

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of International Studies
M. A. DISSERTATION MARK SHEET
(Review)

Student: **Nataša Heleta**

Program: International Area Studies

Title: **War on Terrorism Through the Prism of the US: The Case Study of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, Prague 2019, 109 pp.

Reviewed by:

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1. CONTENT AND AIM OF THE THESIS:

As the main aim of her thesis, Nataša Heleta has decided to focus on examinations of sources of terrorist motivation and their realization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She examines the relationships among Islamic radicalism, extremism, and terrorism through observations of Islamic radicalism as a potential basis for the development of terrorism. Although the title is 'War on Terrorism Through the Prism of the US: The Case Study of Bosnia and Herzegovina', the author focuses explicitly on the Salafi community and the question of members of this community representing a security threat to Bosnian society.

2. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

To answer her questions, the author uses content analysis, case analysis, and interviews. There are two crucial weaknesses in Heleta's project: data (and the way she works with them), and the theoretical-methodological framework she employs. Admittedly, much remains unknown about this topic. Literature and primary sources are rare but Heleta's analysis is based on very limited sources. Besides Ministry of Security reports, the other primary sources are three interviews with Puhalo, Lubecky, and Maldonado. Her work with the Lubecky and Maldonado interviews is insufficient. Including two of their statements in the final part does not improve a rather weak amount of empirical evidence.

The theoretical-methodological framework is vague and not congruent with her main findings. It is not methodologically clear how the author treats 'terrorism'. Additionally, the original aim of the paper was to analyze the war on terrorism through the prism of the US on the case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but although Heleta conceptualizes rhetorical thoughts towards a definition of terrorism and the processes of radicalization, there is no broader discussion of the US war on terrorism. Heleta only delineates the differences between the Bush and Obama administrations regarding their observation al-Qaeda

Heleta's text is much too descriptive. Either she describes essential facts which are not analyzed in detail or she rewrites the main ideas and findings of quoted researchers (Azinović, Puhalo, Bečirević, Azinović, Turčalo and Veljan) without collaborating with them. The result is an unconvincing compilation. This is especially demonstrable in Chapter 13, which is focused on a comparative analysis of information collected from the Bosnia and Herzegovina State Security Reports of 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2016. Some (sub)chapters go beyond her topic (e.g. the pursuit of the truth about American Muslims) and thus seem to be irrelevant. The same could be said about the part of the thesis in which Heleta describes the complicated relationship between the Islamic Community and the Salafi Movement.

There is no broader final discussion of how to interpret the findings, particularly in the sections on Islamic radicalism, extremism, and terrorism.

The conclusion makes it look like the author has simply copied and pasted key statements from the introduction. The answer to the second research question is debatable.

3. PRESENTATION AND STYLE:

Unfortunately, it is obvious that the text wasn't proofread by a native speaker. Some sentences are a challenge to read. The quality of the language and syntax are below-average. There are many errors, especially typos and errors in references.

4. COMMENTS:

Because I had a chance to read Heleta's draft right before the deadline, I could not intervene as a mentor. Therefore, this review should be regarded as another external review.

I have several critical remarks.

Although Heleta emphasizes that she will provide a social context for Bosnia and Herzegovina, I have not found that in the text.

I disagree with Heleta's conclusions regarding the relationship between Salafis and the Islamic Community. She states that "the existence of moral superiority in the Salafi communities and the pursuit of expansion is what provokes the Islamic community and creates various reactions in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society" (p. 38). "Salafis are angry with the behavior of the Islamic Community and their representatives, not the interpretation of Islam" (p. 43). Actually, what provokes the Islamic Community is Salafis' specific dogma and their different reading of the Quran. In other words, it is precisely their diverse interpretation of Islam and the question of authority that create tensions between Salafis and the wider Islamic Community.

Heleta needs to discuss in more detail her conclusion that "Salafi communities become a market that is easily accessible to young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina".

There is no proof for her statement that "the center of para-jamaats units is linked to the area of Gornja Maoča". It seems more probable that the center (if there is such a thing) is the King Fahd mosque.

There are some other unclear statements: "The problem emerges because their vision of Islam (of Salafists) is not the same as that of the radical (Salafists)". What exactly is the difference between their visions of Islam? "Three parties were in physical conflict in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, fighting for the preservation of their territories." Whom does Heleta mean by the three parties? How does she interpret the conflict in the Velika Kladuša region?

The number of foreign mujahideen was probably much lower than 3,000. Puhalo's research sample included 104, not 1004 citizens.

A comparison to other Western Balkan countries (Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro) which have Salafi communities is missing.

5. QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

How influential are Salafists in Bosnia and Herzegovina now?

Does the Salafi Movement represent a threat to Bosnia and Herzegovina?

What was the position of the US and other secret services towards mujahideens during the Bosnian war?

How is the statement “Salafi’s mission to execute the "purification" of Bosnian Muslims is a priority” congruent with Puhalo’s conclusions that this community lives isolated from the Bosnian Muslim society?

Heleta states that “Salafism is seen as a threat to the national identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens”. What is the national identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens, according to Heleta?

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Despite the above-mentioned critical comments, I recommend that Nataša Heleta be given an opportunity to defend her thesis with a proposed assessment of E.

Date: Prague, September 1, 2019

Signature: