IRC) during the night hours to brain wash young people and people in general about the religious deeds in the fights in Iraq and Syria. Mr. Sabani stress that during the alleged religious lectures the young people are indoctrinated to join the Islamic State and the beigest problem comes form the mosques that IRC cannot control.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Daut Dauti,** member of the Data Verification Commission in Macedonia in Dnevnik wrote about the need of the Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia (IRC) to step up its efforts and to provide educational lectures for its believers about the absurdities of the wars in Syria. He says, “it is not enough re-socialization and reintegration of the combatants who return from the wars in Syria and Iraq but education prior their decision to join the fighters in Syria against the Assad’s regime or the ISIS on the territory in Iraq.” He claims, that the best opportunity for the IRC to do these activities it is the Friday prayers when many young people attend the prayers.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Utrinski vesnik – daily newspaper**

Why silence over the incident in Kumanovo? While in the region and the European capitals the incident in Kumanvo is widely discussed in Macedonia it is still unclear what actually happened. Besides the official report from the Ministry of Inferior affairs very little is discussed about the investigation and how the case will proceed. According to Daniela Trpcevska, it is still unclear what was going on during the incident of May 9th in Kumanovo. At the moment, there is silence even from the two main Albanian parties DUI and DPA, as well as the governmental officials. Yet, many international observers called for opening international investigation in order to get clear picture of why the incident happened and who was part of the incident. During the incident in Kumanovo on May 9th the police forces entered the settlement “Diva Naselba” and had open arm fight with alleged radical terrorist group that was planning attacks on national institutions. Trpcevska calls for unbiased investigation in order to get to the facts of the incidents.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Islamic Religious Community (IRC) has a plan how to tackle the radical Islam in Macedonia. The chief of the IRC presented the plan where he will work to prevent and re-socialize the young people and their families from Macedonia who are taking part in the fights in Syria and Iraq. He also, said that the help is needed from all public institutions in order to effectively address this problem and stop the young people to being brain washed to join the Islamic State. In his statement, he also pointed out that all religious muftis must promote Islam as a peaceful religion.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Vecer – daily newspaper in Macedonia**

In this article in the daily newspaper Vecer, which is pro-governmental newspaper, the term jihad, which is a term that connotes a religious extremism, was used to delegitimize the opposition leader Zaev. The title of the article goes like this: “After the citizens turned Zaev down, he encourages religious jihad on the streets”. The article mainly speaks about the alleged cooperation of Zaev with the political party “Vetevendosje” or “Self-detremination” from Kosovo to make scenarios for unrest in Skopje. In the article, Zaev namely makes plan with the radicals from the party in Kosovo to come in May in busses and make unrest on the street in Skopje to steer up interethnic conflict in Macedonia. (In my opinion this is very interesting input: this article was published in April 2015 and in May there are two incidents that happened by alleged terrorists groups from Kosovo on the territory of Macedonia. The question remain; which scenarios were the two incidents, Zaev’s or Gruevski’s or?)[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Nova Makedonija – daily newspaper**

Washhabism in the Balkans. The scream “Allahu Akbar” in Zvornik, Bosnia, was a dangerous warning that the Balkan is not only recruiting place for the jihadist but also can become target on its own. According to London Economist, in the wars in Iraq and Syria there are around 330 Bosnians, 232 Kosovars, 90 Albanians, 70 Serbians, and 12 Macedonians. Ever since the Saudi Arabia started to invest in the Balkan region, 4 decades ago, in putting up new mosques to preach about wahhabism together with setting up new religious schools (madrasas) with a dangerous interpretation of Islam the situation is quite alarming. The local imams in Macedonia say that in the recent time there are radical Islamic groups that are overtaking the mosques in Skopje and put in place new radical imams; this is despite the fact that the wahhabi preaching is new to the Macedonian Muslim population.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Deutche Welle – online broadcaster from the section on Macedonian**

Securing the preventive and defense readiness of Macedonia. In the background of the political crisis in Macedonian there is a new crisis that creeps in, i.e., the defense readiness of the country from terrorist attacks is heightened. Information about new security measures to protect barracks or the shopping malls come after alleged threats since the incident in Kumanovo from 9th and 10th of May 2015. The questions remains; Is there a threat for terrorist revenge since the Kumanovo incident and is that threat coming from the Islamic State? Information spread from the Kosovar portal “Lajmi.net” about the communication between the Kosovar security forces and the Macedonian police, where the Kosovar intelligence service warrants Macedonia police to take additional preventive measures in order to be ready to respond to any possible threat from the ISIS. Namely, according to this portal from Kosovo, male person, Albanian Macedonian, that is present in Syria has contacted another person of trust to share the information about possible attacks in June in Kosovo and Macedonia. In Prishtina, there are strengthen security measures in the most risky places. From the Macedonian defense ministry say that they are diligent and follow the moves of the radical Islamic structures in the country. Adding that the threats are meant to spread panic and horror among the population but by no chance they will neglect it.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Islamic state is a threat for the Balkan. Western Balkan is becoming new front for the Islamic State. In recent video relished by the ISIS fighters there is message to the believers in the Western Balkan to join the cause of the new caliphate by killing the non-believers does not matter where they are; Bosnia, Sandjak, or Syria. The video message intended for the believers in the Western Balkan plays with the fears of war. According the article, the jihadist in the video warned the people in the Balkan that new massacres are possible in Mostar, Srebrenica, Gorazde if people from the Balkan do not join ISIS. The expert on terrorism Peter Neumann says that people who are joining ISIS from the EU countries travel to Syria or Iraq via the Balkan route and that opens new grounds for radicalization in the Balkan. In order to find solution for the situation Newmann suggests the old football technique, namely, to take away the passports of the people before they travel to Syria or Iraq. He points out that in Great Britain there is similar law in effect in order to prevent the football hooligans to ruin the matches. Must priority will be to stop the people to travel in the war torn zone in Syria and Iraq.[[9]](#footnote-9)

No doubt the threat of religious radicalization is imminent in the Balkan. Most of the reported cases in this report speak about the Islamic radicalization with the ongoing rise of the Islamic State and their influence in the Western Balkan. The issue of religious extremism is a multifaceted phenomenon and remains to see how it will be played down in the Balkan.

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