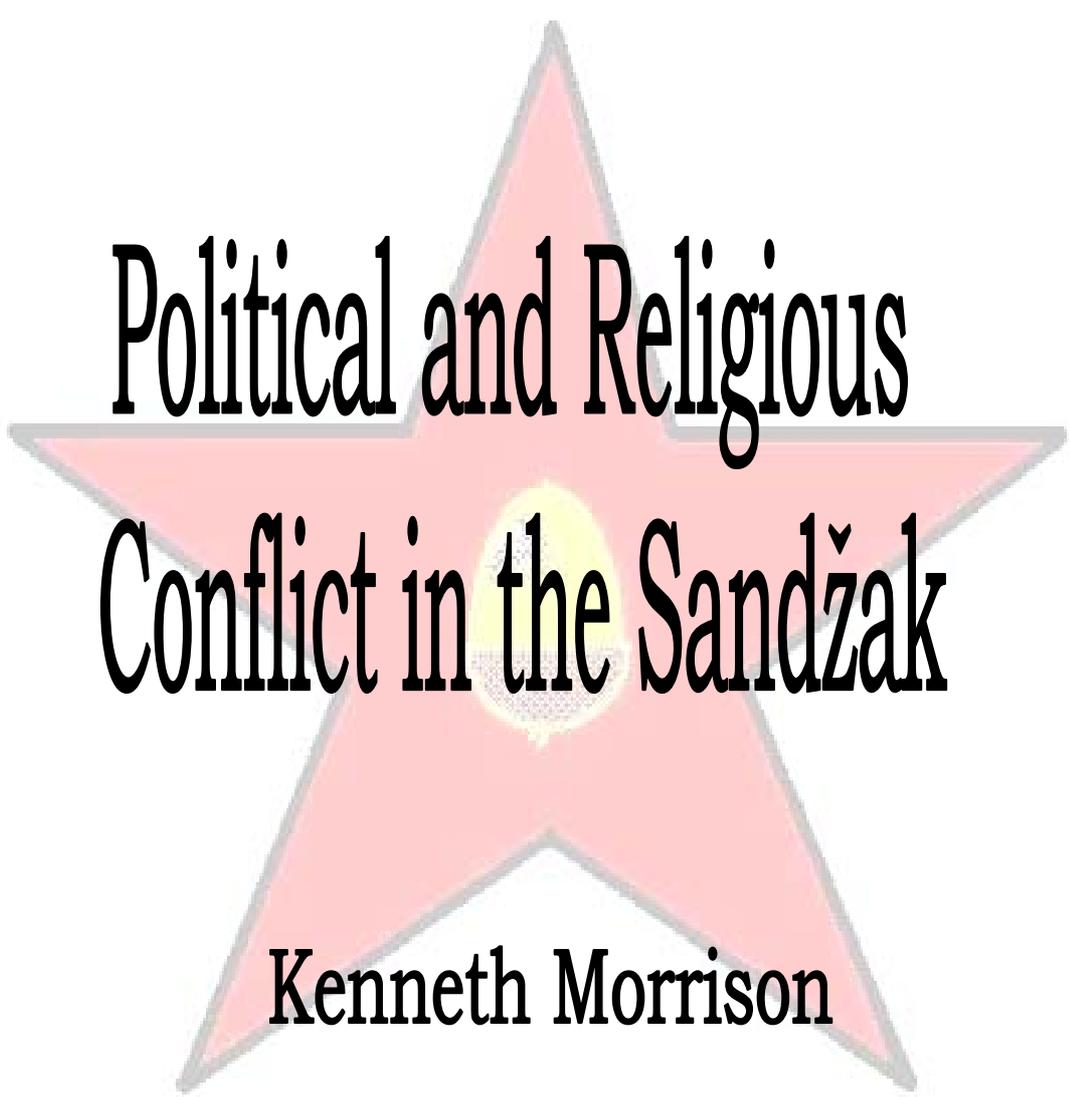


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**Political and Religious  
Conflict in the Sandžak**

**Kenneth Morrison**

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**Defence Academy of the United Kingdom**

# **Political and Religious Conflict in the Sandžak**

**Kenneth Morrison**

## **Key Points**

\* The rising tensions within the Islamic Community are causing growing concern. The split within the Community has led to an increase in violent incidents in the past year.

\* The current conflicts are linked to political struggles, but the instrumentalisation of the split threatens to destabilise intra-Bosniak relations, as well as inter-ethnic relations throughout the Sandžak and within an unstable Serbia.

\* The Balkan region is in a state of flux in the aftermath of Kosovo's independence, and thus areas of potential instability such as the Sandžak should be closely monitored and treated with sensitivity.

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## Map of Sandžak and its Municipalities





# Political and Religious Conflict in the Sandžak

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## Introduction

Located in the south-west of Serbia and the north of Montenegro, the Sandžak is a multi-ethnic region of approximately 8,700 square kilometres. It borders Bosnia and Herzegovina on its western side and Kosovo on its south-eastern edge. The Sandžak may be a small, economically underdeveloped, and geographically isolated space, but it remains a rich and complex cultural, historical and political area. Almost completely ignored in Western literature dealing with former Yugoslav territories, the area has increasingly become the focal point of interest to regional analysts, policy-makers and observers from within the international community.<sup>1</sup> A volatile mix of local political conflicts, inter-ethnic tensions, religious divisions and the activities of a small group of Islamic extremists connected with the Wahhabi movement<sup>2</sup> have collectively brought the area to greater prominence. Furthermore, both Serbian and Montenegrin state security structures have identified the Sandžak as a potential zone of instability.

Ethnic and political divisions have characterised the politics of the Sandžak for almost two decades. Since the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), tensions have ebbed and flowed, though never fully dissipating. To compound the inter-ethnic tensions, a bitter political division between two Sandžak Bosniak politicians and former allies - the current Mayor of Novi Pazar, Sulejman Ugljanin (SDA - Party for Democratic Action) and the current Serbian Minister for Labour, Rasim Ljajić (SDP - Sandžak Democratic Party) - has existed since the mid 1990s. But these entrenched and long-standing political splits have recently been compounded by a split within Sandžak's Islamic Community. In a situation reminiscent of Montenegro in 1993, where two parallel churches uncomfortably co-existed - Serbian Orthodox and Montenegrin Orthodox - the Islamic Community in Sandžak is now divided into two bitterly opposed factions, both claiming to be the legitimate religious authority. Claim, counter-claim, fiery rhetoric and the mobilisation of supporters on the streets has predictably transposed into violence.

The entire Balkan region is going through a period of flux. Kosovo's declaration of independence on 17 February has pushed the region into a period of uncertainty, if not yet outright instability. The focus of international attention has been firmly upon Kosovo and the potential implications of its declaration of independence for other parts of the region. Given the possibility of the intensification of conflict, further inquiry into the political and religious divisions in the Sandžak is both timely and merited. This paper, therefore, presents a broad overview of politics and religion in the Sandžak from the break-up of the SFRY to the current intra-Muslim conflict.

## A Brief History of the Sandžak

To Westerners, the Sandžak (known as *Raška* to Serbs) is best known for being a pawn of the complex regional power game played by the Great Powers prior to the outbreak of the First World War. Students of literature may point to Hector Hugh Munro's (aka Saki) short story *The Lost Sandžak* as their marker. The region, however, remains relatively unknown, with little of note written in the English language.

The Sandžak is a multi-ethnic region straddling the largely mountainous border area between Serbia and Montenegro. Since Montenegro's declaration of independence in May 2006, it is now divided between two independent states. The Serbian Sandžak comprises six municipalities (Priboj, Prijepolje, Nova Varoš, Sijenica, Novi Pazar and Tutin - the latter three with Muslim majorities), whilst the Montenegrin Sandžak comprises five municipalities (Bijelo Polje, Berane, Plav, Pljevlja, and Rožaje). Largely economically underdeveloped and geographically isolated, the Sandžak region possesses significant natural beauty, from the Pešter highlands to the southern slopes of Mount Zlatibor. Historically, the Sandžak was part of the medieval Serbian Empire and testament to this past is the collection of some of Serbia's oldest monasteries (notably those of Sopoćani, St Peter and Paul, and Djurdevi Stupovi). However, following the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and the collapse of the Serbian Empire, the area fell under the control of the Ottoman Turks. Under their administration the area became one of the key Balkan trading centres. The term *Sandžak* (or the Sandžak of Novi Pazar) came into widespread use only during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Ottoman Empire's authority over the Balkans began to recede. The 1878 Treaty of Berlin awarded control of both Bosnia and the Sandžak to the Austro-Hungarian authorities, although the latter was *de facto* still administered by the Ottomans. In 1908, complete control of the Sandžak reverted to the Ottoman administrators, albeit very briefly. Only four years later in 1912 - during the First Balkan War - the Sandžak was occupied by Serbian and Montenegrin forces, who drove out the remaining Ottomans. This development facilitated a common border between the two 'Serb states', formalised in the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest.

Following the end of the First World War, the Sandžak became incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Local Muslims were frequently the target of reprisals by Serb and Montenegrin soldiers and irregulars in the early years of the new state initiating a steady process of emigration. Many Muslims left the area - either for Bosnia or further afield toward Turkey.<sup>3</sup> By 1941, Yugoslav territory was again wracked with conflict - involving both external and internal forces. In the Sandžak, three armed groups - the Partisans, the Chetniks and the Muslim 'militia' were operational and engaging in fierce internecine conflict. By 1943, however, the multi-ethnic Partisans began to take control of the area, and in 1943 the Sandžak was declared as an autonomous region by Tito's Anti-Fascist Council for the Liberation of Yugoslavia. But in 1945 the Sandžak was not awarded the status of a republic - indeed, even a limited form of autonomy failed to materialise. The Sandžak was awarded no special status under the Yugoslav, Serbian or Montenegrin constitutions, and was again formally divided between Serbia and Montenegro, within the framework of the SFRY.

The ethnic dynamics of the Sandžak continually changed from the 1930s onward. The division of the area and the often repressive measures imposed upon Sandžak Muslims by Tito's security chief, Aleksander Ranković (with Tito's acquiescence) led to a process of steady migration - many left for Turkey; indeed, there are areas of

contemporary Istanbul peppered with migrants from the Sandžak. The emigration was facilitated by the KSCS government in cooperation with the Turkish authorities in Ankara, and continued until after the establishment of the SFRY, with the last of these agreements signed in 1954.<sup>4</sup> However, as Yugoslavia became a key member within the Non-Aligned Movement (coupled with the fall of Ranković) the status of Muslims improved. In the service of these new interests, the communist authorities increasingly sought to project an impression of tolerance to their own Muslims. They also sought to end the claim of ownership (by Serbs and Croats) over Yugoslavia's Muslims by formalising the concept of a Muslim 'nation'. In the 1971 Yugoslav census, Muslims were defined as one of the Yugoslav nations, though the concept remained rather opaque until the outbreak of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992 served to crystallise Muslim identity.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Serbian Sandžak in the 1990s**

By 1990, as Yugoslavia was entering into the final phase of its disintegration, Yugoslav Muslims became the primary victims. With Serbian nationalism becoming the dominant discourse among the Orthodox population of the Sandžak (in both Serbia and Montenegro), Muslims quickly discovered not only that the privileges and freedoms awarded by their status within communist Yugoslavia were being incrementally eroded, but that their physical security was threatened. Increasingly defined by Serbian nationalists, Serbian government officials and the media as 'Turks', Sandžak Muslims (often pejoratively referred to as *Sandžaklija*) were denounced as renegades, a potential fifth column threatening the security of Serbia and Montenegro.<sup>6</sup> Serbian nationalist discourse regarding the Muslim population was two-fold: firstly that the Muslims of the region were 'Islamized Serbs', and secondly that they represented a significant internal threat to both Serbia and Montenegro. Muslims were viewed with deep suspicion and were forced to earn the trust of the authorities by demonstrating that they were 'loyal to the state'. Many, feeling marginalised and threatened by this upsurge of aggressive Serbian nationalism, looked toward Bosnia as their spiritual homeland - serving only to reinforce the paranoia of Serbian nationalists that Muslims in the Sandžak possessed separatist tendencies.

Regardless of the extent of the threat posed by Sandžak Muslims, from a territorial perspective Serbia could ill afford to lose control of the Sandžak. The area was of vital strategic importance, linking Serbian territory with Montenegro and allowing Serbia to access the coastline (including key military bases on the Montenegrin coast). Therefore, it was imperative to the Serbian authorities that the Muslims in the Sandžak were kept in check. Any potential moves toward secession were deemed by both the Serbian and Montenegrin authorities as a contravention of the Helsinki Accords, and Muslims were left in no doubt that any move toward secession (or even calls for greater autonomy) would be viewed as an act of aggression that would likely be met with force. The resulting climate of fear that pervaded the Sandžak during this period led many Muslims to conclude that they could no longer prosper. Indeed, many lost their jobs, almost all faced discrimination, and threats to their physical security increased. As a consequence, approximately 60,000 Muslims fled for the safety of Turkey, FYR Macedonia and various Western countries.<sup>7</sup> Those that remained endured further discrimination and repression. A creeping anti-Muslim rhetoric emerged in the Serbian and Montenegrin press - labelling Muslims as 'secessionists', 'terrorists', 'fundamentalists' and 'extremists'.

Tensions, however, increased exponentially when the newly-formed Sandžak branch of the SDA, led by Sulejman Ugljanin, began to advance arguments in favour of independence. Some within the SDA elite argued that, in the event of Bosnia's secession from Yugoslavia, the Sandžak should be unified with Bosnia.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, political links with Bosnia were strong; the Sandžak SDA was the sister organisation of Alija Izetbegović's Bosnian SDA. Founded by two individuals who were to become key to political developments in the region - Sulejman Ugljanin and Rasim Ljajić - the party experienced ideological difficulties from its inception. According to the International Crisis Group, Ugljanin associated closely with a right-wing nationalist Islamic faction within the Bosnian SDA which espoused a radical Bosniak nationalism, whilst Ljajić sought to negotiate the status of Sandžak through participation in the rump Yugoslavia's political institutions.<sup>9</sup> Adil Zulfikarpašić, a founding member of the SDA, noted that by early in 1991 the SDA were essentially composed of these two factions. The Sandžak SDA faction, led by Sulejman Ugljanin, were also more radical, promoting a more religious orientation. He recalls a SDA meeting in a football stadium in Novi Pazar which:

*...was held in a quasi-fascist manner...All of a sudden a group of five people sat down one next to the other and recited, 'Alija [Izetbegović], father of the homeland, fighter for Islam, who was imprisoned, who did this and that, our one and only leader.' And people started waving religious banners, hundreds of them, throughout the stadium. This was something new and unexpected.<sup>10</sup>*

Zulfikarpašić also claimed that Sulejman Ugljanin informed him that this radical faction were planning an uprising in the Sandžak, with arms to be supplied by Zagreb and Turkey.<sup>11</sup> No armed uprising materialised, but in October 1991 the Muslim National Council of the Sandžak (MNVS, later BNVS) declared that they would hold a referendum on greater political and cultural autonomy. The citizens of the region were asked whether they were in favour of 'full political and territorial autonomy' and the 'right to [integration with] other sovereign republics' (Bosnia & Herzegovina).<sup>12</sup> The rhetoric of the SDA leaders in both Serbia and Montenegro was uniform - that Muslims in the Sandžak felt threatened by the Serbs, and as a nation they had a right to seek autonomy (as the *Krajina* Serbs had done in Croatia).<sup>13</sup> The referendum, deemed illegitimate by both Serbian and Montenegrin authorities, was met with significant hostility in both republics, and when the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina began in April 1992, physical attacks against the Sandžak's Muslim population significantly increased.

During April and May 1992, Serbian paramilitaries roamed menacingly around Muslim villages in both the Serbian and Montenegrin Sandžak.<sup>14</sup> In the village of Sjeverin in the Priboj municipality, 17 Muslims were abducted and killed. The Muslim inhabitants of the Sandžak were continually subjected to violence and intimidation. Within a year, Novi Pazar was surrounded by Yugoslav Army tanks.

In 1993, fearing for their very existence, Muslims in the former Yugoslavia chose the term 'Bosniak' as the most appropriate replacement for the former designation 'Muslim'. But this brought its difficulties, particularly to Sandžak Bosniaks. Serb nationalists defined this shift as an indication that Sandžak Bosniaks looked to Sarajevo, and not Belgrade, as their political, cultural and spiritual centre, reinforcing the perception that Sandžak's Bosniaks were a fifth column.

## The Montenegrin Sandžak in the 1990s

In Montenegro, Muslims were under similar pressures. Opposition to Milošević was strong in certain municipalities - most specifically in Plav and Gusinje - but whilst there existed a hostile climate toward Montenegro's Muslims, relations between the Muslim and Slav communities never degenerated into the widespread violence witnessed in Bosnia.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, according to Andrijašević & Rastoder, "for the entire duration of the war, the border between the FRY and Bosnia and Herzegovina was beset with incursions of paramilitary units, abductions and liquidations".<sup>16</sup> In 1992 and 1993 Yugoslav Army units, in conjunction with Montenegrin police and Serbian paramilitaries, began to cleanse Muslim villages close to Montenegro's border with Bosnia. The aim was essentially to ensure that the area was cleared of any potentially hostile Muslims who would aid their brethren across the border.<sup>17</sup> But the main danger to Muslim citizens living close to the border came primarily from Serbian paramilitaries who would 'stopover' in Montenegro via towns like Foča (Srbinje to Serb nationalists) in eastern Herzegovina. As paramilitary activities proliferated in the region, a great number of Muslims faced discrimination, physical attacks and hostility, and numerous Sandžak Muslims lost their jobs, especially police and army officers, teachers and government employees.<sup>18</sup> With the growing perception that their own (Montenegrin) government was doing little to assist them, distrust between the Muslim community and the Montenegrin authorities grew into mutual hostility. In 1992, at the height of the Bosnian conflict and Serbian ethnic cleansing in nearby eastern Bosnia, violent incidents increased.

In the predominantly Serb town of Pljevlja in northern Montenegro relations between the Orthodox community (Serbs and Montenegrins) and the Muslim community worsened significantly, heralding an unprecedented wave of inter-communal violence.<sup>19</sup> Close to the border with Bosnia, Pljevlja, with a thirty percent Muslim minority, became the scene of violence and intimidation directed at the Muslim community and carried out by Serbian paramilitary groups,<sup>20</sup> in conjunction with local extremists, led by *Vojvoda*.<sup>21</sup> Milika Ćeko Dačević. A Serbian Radical Party activist (and later a member of the Yugoslav Federal Assembly) Dačević claimed that the violence had been "perpetrated by Muslims who wanted to avoid paying taxes".<sup>22</sup> According to the Humanitarian Law Center, however, it was Dačević's men who harassed the Muslim community of the town, subjecting them to random acts of violence.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the best attempts of the Montenegrin authorities to play down the crisis and deny the existence of paramilitary groups in the town, the situation was deemed serious enough for the then President of Yugoslavia, Dobrica Ćosić, and the Montenegrin President, Momir Bulatović, to visit on 7 August 1992 to find a resolution to the worsening situation.<sup>24</sup> They sought guarantees from the local Muslims that they would not continue to seek autonomy. But such was the tension in Pljevlja at the time that "during their talks with the two Presidents no Muslim leader had ventured to request autonomy".<sup>25</sup> Despite the assurances given by the presidents the security of Muslims in the Pljevlja municipality remained uncertain. Close to Pljevlja, on the border between Montenegro and Bosnia, lay a number of villages inhabited by Muslims. The village of Bukovica<sup>26</sup> (which had been the scene of Chetnik massacres of Muslims in the early 1940s) experienced several days of terror. According to Helsinki Watch, around 800 Muslims were banished, kidnapped or murdered in the village.<sup>27</sup> The situation remained problematic for Montenegro's Muslims as the conflict in Bosnia & Herzegovina intensified. Furthermore, the anti-Muslim sentiment was not limited to the Pljevlja municipality or to the areas bordering eastern Bosnia.<sup>28</sup> In July 1992, the leader of the Montenegrin branch of the SDA, Harun Hadžić, had called on Momir Bulatović to

introduce measures that would guarantee the security of Montenegrin Muslims who had been victims of terrorist attacks by Serbian paramilitaries not just in Pljevlja but in Bijelo Polje, Berane, and Podgorica.<sup>29</sup>

One year later, in August 1993, the SDA released a document named 'The Memorandum on the Establishment of a Special Status for Sandžak' to a limited number of individuals.<sup>30</sup> Not intended for public consumption, word of its content soon leaked. The authors of the document envisaged the Sandžak becoming a largely autonomous region with local authorities controlling police, taxes, legislature, education; in short, many of the core functions of the state. The proposal, however, was not broadly supported by all Sandžak Muslims. Whilst the SDA enjoyed high levels of support in Plav and Rožaje, for example, they were less popular in other Montenegrin Sandžak municipalities. Rastoder argues that "The Memorandum on Sandžak's special status represented an act of the political will of one party [SDA] based on its obsession with nation and state".<sup>31</sup> But the damage had been done and the authorities in Podgorica took measures to pre-empt a feared rebellion by Sandžak Muslims. Five months later, 26 members of the SDA were arrested without formal charge. Known as 'The Bijelo Polje Group', their crime was allegedly the plotting of a forceful secession of Sandžak from the FRY.<sup>32</sup> The judicial process was highly suspect, and one year later, after a series of controversies including a hunger strike by the accused, 21 members of the Montenegrin branch of the SDA were sentenced to a total of 87 years imprisonment by a Bijelo Polje court.<sup>33</sup> In the municipality of Plav a series of similar charges were filed by the Montenegrin courts. In November of the same year, Montenegrin police arrested 19 Muslims for allegedly attempting to procure arms.<sup>34</sup> Those imprisoned in the Bijelo Polje trial included Harun Hadžić, the leader of the Montenegrin branch of the SDA, and Muslim members of the Montenegrin parliament.

By 1997, however, the political landscape in Montenegro had changed fundamentally. The Muslim and Albanian communities, instead of being marginalised, had become a crucial political factor for Milo Djukanović. As part of his 'anti-Milošević coalition' he offered Montenegrin Sandžak Muslims representation in the Montenegrin parliament in accordance with the proportion of their electoral support.<sup>35</sup> The strategy appeared to be effective. Despite calls by some Sandžak politicians, such as Suljeman Ugljanin, for the Bosniak population to boycott the Montenegrin elections, Montenegro's Muslim-Bosniak community chose to become engaged in the political process. Muslims in the Sandžak overwhelmingly backed Djukanović's DPS in the parliamentary elections of 1997, undermining the influence of the Montenegrin SDA, and bringing Montenegro's Muslims (or Bosniaks) back into the political mainstream. Their loyalty was rewarded with inclusion in the Montenegrin government.

Since then, Montenegro's Muslim community have continued to engage in mainstream politics. Many were supportive of independence despite the fact that it would essentially divide the Sandžak. As a result, the Muslim-Bosniak community sought representation and benefits relative to the significance of their support (their argument was that independence would not have been gained without them). However, the temporary abandonment of proposed minority rights legislation that would have guaranteed a strengthening of minorities' position caused Montenegrin Muslims-Bosniaks to protest vehemently. During the parliamentary elections in September 2006, Muslim-Bosniaks began to organise themselves along narrower movements based upon the ethnic principle. It remains to be seen if they will continue to divert their support away from the ruling DPS-SDP coalition toward specifically Muslim-Bosniak parties.

### **Continuing Inter-ethnic Tensions in the Serbian Sandžak**

Relations between Sandžak Bosniaks and Serbs remained tense. Novi Pazar (essentially under *de facto* siege by the Serbian Army in the early 1990s), has been the scene of numerous inter-ethnic incidents. A number of Serbian nationalist politicians - including Vuk Drašković, Vojislav Šešelj and Serbian paramilitary leader Željko 'Arkan' Ražnjatović visited Novi Pazar, often accompanied by nationalist gangs. On 10 October 1993, at the height of the repression, violence erupted in the centre of Novi Pazar before, during, and after a football match between FK Novi Pazar (the hooligan element of the club's support are known as the 'Torcida')<sup>36</sup> and FK Priština (whose hooligan group were led through the town by Arkan).<sup>37</sup> Whilst this was the worst incident of its kind, the pattern was repeated when these two clubs (or clubs from Belgrade) played each other.

In the same year, Sulejman Ugljanin was 'forced' into exile, having been charged with terrorism and attempting to overthrow the constitutional order. During his three-year exile, Ugljanin addressed various international conferences in a largely unsuccessful attempt to draw international attention to the Sandžak-Bosniak cause.<sup>38</sup> He was, however, permitted by Federal Yugoslav authorities to return to the Sandžak in 1996. But whilst he remained something of a martyr among his supporters, his opponents alleged that he had been compromised by Milošević, who allowed him to return not only to Sandžak, but to re-enter politics (although the indictment against him remained in place). Cynics have consistently argued that Milošević would not have allowed the return without a deal between the two men. Ugljanin appeared neutralised and his adversary, Slobodan Milošević, was basking in the glory of the title of 'peacemaker' - the man who helped deliver the Dayton Agreement. However, within a year, Milošević was facing opposition on the streets of Belgrade in the form of the *Zajedno* protests, whilst discontent was fomenting on the peripheries of the FRY - firm sources of opposition to Milošević were consolidating in both Kosovo and Montenegro. Perceiving, these challenges to be a sign of Milošević's weakness, Ugljanin reverted to type, implementing policies that alienated local Serbs, sacking Serb directors of local enterprises and replacing the partly Serb board of Novi Pazar's municipal assembly.<sup>39</sup> As a consequence, members of Milošević's SPS (Socialist Party of Serbia) accused Ugljanin of attempting to create an independent state. The authorities in Belgrade intervened, replacing the municipal assembly with JUL (Yugoslav United Left - led by Milošević's wife Mira Marković) and SPS deputies.<sup>40</sup> This arrangement continued until Milošević's fall in October 2000.

To compound this, sporadic inter-ethnic incidents continued throughout the 1990s, keeping the level of tension high. But whilst this was followed by a lull in the wake of the fall of Milošević's regime, antagonism between the communities never dissipated. Those Serbs who lived in Novi Pazar were confined to a rather isolated Serb enclave, and many have moved to Raška some fifteen miles away. Throughout the early 2000s, significant tensions were often intensified by minor incidents and careless statements by either Serbian politicians or leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Not only has Bishop Filaret of the Mileševo eparchy appealed to local Serbs to support the Serbian Radical Party, for example, but he has often made inflammatory statements which have threatened inter-ethnic stability.<sup>41</sup>

On Orthodox Christmas Day (January 7) 2004, leaflets - the source of which remains unknown - appeared in Novi Pazar and Sjenica warning that Novi Pazar would become the 'new Vukovar' and that Sjenica would become the 'next Srebrenica'.<sup>42</sup> A subsequent police investigation failed to generate any results and the perpetrators were never arrested. Two months later, following the anti-Serb riots

in Kosovo which left 17 dead, the burning of mosques in Belgrade and Novi Pazar galvanised the Bosniak community in the Sandžak. Inter-ethnic violence was avoided, largely due to conciliatory statements issued by the Bosniak community. But whilst there were no major incidents, the orbit of sport was again utilised to channel nationalist frustrations. In March 2004, the notorious supporters of the Belgrade club *Rad* (known as the 'United Forces') caused chaos during a fixture against FK Novi Pazar. Both sets of fans chanted nationalist and politico-religious slogans. Further incidents took place during a fixture between the local football club in Raška and FK Novi Pazar.<sup>43</sup> Thus sport, particularly football, continued to be a forum for the venting of nationalist frustrations.

### **The Islamic Community in the Sandžak 1993 – 2008**

Within this context of repression in the early 1990s, an organised Sandžak Islamic Community developed. From 1945 until the break-up, Yugoslavia's Islamic communities had been organised into a single federal body (The Islamic Community in the SFRY) based in Sarajevo - in contrast to other religious communities who were linked primarily to their respective national and ethnic communities. This body was essentially run by an elected council of imams (Muslim clerics) and headed by the *Reis-ul-Ulema* (chief Muslim cleric). According to Perica, this body:

*had been managed by leaders recruited from World War Two Partisan veterans dedicated to Titoist 'brotherhood and unity'. This Muslim organisation had been the factor of stability in religious and ethnic relations and the source of religious legitimation for the Yugoslav regime. Leaders of the Muslim organisation were appointed with the regime's consent from the rank and file of the Bosnian ulema associated with the Ilimja clerical organisation. The top Muslim leaders were all Partisan veterans of the Anti-fascist People's Liberation Struggle.*<sup>44</sup>

But as communist authority weakened, Federal Yugoslavia's Islamic Community began to fragment along national lines. Following the declarations of independence by Bosnia and FYR Macedonia, the Islamic Communities began to reorganise themselves as national bodies. This caused a very specific problem in the Sandžak, where there emerged a division within the Muslim community over the issue of whether to look to Belgrade or Sarajevo as their spiritual centre. In the early 1990s, the majority of Sandžak Muslims looked toward Sarajevo, although a small number continued to lean toward Belgrade, the official seat of the Serbian Islamic Community (led by Hamdija Jusufspahić). Herein lies the root of the current division.

In October 1993, the Mesihat Islamic Community of Sandžak was officially formed in Novi Pazar. The Islamic Community (IZ - *Islamska Zajednica*) of Sandžak formally recognised the Riyaset of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the central Islamic authority in the region. Furthermore, Mustafa Cerić (the *Reis-ul-Ulema* in Sarajevo) was recognised as the *reis* of Sandžak Muslims.<sup>45</sup> The political backing for the project was provided by both Sarajevo and by Sulejman Ugljanin, party boss of the Sandžak SDA. He installed the young and ambitious Muamer Zukorlić as mufti of the Sandžak IZ, making him one of the youngest muftis in the world.<sup>46</sup> Zukorlić possesses an impressive pedigree and a significant degree of personal charisma. Born in 1970 in the village of Orlje (between Novi Pazar and Tutin), he attended secondary school in Sarajevo before embarking upon undergraduate studies in Algeria and postgraduate studies in the Lebanon.<sup>47</sup> Enthusiastically embracing the challenge of leading the Mesihat (essentially, the

Council of Elders) of Sandžak, his impact was immediate. Young, energetic, and resourceful, Zukorlić helped build and consolidate a stronger and more unified Sandžak IZ, establishing the University of Novi Pazar (known to locals as the 'Mufti's University') and the religious weekly *Glas Islama* (The Voice of Islam). Such impressive achievements in a relatively short timescale awarded him an increasing amount of political influence and economic power. Ugljanin, forced into exile in 1993 (he spent periods in Turkey and Bosnia), found upon his return in 1996 that the power vacuum created by his temporary absence had been filled, in part, by the mufti.<sup>48</sup>

Zukorlić had forged a degree of financial independence for the Sandžak IZ whilst simultaneously nurturing strong relations with the Mesihat of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This awarded the latter a significant influence upon Sandžak Muslims. That Sarajevo was considered as the spiritual centre for Sandžak Bosniaks was treated with deep suspicion by both Ugljanin (who threatened to "banish Zukorlić from the Sandžak and from Europe") and official Belgrade.<sup>49</sup> Turning against his one-time ally, Ugljanin began to undermine Zukorlić's credibility, using the BNVS newspaper *Sandžacke novine* to launch attacks and smears against him. But it was a strategy that met with little success. Zukorlić had garnered significant support among Sandžak Bosniaks, and his message that Ugljanin was attempting to rule both "municipalities and mosques", in contradiction of the constitutional principle of the separation of religious institutions and the state, was well received.<sup>50</sup> The precise reasons for the Zukorlić-Ugljanin split remain a matter of conjecture, but it would appear that Zukorlić opposed Ugljanin's overtly political use of Islam as a political tool and that Ugljanin objected to Zukorlić's growing political influence.

The change of government in Belgrade following Milošević's overthrow in 2000 (which led to a change in Serbian government policy toward Sandžak Bosniaks) also played into Zukorlić's hands. The new regime attempted to integrate Bosniaks into the system, rather than excluding them from it. As a consequence, a number of Sandžak politicians (such as Rasim Ljajić) were given ministerial portfolios, whilst Mufti Zukorlić became an important interlocutor in the Sandžak for Serbia's post-Milošević government. Indeed, the latter became the government's trusted point of contact, testified by the fact that former Serbian Prime Ministers Zoran Djindjić and Zoran Živković, and then incumbent President, Boris Tadić, largely snubbed local Bosniak politicians (although they met with Ljajić, they did not meet with Ugljanin), choosing instead to engage primarily with Zukorlić on their trips to Sandžak. Likewise foreign diplomats would often seek an appointment with the mufti. Furthermore, Zukorlić was included as a member of a Serbian state delegation on a visit to the United Arab Emirates.<sup>51</sup> Despite Zukorlić's claim that his organisation (and he himself) is apolitical, he frequently issued political statements - most notably criticisms of Ugljanin.

But whilst Zukorlić became a hugely influential figure, he never fully controlled the Islamic Community in the Sandžak. There existed tensions within the IZ from those who felt Zukorlić was becoming too powerful. A small group of Wahhabis active in Novi Pazar also began to denounce Zukorlić, claiming he had become increasingly corrupted by politics and material wealth. Indeed, dealing with the Wahhabis became a source of intra-IZ tension. Initially accused of supporting the Wahhabi movement, Zukorlić had subsequently turned against them, accusing them firstly of trying to impose their own prayer rituals and, more disturbingly, attempting to "destabilise the entire region".<sup>52</sup> However ambiguous his stance may have been previously, Zukorlić began publicly stating his opposition to their activities and

suggested that their support lay outside the Sandžak. In an interview given to the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje* in October 2007 he stated:

*This is a group of extremists [acting] in the name of Islam, preferring a different approach to religion and exclusivist behaviour towards all those who think differently. They are dangerous because they act under instructions. I have said several times that the most important thing to do was to unearth the background of their actions, to discover who had armed them and helped them obtain arms. They are a group of poor young men who do not have the financial or other means to come into possession of such major quantities of arms.<sup>53</sup>*

The exact source of their support remains a matter of conjecture. During the trial of the Wahhabis arrested outside Novi Pazar in 2007, it emerged that Zukorlić was the main target of their activities. But with the leadership of the Wahhabi sect safely ensconced in a Belgrade prison, Zukorlić had more pressing problems to devote his energy to. These threats emerged from within the Serbian IZ. Since the break-up of the SFRY in 1992, the IZ in Serbia has been administered from Belgrade by Mufti Hamdija Jusufpahić. They did not recognise the IZ in Novi Pazar led by Zukorlić. Their objections were based primarily on the basis of the Sandžak IZ's relationship with Sarajevo. Since the Sandžak IZ's inception, Zukorlić accepted the Sarajevo *Reis ul Ulema* as the spiritual leader of Sandžak Muslims whilst cultivating strong connections with the riyaset in Sarajevo, led by Mustafa Ćerić.<sup>54</sup> A section of the IZ in Serbia was uncomfortable with the consolidation of these connections. Zukorlić was, in the words of Jusufpahić, attempting to "take us [the Serbian IZ] to Sarajevo".<sup>55</sup>

In an attempt to stem Zukorlić's activities, a newly-formed 'Serbian Islamic Community's Riyaset' proclaimed Adem Zilkić to be the new reis. Zilkić's speeches focused on nurturing an independent Islamic Community in Serbia. Furthermore, he proposed a reorganisation of Serbia's Islamic Community on the 'basis of different principles', with a view to establishing Belgrade - as opposed to Novi Pazar (or Sarajevo) - as the genuine spiritual centre of the Serbian IZ; in short, this meant cutting ties with Bosnia and Herzegovina, a move Zukorlić vigorously opposed.<sup>56</sup> In response, Zukorlić and his followers formed a separate Islamic Community in Novi Pazar (The Islamic Community of Serbia's Mesihat), with its main base in Sarajevo. In an interview for the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje*, Zukorlić summed up his reasons for opposing the shift toward Belgrade thus:

*The issue of a spiritual centre is not a matter of decisions, it is an issue of traditional-historical facts. Someone cannot sit down and say that Belgrade from now on is the spiritual centre of Muslims....it would be the same if someone were to decide that Tehran is a spiritual centre for Protestants. It could be done but would be unsustainable and ridiculous. Belgrade can only be a centre for Muslims relative to their numerical strength and their spiritual infrastructure there.<sup>57</sup>*

Zukorlić, who claimed to possess the support of the majority of Muslims in the Sandžak, dismissed Zilkić as an imposter. A bitter power struggle ensued, with both arguing that they were the only legitimate body representing Sandžak Bosniaks-Muslims. Key was rallying support among Sandžak imams, who (to all intents and purposes) wield significant control their own mosques. Subsequently there have been many manifestations of an increasingly bitter struggle - with violent incidents taking place in Novi Pazar, Sjenica and Tutin. Throughout November 2007, clashes between the two factions intensified, the first serious incident taking place following a statement given by Zilkić supporters in Novi Pazar "relieving Muamer Zukorlić of

his duties".<sup>58</sup> This was followed three days later by a rally held by Adem Ziklič in the centre of the town. A police cordon was required to separate the two factions' supporters. Muamer Zukorlic, absent from Novi Pazar on the day of the rally, told Belgrade radio station B92 that his removal from office and the subsequent rally was "the work of [Serbian] State Security, Novi Pazar Mayor Sulejman Ugljanin, and the Belgrade mufti Hamdija Jusufspahić".<sup>59</sup> That Radomir Naumov, the Serbian Minister for Religious Affairs, publicly received Zilkić days after his appointment gave credence to Zukorlic's argument that the state was interfering, although it was a charge the minister vehemently rejected.<sup>60</sup>

In Novi Pazar itself, the situation soon worsened. Two weeks after Zukorlic had been dismissed, an incident between the two factions led to a shooting incident. This time, the conflict centred around the 'ownership' of the Altun-alem mosque in the centre of Novi Pazar. During early November, supporters of Zukorlic had 'occupied' the mosque, with a view, they claimed, to beginning a reconstruction programme.<sup>61</sup> In protest, followers of Zilkić held prayers and demonstrations outside. Some time later, they attempted to enter the courtyard of the mosque, a move that led to violent clashes on the streets adjacent to the mosque. One man was shot and two policemen were injured.

On 20 December, to celebrate the Muslim festival Kurban-Bairam, both factions held parallel celebrations in Novi Pazar - a clear indication that the Islamic Community has now been fully polarised. Throughout January and February 2008, tensions remained high. Zukorlic gave statements to the Serbian media claiming he had been receiving death threats, and two men were injured in a brawl in Novi Pazar following an alleged attack on mufti Zukorlic's car. Political squabbles in the region were largely frozen due to the impending declaration of Kosovo's independence, but only three weeks after that declaration there were again violent incidents between the two factions - this time in Tutin. The bone of contention was the construction of a religious school, with factions quarrelling over who should lay the foundation stone. A subsequent shootout left two injured, one of the victims received serious gunshot wounds to the leg.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Political Dimension**

In the Sandžak, politics and religion are inseparable. To a significant extent the struggle between religious factions is mirrored in the political orbit. This symbiosis is demonstrated by the fact that religious leaders with political ambitions often use mosques to address their supporters. The key players, however, remain the Mayor of Novi Pazar, Sulejman Ugljanin of the LZS (List for Sandžak) and Rasim Ljajić of the SDP (Social Democratic Party).<sup>63</sup> The former is an ally of Vojislav Koštunica's DSS (Democratic Party of Serbia), whilst the latter is a strong supporter of Boris Tadić's DS (Democratic Party). In the early 1990s, Ugljanin was the chairman (and undisputed leader) of both the SDA and the Muslim (later Bosniak) National Council of Sandžak (BNVS). These two organisations essentially represented a monolithic power in the area until a number of party members (including Rasim Ljajić) began to break away. Since the split, violent incidents between supporters of the two parties have been relatively commonplace - for example, during the local elections in September 2006, a candidate for the Novi Pazar Assembly was shot dead outside a polling station. Both parties blamed each other for the incident.<sup>64</sup>

Both are engaged in the current intra-IZ struggle. Zukorlic is relatively close to Rasim Ljajić's SDP, whilst Zilkić is known to be a supporter of Ugljanin's party.<sup>65</sup> According to the Belgrade based news agency Beta, the destabilisation of the

Islamic Community can be framed within the context of “overlapping interests of nationalist circles in Belgrade, of parts of Serbia’s security structure, and of the leader of the Sandžak Ticket, Sulejman Ugljanin”.<sup>66</sup> Zilkić himself, in an interview for the B92 news programme *Poligraf*, acknowledged that the two factions had naturally fallen into the form of the pre-existing Ljajić-Ugljanin struggle, although he denied that the political parties had themselves instrumentalised the split.<sup>67</sup>

Ugljanin may have installed Muamer Zukorlić as mufti of Sandžak in 1993, but their subsequent split has been bitter. Behind the current attempts to undermine Zukorlić via his support for the Serbian Islamic Community’s Riyaset lies the decade-long personal conflict between the two men. Ugljanin continues to issue statements intended to bolster the Zilkić-led faction within the Islamic Community. His rather contradictory assertion that “monopolies in any part of life are damaging, so it is not good for there to be only one Islamic Community”, suggests he fully supports (both rhetorically and logistically) Zilkić’s attempts to undermine Zukorlić.<sup>68</sup> That said, Ugljanin has given only very ambiguous statements regarding his own role, preferring to lay the blame for the current chaos at the door of his political rivals (Rasim Ljajić’s SDP) or equally, upon “external forces”. In an interview for Regional Television on 28 December 2007, Ugljanin rejected personal involvement in the crisis, stating that the intra-Muslim conflict was being engineered by external forces, which he broadly described as an “anti-Muslim alliance....which has representatives in Serbia”.<sup>69</sup> He did not elaborate as to the identity of those forces.

### **The Media as a Political Tool**

A final word must be said about the local media. As is frequently the case in the former Yugoslav states, political and religious divisions are intensified by disinformation proliferating through print and electronic media. The media in the Sandžak reflect the polarised political and religious context. Privately owned media are often utilised as a transmitter for the propagation of political messages. Aside from the weekly *Sandžak Danas* (a Friday supplement with Belgrade Danas) and Radio Sto Plus (a subsidiary of Beta News Belgrade) and the independently-owned *Jedinstvo TV*, both print and electronic media are controlled by politicians or religious leaders. Ugljanin (or at least his party) controls the *Sandžacke novine* (which is also partly financed by the Serbian Ministry of Culture), and Zukorlić owns *Glas Islama* (The Voice of Islam) which although a ‘strictly religious’ monthly publication, has a significant political influence.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the mufti owns the only bookshop in Novi Pazar, located within the University (known among locals as ‘the Mufti’s university’). Whilst it primarily sells religious content, it does increasingly stock a limited number of secular titles. Nevertheless, the absence of a strictly secular bookshop in the town is rather unusual in such a densely populated settlement and regional capital.

In terms of electronic media, Sulejman Ugljanin controls Regional TV and TV Tutin, both of which act as a propaganda tool for his LZS. Throughout the controversies in Novi Pazar centred around the arrival of Adem Zilkić, the evening news bulletin awarded a disproportionate percentage of coverage to Zilkić and Ugljanin, whilst marginalising (and often mocking) Muamer Zukorlić and Rasim Ljajić. The channel frequently reported that Zilkić was welcomed by the majority of Muslims in Novi Pazar and was supported by “many other political parties and institutions” - often ignoring statements by Zukorlić (apart from those that could be manipulated).<sup>71</sup> Conversely, *Jedinstvo* - although significantly more objective - tends toward a pro-

Ljajić bias. At times, during the conflict between the two factions, the news coverage on these stations seemed to present parallel but radically different worlds.

## Conclusion

Whilst the Montenegrin Sandžak remains calm, tensions in the Serbian Sandžak remain dangerously high. Inter-ethnic relations are still relatively stable but there can be no guarantee that such a situation can be preserved indefinitely. The real source of instability, however, is within the Islamic Community itself (although domestic political forces continue to influence it), between the Zukorlić and Zilkić factions. Belgrade may deem Zilkić's rebellion against the pre-existing structures as a success; after all, the links between Novi Pazar and Sarajevo have certainly been weakened. However, the increase in violent incidents is indicative of a rapidly deteriorating situation. We are in a period of genuine uncertainty and it is impossible to map the trajectory of the current intra-IZ conflict. Zukorlić and his supporters will continue to attempt to regain control, but their adversaries, supported by Belgrade, will not be easily defeated.

But whilst the intra-Bosniak conflict appears to be based upon religious affiliation, it should be recognised that, to a significant extent, this is also a conflict about money, power and local political dynamics. Firstly, there is a struggle over who controls the extensive financial and property assets of the Islamic Community's religious endowments (known as the *vakuf*) and the significant charity and external aid funds. Control of the IZ's assets also facilitates patronage and the allocation of key jobs. What is more, political ambitions, grievances and the interests of factional leaders are key.

The situation may continue to worsen. The question is whether the current uncertainty will transpose into instability. The statement by the President of the Helsinki Council for Human Rights in Serbia, Sonja Bišerko, that human rights in the Sandžak are in "absolute remission" should be heeded. Her warning that "events which have taken place in this region over the last few years are ripe for declaring a state of emergency, should the Serbian government need to do so", should also be digested.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, it is not impossible that these increasingly violent incidents could lead to such an outcome. The role of the Serbian state in these conflicts should not be overlooked. Clearly, their policy of 'divide and rule' is paying dividends - whilst there exist internal divisions there can be no Bosniak unity which could be channelled toward the search for autonomy. Additionally, the strategy of dividing the Bosniaks (if indeed it is a premeditated strategy) also erodes the authority of the Bosnian Mesihat in the Sandžak.

There exists a genuine fear in Serbia of further partition, be it in Preševo-Bujanovac, Vojvodina or the Sandžak. Statements from within the International Community have fuelled these fears. The remarks, for example, of the German Ambassador to Serbia, Andreas Zobel, in April 2007 did little to assuage them. His comment that in the event of Serbia's failure to accept Kosovo's independence, "problems could reappear in Vojvodina and Sandžak" was interpreted in Belgrade as a veiled threat.<sup>73</sup> Serbia has been damaged by the loss of Kosovo, and must be treated with appropriate sensitivity and dignity regarding the Sandžak. Thus, in the wake of Kosovo's declaration of independence, and with parliamentary elections upcoming, it is imperative that policy-makers and analysts do not ignore the Sandžak region as they have done so often in the past. Dialogue between the

Sandžak's ethnic groups and among Bosniaks is the only positive way forward. It is equally imperative that any international engagement be seen to be objective and balanced. The future stability of the Sandžak could depend upon it.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The opening of an OSCE media centre in Novi Pazar (funded largely by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office) is testament to the growing interest in the Sandžak.

<sup>2</sup> Wahhabis are a religious sect led by the teachings of Saudi reformist Abdul al-Wahab. For an analysis of Wahhabis in the Balkan region see: Kenneth Morrison, *Wahhabism in the Balkans*, ARAG Report 08-08, February 2007.

<sup>3</sup> See Milovan Djilas, *Land Without Justice*, Harcourt Brace and Co, New York, 1958, and Djilas & Gace, *The Bosniak*, Hurst & Co., London, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Safeta Biševac, 'Bosniaks in Sandžak and Inter-ethnic Tolerance in Novi Pazar', in *Managing Multiethnic Communities in the Countries of the Former Yugoslavia*, Budapest, 2000, p.387.

<sup>5</sup> Milan Andrijevič, 'Sandžak: A Perspective on Serb – Muslim Relations', in Poltouns & Taji-Farouki, *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, Hurst & Co., London, 1997, p.187.

<sup>6</sup> The term '*Sandžaklija*' refers to Sandžak Muslims, and has pejorative connotations - Serbs refer to Sandžak Muslims or Bosniaks as such. However, it has also become a pejorative term used by Muslims in Bosnia (and in particular Sarajevo) – many of whom regard Sandžak Muslims as distant and poor rural relatives.

<sup>7</sup> Bodhana Dimitrova, *Bosniak or Muslim? Dilemma of one Nation with two Names*, in 'Southeast European Politics', October 2001, Vol.II, No.2, p.98.

<sup>8</sup> When the war eventually broke out in Bosnia in April 1992, many high profile Sandžak residents went to fight in defence of Bosnian Muslims. A number were also very prominent within Bosnian political and military structures, including member of the Bosnian Presidency Ejup Ganić; the first commander of the Bosnian Army Sefer Halilović; the first commander of the Bosnian Fifth Corps, General Ramiz Dreković; and the commander of the 'Zulfikar' Brigade in Sarajevo, Zulfikar Ališpago (known as 'Zuka').

<sup>9</sup> International Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, Europe Report No.162, April 2005, p.9.

<sup>10</sup> Djilas & Gace, *The Bosniak*, Hurst & Co., London, p.136.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp.139-140.

<sup>12</sup> RFE/RL Research Report, Vol.1, No.47, 27 November 1992, p.27.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See Humanitarian Law Center, *Spotlight on Human Rights Violations in Times of Armed Conflict*, Belgrade, 1995, p.14.

<sup>15</sup> The Muslim community of Plav (and later Gusinje) were the first in the former Yugoslavia to hold anti-Milošević demonstrations (in 1988). They argued that Milošević's policies would lead to significant bloodshed.

<sup>16</sup> Živko Andrijašević & Šerbo Rastoder, *The History of Montenegro*, CICG, Podgorica, 2006, p.265.

<sup>17</sup> International Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, p10. This idea of cleansing a 30km 'buffer zone' along Serbia and Montenegro's border with Bosnia was supported by Serbian politicians such as Vojislav Šešelj.

<sup>18</sup> Bodhana Dimitrova, *Bosniak or Muslim: Dilemma of One Nation with Two Names*, p.98.

<sup>19</sup> Milan Andrijevič, *Sandžak: A Perspective on Serb – Muslim Relations*, p.187.

<sup>20</sup> Although many of the worst acts of intimidation were carried out by Serbian and Montenegrin paramilitary groups, most specifically the elite unit 'The White Eagles', there were also Muslim 'Green Berets' operating in the town.

<sup>21</sup> Vojvoda is a 'military commander' in Serbian tradition.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Čeko Dačević in *Nova Makedonija*, 9 August 1992. See also RFE/RL Research Report, Vol.1, No.47, 27 November 1992, p.33.

<sup>23</sup> Members of 'Čeko's Men' were later arrested and charged with terrorism. But although convicted, Dačević received a suspended sentence. He left Pljevlja soon after to take up a seat in the Yugoslav Federal Assembly. Paradoxically, he is now a member of the ruling DPS in Montenegro. See Humanitarian Law Center, *Spotlight on Human Rights Violations in Times of Armed Conflict*, Belgrade, 1995, p.21.

- <sup>24</sup> See Momir Bulatović, *Pravila Ćutanja*, Alfa Kniga, Belgrade, 2005, p.89.
- <sup>25</sup> Milan Andrijević, *Sandžak: A Perspective on Serb – Muslim Relations*, p.188.
- <sup>26</sup> Bukovica encompasses a number of mountain villages including Kovačevići, Borošići, Planjska, Bunguri, Ravni, Klakorina, Stražice, Cejrence, Rosulje among other smaller settlements. It accounts for almost a third of the population of the Pljevlja municipality. See Humanitarian Law Center, *Spotlight on Human Rights Violations in Times of Armed Conflict*, Belgrade, 1995, p.22.
- <sup>27</sup> Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, *Montenegro: Human Rights Practices, 1993*, p.10.
- <sup>28</sup> Although calm today, Pljevlja retains a level of potential for inter-ethnic disturbances. The actions of local police demonstrate this existing but hidden tension. In March 2004, after Albanian rioting in Kosovo and the burning of two mosques in Belgrade, the police force in Pljevlja were reinforced in order to protect the *Husein-paša* mosque in the centre of the town. Some months later, the police allowed Bosnian Muslims to pass through the town in large buses (heavy traffic is normally forbidden in the centre of town) in order to worship at the mosque. See OSCE Report 'Police Perceptions of Community Policing in The Republic of Montenegro: A Survey', August 2004.
- <sup>29</sup> Milan Andrijević, *Sandžak: A Perspective on Serb – Muslim Relations*, p.188.
- <sup>30</sup> *Napomene uz memorandum o ospostavljanju specianog statusa za Sandžak*, reprinted in Goran Bašić, 'Položaj Bošnjaka u Sandžaku', Belgrade, 2002, pp.139 – 156.
- <sup>31</sup> *Vreme*, 23 August 1993, p.6.
- <sup>32</sup> *Monitor*, 11 November 1994, AIM Press, 9 July 1994.
- <sup>33</sup> AIM Press, 15 January 1995.
- <sup>34</sup> AIM Press, 17 March 1995.
- <sup>35</sup> Robert Thomas, *Serbia under Milošević*, Hurst & Co., London, 2000, p.380.
- <sup>36</sup> The Torcida gang is allegedly controlled by Sulejman Ugljanin, and according to the International Crisis Group, they are associated with "hooliganism and protection rackets". See International Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, Crisis Group Europe Report No.162, 8 April 2005, p.20.
- <sup>37</sup> Crnovršanin & Sadiković, *Sandžak: Porobljena Zemlja*, Sandžačka Riječ, Frankfurt, 2007, pp. 718 – 719.
- <sup>38</sup> UNPO, *Sandžak Election Monitoring Report*, 3 November 1996, p.8.
- <sup>39</sup> International Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, Crisis Group Europe Report No.162, 8 April 2005, p.13.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p.14.
- <sup>41</sup> According to the International Crisis Group. Bishop Filaret "often visited the battlefields of Bosnia and Croatia, outspokenly urging Serbs to fight against other ethnic groups". Bishop Filaret was the cause of a major incident in November 2007, when members of Montenegro's 'Serbian People's Party' threatened to block the main road between Podgorica and Belgrade if the Montenegrin government carried out their threat to ban Filaret from visiting Montenegro.
- <sup>42</sup> Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, *Sandžak Still a Vulnerable Region*, 25 May 2005, p.2.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.
- <sup>44</sup> Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.74.
- <sup>45</sup> Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, *Sandžak Still a Vulnerable Region*, 25 May 2005, p.5.
- <sup>46</sup> International Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, Crisis Group Europe Report No.162, 8 April 2005, p.24.
- <sup>47</sup> *Oslobodjenje*, Sarajevo, 28 October 2007, pp.26 -27.
- <sup>48</sup> According to Ejub Stitkovic, the conflict was "primarily a personal conflict of two men who are, each in his own way, the most influential persons among the local Bosniaks - Muslims. During years of crisis and war Zukorlic has managed to organize construction of a few mosques and for it, won points of exceptional value. The Islamic Community has also become financially independent, thanks primarily to donations of believers, but also to aid from abroad. At the time of greatest isolation of the newest Yugoslavia, the Novi Pazar Board managed to import 20 thousand copies of the Koran translated by the well known Orientalist, Besim Korkut. The translation was printed in Paris, and the donor was a religious institution from Saudi Arabia". See AIM Press, 14 February 1997 & International

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Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, Crisis Group Europe Report No.162, 8 April 2005, p.24.

<sup>49</sup> AIM Press, 14 February 1997, p.1.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p.2

<sup>51</sup> Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, *Sandžak Still a Vulnerable Region*, 25 May 2005, p.5.

<sup>52</sup> BIRN, *Raid on Wahhabi Camp Raises Tensions in Sandžak*, 22 March 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Oslobodjenje, Sarajevo, 28 October 2007, pp.26 – 27.

<sup>54</sup> BETA Week, 11 October 2007, No.591, p.3.

<sup>55</sup> Oslobodjenje, Sarajevo, 28 October 2007, p.27. According to a number of citizens of Novi Pazar, some Bosniaks were upset by Zukorlić 'taking' another wife. Under Islamic practice, men are entitled to take more than one wife. This should only be done, however, as an act of charity and if the woman is in need or destitute. According to interviewees in Novi Pazar, Zukorlić's new wife did not fit this category.

<sup>56</sup> BETA Week, 11 October 2007, No.591, p.3.

<sup>57</sup> Oslobodjenje, Sarajevo, 28 October 2007, p.27.

<sup>58</sup> B92, Belgrade, 4 October 2007.

<sup>59</sup> B92, Belgrade, 17 November 2007.

<sup>60</sup> Betaweek, Belgrade, 11 October 2007, No.591, p.3.

<sup>61</sup> B92, Belgrade, 17 November 2007.

<sup>62</sup> BIRN, *Serbia's Muslims Trade Gunfire, Two Wounded*, 7 March 2008.

<sup>63</sup> The level of tension between the SDA and SDP has, under some circumstances, led to complete political deadlock in municipal assemblies. In Sjenica, for example, continuing disagreements between the two major parties has led to a deadlock in negotiations on the worsening problem with the town's rubbish. The inability to come to agreement (Serb parties are also complicit) has led to something of a crisis in Sjenica, where rubbish has simply been dumped in sites near the centre of town. Thus the continuing conflicts are detrimental to the wellbeing of ordinary citizens.

<sup>64</sup> Vreme, Belgrade, 21 September 2006, pp.16-19.

<sup>65</sup> Betaweek, Belgrade, 11 October 2007, No.591, p.3.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>67</sup> Poligraf, B92, Belgrade, 13 March 2008.

<sup>68</sup> B92, Belgrade, 12 December 2007.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Sulejman Ugljanin, Regional Television, Novi Pazar, 28 December 2007.

<sup>70</sup> International Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, Europe Report, No.162, 8 April 2005, p.39.

<sup>71</sup> Vesti, Regional Television, 20 November 2007.

<sup>72</sup> B92, Belgrade, 14 December 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Deutsche Welle, 12 April 2007.

## **Want to Know More ...?**

See:

International Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, Europe Report No.162, April 2005.

Milan Andrijević, 'The Sandžak: A Perspective of Serb-Muslim Relations', in Poulton & Farouki (eds), *Muslim Identity in the Balkan State*, Hurst & Co, London, 1997.

Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.74.

Adil Zulfikarpašić (in dialogue with Milovan Djulas and Nadežda Gaće), *The Bosniak*, Hurst & Co, London, 1996.

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