

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA

Přírodovědecká fakulta

Katedra sociální geografie a regionálního rozvoje

Studijní program: Geografie (navazující magisterské studium)

Studijní obor: Globální migrační a rozvojová studia



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Islamizace rozvojové spolupráce zemí Rady Perského zálivu v Kosovu

**Islamization of Development Assistance of the States of the Gulf
Cooperation Council in Kosovo**

Diplomová práce

Master thesis

Vedoucí diplomové práce: RNDr. Libor Jelen, Ph.D.

Praha 2020

Prohlášení

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V Praze dne 13. 8. 2020

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Vít Volný

Acknowledgement:

In the context of birth of this master thesis I would like to thank to my supervisor RNDr. Libor Jelen, Ph.D., for all the attention, he has given me since the first consultation. Thank you CEEPUS programme and department of Social Geography and Regional Studies for the scholarship which enabled me to conduct the research in Kosovo. Moreover, I want to express my thanks to professors Rrahmani and Ejupi who helped me in securing respondents for the interviews and in general made my stay in Pristina easier. Last but not least, big thank you to Nick Hudac for checking my English, my mum for keeping me mentally healthy during this COVID thing and to Romanian and Albanian music and Belorussian football which accompanied me during long days in front of the screen.

Abstract:

This thesis deals with the developmental assistance and humanitarian aid from the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council in Kosovo. The goal is to understand what role plays a religion plays in developmental assistance and humanitarian aid in Kosovo. This thesis investigates the forms in which the process of Islamization of development assistance occurs, and how civil society and states cope with it. Methodologically, the author employs the principles of a case study: qualitative research was conducted in Kosovo using the methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The thesis covers the development projects of GCC organisations and agencies and will show that religion has a key influence on these efforts. Regarding the practices used in Kosovo, the author shows that the states of GCC use development assistance and humanitarian aid as a mean of spreading religious teachings and beliefs of the Gulf region. Kosovo society has not been immune to these activities and Salafism (and in minority Jihadism) has gained followers in the Muslim community. However, the thesis shows that since 2014 with the help of the state structures, radical Islam has been on the decline while the GCC organisations spreading it, are no longer operational in Kosovo.

Key words: development assistance, Gulf Cooperation Council, humanitarian aid, Kosovo, Salafism

Abstrakt:

Tato práce se zabývá rozvojovou spoluprací a humanitární pomocí států Rady pro spolupráci arabských států v Zálivu na území Kosova. Hlavní cíl práce je pochopit jakou roli hraje náboženství v rozvojové spolupráci a humanitární pomoci v Kosovu. Tato práce zjišťuje, jak probíhá a jak se projevuje proces islamizace rozvojové spolupráce a jak se daří společnosti a státu na ní reagovat. Autor využívá případové studie jako metodologického přístupu. Kvalitativní výzkum provedl v Kosovu pomocí metod zúčastněného pozorování a semistrukturovaných rozhovorů. Práce pokrývá největší rozvojové projekty organizací a agentur ze Zálivu a snaží se ukázat jaký vliv v nich má náboženství. Na příkladech praktik využívaných v Kosovu autor ukazuje, jak státy Zálivu využívají rozvojovou spolupráci a humanitární pomoc k šíření náboženských tradic, názorů a věrouky typické pro oblast Perského zálivu. Kosovská společnost není imunní vůči těmto aktivitám, praktikám a salafismus (v menší míře džihádismus) i díky státům Zálivu získal příznivce v muslimské komunitě Kosova. Práce ovšem ukazuje, že se po roce 2014 s velkou pomocí opatření státních struktur podařilo zastavit šíření radikálního islámu v Kosovu. Radikální islám je na ústupu a organizace ze Zálivu, které ho šířily jsou zakázány.

Klíčová slova: humanitární pomoc, Kosovo, Rada pro spolupráci arabských států v Zálivu, rozvojová spolupráce, salafismus

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHIF	Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation
CEEPUS	Central European Exchange Program for University Studies
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of OECD
DLK	Democratic League of Kosovo
EU	European Union
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – officially used till 2019
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GNI	Gross National Income
G7	Group of Seven
ICK	Islamic Community of Kosovo
IIRISA	International Islamic Relief Organisation
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
KCSS	Kosovar Centre for Security Studies
KFOR	Kosovo Force – NATO-led international peacekeeping force
KIPRED	Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army – Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës (UÇK)
MF	Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RTK	Radio Television of Kosovo
SJRCKC	Saudi Joint Committee for the Relief of Kosovo and Chechnya
TIKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency

UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIMK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
US	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

1. Introduction and Research Goal

“Saudi money and influence have transformed this once-tolerant Muslim society at the hem of Europe into a font of Islamic extremism and a pipeline for Jihadists”, wrote Carlotta Gall in New York Times (2016) in the article with the worrying title *“How Kosovo Was Turned Into Fertile Ground for ISIS.”* This article, which caught worldwide attention, was based on the previous report that Kosovo had the highest number per capita in Europe of ISIL recruits fighting in Syria and Iraq, and Gall’s main point was that the Gulf states have been promoting their agenda of spreading radical Islam since the war in 1999 via humanitarian and development assistance.

In reality, Gall did not come up with something new; a number of Kosovo based authors (Blumi 2005, Krasniqi 2011) had already warned a decade ago that the Gulf countries’ agencies/organisations/charities arrive in Kosovo with the agenda of spreading the teachings of Middle Eastern Islam. In neighbouring Bosnia and Hercegovina, the phenomenon of Islamization of relief and development efforts soaked on the surface even more. The Gulf-based associations have been accused of pumping money into Bosnian society via grants for religious schools, madrasas, wages for imams, campaigns propagating conservative Muslim values or direct financial aid to families who will adhere to the Gulf conservative lifestyle (Merdjanova 2013, Morrison 2008). Bosnia and Hercegovina is not alone, as this process has been researched in the last ten years by several development assistance researchers in different regions in the world (Ahmed 2009, Brown, Pierce 2013).

In the same time, to speak about the Gulf assistance with a sole interest in spreading purist Salafi/Wahabi Islam is incorrect, as will be seen in chapter 3.1, as the oil and gas-rich countries of the Persian Gulf have been spending large sums of money worldwide for humanitarian and development purposes for decades. They have been, for a lengthy period, key donors in Asia and Africa and their relief after natural catastrophes and post-conflict areas has been acknowledged by local communities. Their development agencies have been financing big health, educational, social projects in countries which OECD states development agencies omitted for several reasons (Villanger 2007, Al Yahya, Fustier 2011). This activity has been overlooked

by the international community for decades and only since the 9/11 attacks have the Muslim agencies and organisations moved into the spotlight only not through their development/humanitarian activities but via CIA reports that have called these activities a threat to international security and a method of financing global terrorism. Since then, many organisations/agencies/charities have been put on the terrorist watchlist, banned from operating and the entire sector earned the tag; *'funding Wahhabism/Salafism/Jihadism'* (Kohlman 2010, Secretary of State 2009).

The organizations/agencies/charities themselves called it a witch-hunt and that, instead of the War on Terror, the international community was waging a war on Muslim charitable activity. They say that what is called Islamization is a natural process connected to the basic tenants of Islam. Their argument is that voluntary charity (*sadaqah*) is one of the key principles in Islam and, thus, it is only natural the goals of this charity are not only humanitarian/development but religious as well. Petersen (2010, 2012, 2012, 2016) has called this all-encompassing Islam (more in 3.2.2.1.) and even if it is controversial from a development/humanitarian field perspective it must be respected.

When returning to Gall's original claim while considering these two contrary perspectives on the Gulf Cooperation Council development assistance and humanitarian aid, the author's goal in this thesis is: **to understand, how big a role plays a religion in development assistance and humanitarian aid in Kosovo. While investigating in which forms the process of Islamization of development assistance occurs, how civil society and state cope with it.**

1.1. Research Questions

Based on the primary goal of the thesis, several research questions arise concerning the development assistance and humanitarian aid of the Gulf Cooperation Council:

- a) **How big a role does religion play in development assistance and humanitarian aid in the case of Kosovo?**

The aim of this question is to search for clues on how all players involved in the development field approach religious principles — if using Islam is merely a tool of GCC organisations for getting the most of relief to local citizens and the development of state/civil society or, if it is not simply a tool, but rather is the main goal of these

organisations to spread the religious beliefs of Middle East as well. The former argument is used by the Gulf organisations themselves, and in that case, most of the finances should be spent on educational, health, infrastructure purposes in Kosovo. The latter argument is a follow-up on Gall's article and is used mainly by critics who say that the well-being of Kosovo citizens and the development of the state is secondary to the spreading of Salafism as seen by finances flowing mainly to religious communities/NGOs.

b) Which forms of Islamization of development assistance were/are seen in Kosovo?

This question is the principal question of the whole thesis: which practices of all-encompassing Islam were used by GCC organisations? How did they approach the society of Kosovo and how successful were they in transferring the Gulf's religious traditions to Kosovo? This coexistence and the relationship between traditional Islam with an influence from the Sufi brotherhood (as practised by Kosovar Albanians) and the Salafi/Wahhabi purist Islam brought from the Middle East, will be researched. The author asks here a subquestion: **how active were/are organisations and charities in supporting Jihadism in Kosovo?** This thesis will investigate if there are any cases of newly built mosques, financed by the GCC, whose imams preached to join ISIL or other Jihadi groups, as well as if some agencies or charities were connected to extremists Jihadists and if these organized helped the Jihadists recruit in Kosovo.

c) What is the response of the Muslim community, civil society and the Kosovo government to the process of Islamization?

Finally, this thesis will look into how the civil society responds to the relief and help which is conditioned by changing its religious beliefs and traditions — if it is seen as a threat or genuinely normal development and what is an attitude towards the GCC states? Additionally, it will look at how the state has acted concerning these GCC organisations spreading Salafism and especially regarding the fact that Kosovo Albanians fought in Syria and Iraq. What measures have been taken to disrupt the Jihadi nets in Kosovo and if the controversial organisations were banned from operating of the Kosovo territory?

This is the end of the short introductory section with the main and research questions. The following section concerns the related literature in the field of GCC development assistance and the thesis' theoretical framework. Its goal is to explain the scope, the system, and the controversial issues surrounding this assistance while providing a background of the process of Islamization and its manifestations. In chapter 4, these methodological principles are explained as well as the course of the fieldwork in Kosovo. The next two chapters aiming to explain the context of Kosovo: how the society of Kosovo, the state of Kosovo and religion first looked when development assistance and humanitarian aid from the GCC states arrived in Kosovo after the war (1999). Chapters 7 and 8 summarize the research results and cover the GCC development assistance, humanitarian aid from 1999 till today. The key issues and findings connected to assistance/aid in general and its Islamization, are stated and discussed with the help of the respondents of the interviews. In the second to last chapter, the whole research project is put into context and compared to similar examinations. The work finishes with a conclusion where the conclusions to research questions are presented.

2. Related Literature

The literature on the development assistance and humanitarian aid of Gulf states is quite numerous. Two groups of scientists deal with it from their own two unique perspectives: the first group of scientists approaches it from perspective of development studies and the other from an Arabic studies perspective. This thesis looks at the case more from a development perspective, so the studies cited in its theoretical framework are mostly from this field rather than from Arabic studies. Most scientists became interested in the development and humanitarian field only at the end of the 20th century, and ever since books have been published to illuminate the topic such as the anthology *Diversity in Donorship: The Changing Landscape of Official Humanitarian Aid* (2005) edited by Adele Harmer and Lin Cotterrell of the London Development Institute. In particular, Gulf development assistance has been overlooked for a long time among experts in the Western world which dominates development studies field. The one researcher who attempted to draw attention to this field is California-based social scientist Jonathan Benthall, who has studied the relationship between contemporary Islam and humanitarian aid since 1993 and has published widely on the topic such as *The Charitable Crescent:*

Politics of Aid in the Muslim World (2003) and is active in his studies of Faith-Based Organizations with special reference to Islamic charities to this day; in 2018, he published *The Rise and Decline of Saudi Overseas Humanitarian Charities*.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the field's literature expanded, and several authors wrote their analysis of the GCC development assistance. Often cited in this thesis are the Norwegian economic development researcher Espen Villanger (2007) and Peter Salisbury (2018) from Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. Other researchers focused only on one nation, such as Al Yahya and Fustier (2011) in case of Saudi Arabia, Kharas (2015) in case of Qatar or Leichtman (2017) in case of Kuwait. The topic of development diplomacy concerning the GCC states was opened up by professor of Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science Eric Neumayer who in his studies (2003, 2004) focused on using quantitative methods to examine Arab aid and their connection with development diplomacy.

The Islamization of development assistance became an important topic as mentioned in chapter 3.2.3. as a result of the 9/11 attacks when the US administration started to support research in this field. From the number of books on this topic, the author can emphasize two anthologies *Humanitarian Action and the 'Global War on Terror': a Review of Trends and Issues* edited by Joanna McRae and Adele Harmer and *Gulf Charities and Islamic Philanthropy in the 'Age of Terror' and Beyond* edited by Robert Lacey and Jonathan Benthall. In Czechia, the topic is conceptualized in the book *Dual Face of Islamic Charity* (2008) written by two highly acclaimed Czech Arabists Ondřej Beránek and Pavel Ťupek. They try to familiarize the Czech public with the concept of Islamic humanitarian and (to a lesser degree) development assistance. The crucial idea of the work, as the title already points out, is that the involvement of charities is double-edged. On one side, they provide very generous aid for people who need it, while on the other hand, spreading Salafist ideas, financing the Islamization of society, and fundraising for Jihadi missions. Beránek, as the current head of the Orientalist Institute of Academy of Science, is probably the biggest expert on Saudi Arabia in Czechia and in the late 2000s wrote several articles on Gulf charities.

However, the writer which influenced the author the most is Marie Juul Petersen, a researcher at the Danish Institute for Human Rights. Her dominant topic is Muslim Transnational NGOs. Petersen explores how they conceptualise their provision of aid/assistance and the role Islam plays in this. Her concept of all-encompassing Islam has been crucial for this thesis. The articles she has written since 2010 are based on case

studies and interviews that she conducts with employees of these organisations. A series of her articles is capped off by the book *For Humanity Or for the Umma?: Aid and Islam in Transnational Muslim NGOs* (2016) which draws on extensive research in Britain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan and Bangladesh, and over 100 interviews with those involved in such organisations.

The case studies of Islamization of development assistance where the objects are not NGOs, such as in Petersen's case, but states or regions are known to social scientists focusing on regional studies. One well-known author focusing on the GCC involvement in southwest Asia is the Malaysian Rajeswary Ampalavanar Brown. Her books (2013, 2017) try to explain the behaviour of Gulf agencies and charities and more importantly the response of the government and administration to threats of spreading Salafism and funding Jihadism in southeast Asia. Similar studies have been written about different regions on the receiving end of GCC assistance. For the sub-Saharan Africa region, the key works are from Comorian Berlin Humboldt University-based professor Chanfi Ahmed. Ahmed identifies the response of East African society on the spreading of Salafism via Gulf agencies and charities (Al-Haramain, for example) and as he wrote in 2008 (p. 431), "*Like any modern Islamic NGO, these institutions pursue two aims: while giving support to those in need, they simultaneously try to spread their particular version of Islam*".

In the case of Balkans, any footprints of the GCC states involvement are the primary reason for research for Balkan and not Development Studies. This is mainly due to strong Balkan studies departments and a strong diaspora community, especially in the German-speaking world. Their research is more focused on the security or religious perspective than the development one. Typical security articles and books are focused on the Bošnjak Mujahideen movement, their financing in the 1990s and, in general, on the influence of the Wahhabist movement in Bosnia and Hercegovina or the involvement of Al-Haramain in Albania during the 1990s. From the many available studies, the author would like to highlight *Islamic Terror and the Balkans* by Israeli anti-terrorism expert Shaul Shay, as the security aspect is the most important in the Balkan Studies department at the Faculty of Social Sciences of our university, where recently (2014), a master's thesis by Vladimíra Janková titled *Wahhabism in the Balkans: The Case Study of Bosnia and Herzegovina* was successfully defended. Janková's main hypothesis was that "*the influence and the scope of Wahhabi movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently waning*".

and at the moment it neither poses a significant threat to social order nor the development of the country” and was largely proven (Janková 2014, p. 7). For an expert interview, she used Filip Tesař as the (perhaps) biggest expert on Wahhabism in Bosnia and Hercegovina in Czechia.

On the other hand, works that concentrate on the religious perspective cope with the clash of the traditional way of Islam and the one brought by the GCC agencies and charities. In the canon of these publications is the book *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism* (2015) by the Bulgarian expert on interreligious relations, Ina Merdjanova. Meanwhile, Andreja Mesarič in her research discovers what the ‘new’ Salafi Islam brings to Bosnia and Hercegovina and how the society reacts to it. Her accounts of societal phenomenon such as ‘sharia dating’ or explanation of engagement of pious with Islamic Authority are fascinating. The author drew inspiration from them when describing what Salafi Islam brings to Kosovo.

The literature covering development/humanitarian sector in Kosovo is very limited and even more focused on either security or religious aspect. Author who warned from the activity of GCC charities in Kosovo already in the 2000s is Isa Blumi (2005). The activity of some most dominant GCC charities is explained in Kolë Krasniqi work, *Islamist Extremism in Kosovo and the Countries of the Region*. While Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development duo Agon Demjaha and Lulzim Peci focus on Salafism and Jihadism practices and their financing in Kosovo. Similar research interest has a professor of Hasan Prishtina University Abdulla Rexhepi - *The Jihadist Discourse of the Islamic Community of Kosovo: The Case of Syria* (2018). More local Kosovo authors are cited in chapters 7 and 8.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. The GCC Countries as Donors

The states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)¹ are not known as leaders in international development nor in the humanitarian sector. Yet since the 1970s, they have been the source of large amounts of development assistance (ODA)², humanitarian aid³ or other forms of support for developing and conflict-affected countries, both through state-led channels or through the donations of private agencies, religious charities and individual donors, as underlined by Peter Salisbury in his book (2018) on the GCC states and foreign assistance.

The first appearance of the GCC countries in the humanitarian and development sector overlaps with the first Oil Crisis and a sharp rise in the price of oil in the 1970s. The sudden rise of the oil prices provided the governments and elites (*sheikhs*) enough capital which they could not spend in their domains and were willing to give away. The first decade was in the name of enormous generosity as, in the 1970s, the amount of foreign aid totaled about 4% of GNI of GCC, which is, in comparison, proportionally as much as the US gave away for the reconstruction of Europe via the Marshall Plan in the late 1940s, to paraphrase Villanger (2007, p. 226). The fall of oil and gas prices in the 1980s meant a sharp decline to about 1,5% which was still significantly above the average (0,5%) of Development Assistance Committee⁴ (DAC) members at the time. Historically, the pioneers were primarily Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as the fastest

¹ For the purpose of this master's thesis the author will use the countries which comprise the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman. They are a homogenous group of primarily ethnically Arabic countries of the Arabian Peninsula which share a similar history and their economies mostly depend on revenues from oil and natural gas. In terms of this work, it is important that all of them are, in the long term, much larger donors than receivers of humanitarian aid or development assistance (except for Kuwait in 1990s during its reconstruction after the Iraqi occupation). The countries left out from the Arabian Peninsula are Iraq and Yemen which have been war-torn by recent conflicts and non-stable political situations, so clearly they do not fit into the mix, as they are on the receiving end of the humanitarian aid or development assistance.

² ODA is defined by OECD as financial assistance meeting the following four criteria: (i) provided to a developing country or an ODA-eligible multilateral organization; (ii) on concessional terms with a grant element of at least 25 percent; (iii) for a development purpose and (iv) by official agencies (Al Yahya, Fustier 2011).

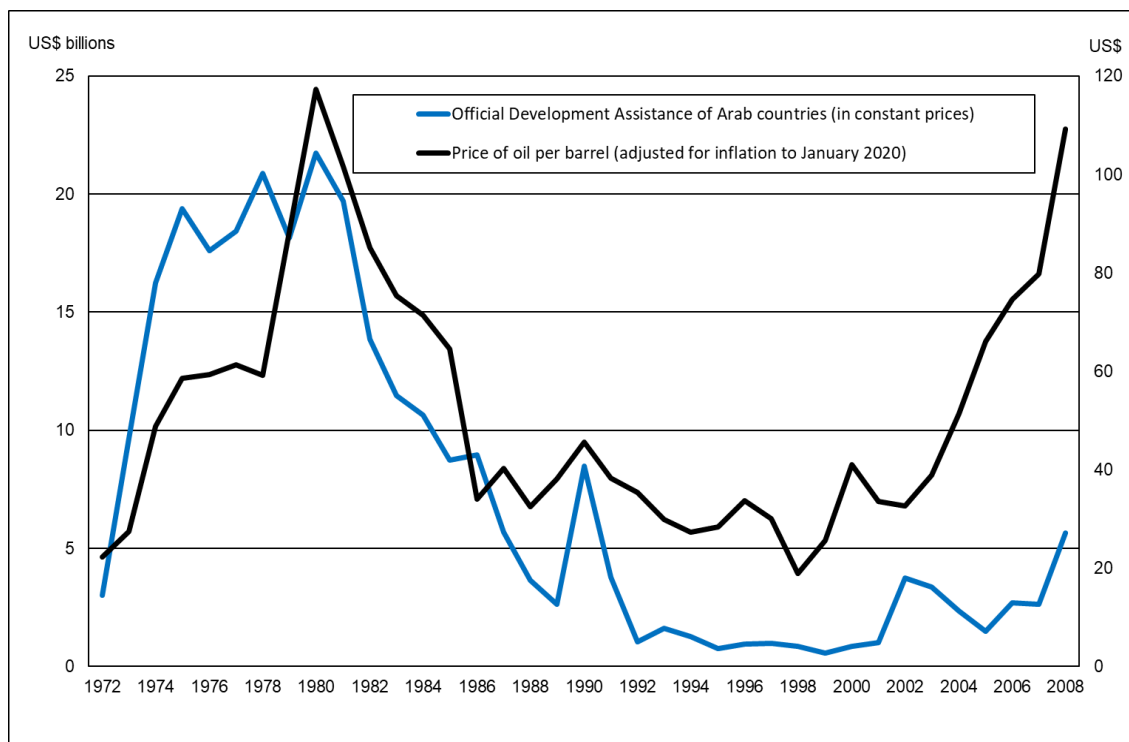
³ For the purpose of this master's thesis, the author will prevalently use the term “development assistance” as it is a more recent term. The agencies are assisting, not necessarily doing the whole work/giving everything needed for the project, while, on the other hand, humanitarian aid is still aid, material, financial, social aid, but not assistance.

⁴ The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is a forum to discuss issues surrounding aid, development and poverty reduction in developing countries. Currently there are 30 members of DAC, so not all of the OECD countries are present, but essentially all OECD members having substantial development assistance are part of the forum (OECD 2020)

developing economies of the GCC states. Kuwait in particular tried to portray itself as a ‘humanitarian state’ which Leichtman (2017) argue even helped the country to gain the support of UN states when was Kuwait occupied by Iraq in 1990.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, stirred up the activity in the other GCC countries, especially United Arab Emirates. Qatar joined the development assistance and humanitarian field in the late 1990s, following Hamid bin Khalifa Al-Thani’s palace coup in 1995, when the new Qatari emir moved towards an independent foreign policy which included a major increase in funding of ODA and humanitarian projects (Salisbury 2018). The 9/11 attacks completely changed the political climate and mood towards the Middle East, and the field of development assistance was not spared. The GCC donors went under pressure and scrutiny about their real priorities and goals, which continue until today. Yet it did not discourage the GCC to continue giving away their finances. On contrary, they used the favourable conditions of the rising price of oil and the reluctance of the state/NGO sector of DAC countries to invest in predominantly Muslim countries and expanded their ODA and humanitarian services all over the world.

Fig. 1 - ODA from Arab donors (US\$ billions in constant prices) and price of oil per barrel (US\$/per barrel Illinois Crude Oil inflation-adjusted prices January 2020)



source: Rouis et al. 2010, Smith 2011, Inflationdata.com 2020, OECD 2020, author's adaptation.

It can be said that GCC assistance is the most volatile in the world and had its historical highs and lows based on the price of oil. The generous 1970s were replaced by a huge drop in the 1980s due to a sharp decline of oil price in 1983-85 and the underwhelming 1990s when the price of oil was kept low. Since the rise in oil prices in the 2000s, which was joined by a shift of focus on the Arab world and bigger role of GCC countries in world geopolitics, the ODA (and the humanitarian sector in general) began to rise again on the Arab peninsula. Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait remain some of the highest donors per capita in the world, reporting about 0,8-2% of GNI as ODA while it is thought that another 1-3% of GNI of humanitarian and development assistance go unreported (Qatari Fund for Development 2020, Saudi Fund for Development 2019, Peninsula 2017, Kuwait Fund 2019, Abu Dhabi Fund for Development 2019, Smith 2011).

3.1.1. The Financial/Material Base Behind ODA/Humanitarian Aid

The tradition of voluntary charity (*sadaqah*) has existed since the birth of Islam. *Sadaqah* is considered a virtuous deed in Islam and is proof of one's faith. It is believed that more person gives *sadaqah*, the more his faith increases and so, one can expect Allah's rewards both in this world and in the life afterwards.

“That which you give in usury for increase through the property of (other) people, will have no increase with Allah: but that which you give for charity, seeking the Countenance of Allah, it is those who will get a recompense multiplied.” (Qur'an, 30:39)

Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam and is an obligation, so an eligible individual must donate a proportion of wealth each year to charitable causes. Usually, the common minimum amount for those who qualify is 2.5% or 1/40 of a Muslim's total savings and wealth. In Saudi Arabia, giving *zakat* is a necessity, enshrined in the law system by decree in 1960, for all the citizens holding Saudi passport (Beránek, Ťoupek 2008). The addition of the institution of *waqf*, an endowment for a charitable (or religious) purpose, where a Muslim donates a building, land or cash with no intention of reclaiming the value gained from them and also contributes to the view of Islam as the most willing religion to spend money for others in need (Islamic Relief Worldwide 2015, Bonner et al., 2003). Considering that royal families and ruling elites are not exempt from *sadaqah*, one understands it gives the GCC states an excellent financial base for their humanitarian aid and development assistance.

3.1.2. Development of the Assistance/Humanitarian Aid System

Having shown why Arab donors have such a solid financial base, let us examine how the systems of humanitarian aid and development assistance work. When looking at the DAC and GCC donors you can easily spot differences (and similarities), and the author will briefly go over them:

3.1.2.1. Prevailing Use of Bilateral Channels Instead of Multilateral Organisations

Ever since the GCC, donors have been very reluctant to use multilateral channels such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other traditional development agencies and preferred to have control over their finances. Only 13% of the total ODA was provided multilaterally compared to around 30% in the DAC countries (Rouis et al. 2010, p. 10). In addition, most of the finances sent through multilateral channels were in cooperation with other GCC states, not with the international field. The main multilateral institutions that the GCC founded and use until now include the Islamic Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab Monetary Fund and the OPEC Fund for International Development (Villanger 2007). The WB/IMF or the UN institution get crumbs, and in an extreme case like Qatar, sometimes only 0,5% of total ODA (Kharas 2015, p. 20). The main reason is the feeling from the GCC that institutions are too bureaucratic and political, and that direct assistance is much better for the receiver and donor at the same time. To quote a Saudi observer of charitable and humanitarian efforts (Al-Yahya, Fustier 2011, p. 21): *“The UN is an unnecessary middleman that receives much but deliver little.”* From Saudi perspective the bilateral assistance strengthen the ties between the foes and improve the image of the donor as the receivers population understand from where the money come from while also allow the GCC states to avoid in some intervention in domestic issues which are the stable autocratic regimes very reluctant to do as they themselves cannot stand (Robyns, de Geoffroy 2009).

3.1.2.2. The Decision-Making About ODA and Humanitarian Aid Undertaken at the Highest Levels of State

On first glance, the GCC member states use a similar system of bilateral development assistance and humanitarian aid as the DAC countries. On the top is the national development agency. In the case of Saudi Arabia, it is the Saudi Fund for Development, while the main humanitarian organisation is the national branch of the Red Crescent (the Muslim analogy to the worldwide Red Cross). However, just by looking at the figures leading of both organisations one can understand that the agencies are governed differently. The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Saudi Fund for Development is Ahmed bin Aqeel Al Khatib, current Minister of Tourism and former close advisor of the Royal Court, while the president of Saudi Red Crescent Authority was until recently Prince Faysal bin Abdulla. But this is not only limited to Saudi Arabia, as the Chairman of the Board of Qatar Development Fund is the current prime minister himself, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani. Experts (Al-Yahya, Fustier 2011) say the decisions in the development/humanitarian field are taken between the highest ranks of the state, when the Royal leadership and powerful ministries like Interior, Finance, and Foreign Affairs Experts are involved. This is few levels above the supervision of the DAC countries' governments which might set the sector priorities or preferred countries but still leave freedom for the development agencies to decide on their steps. In practice, this means the GCC development/humanitarian agencies can easily be prolonged hands of government policies abroad as discussed later on.

3.1.2.3. Public Campaigns

An often-used feature of the GCC humanitarian/development system is a public campaign, usually in the form of telethon, a nationwide fundraising show that mobilizes people's opinion around a popular cause and raises finances from private sources. These campaigns can last for days, weeks, but there are cases of even a few months-long telethons. All of this is supervised by the royal court and no campaign can be without a royal family member appearing on the TV, announcing the start and giving the first personal donation. It is something which cannot be compared to anything in the Western world where governments do not mobilize private donations from businesses and average citizens (Robyns, de Geoffroy 2009). When talking about average citizens, the conversation is really about everyone: *"Children donated pocket money, school bags*

and slingshots. A man offered funds he had saved for dental treatment, another said he would give a kidney for a Palestinian who needed it” (Deseret News 2002).

In general, the campaign’s goal must be in line with state policy and the popular case should be from the Muslim world. Some of the most massive campaigns have been, for example, the 2010 telethon for relief of Pakistan after the devastating floods raising about 120 million USD, the benefit for the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia raising over 80 million USD, periodic telethons for the Palestinian cause (in total over 200 million USD), or the most recent for Syrian refugees, which happened in almost all Gulf Coast countries (Ali Khan, Tago 2005, Prados, Blanchard 2005, Help Pakistan Telethon Show 2010, Allam 2012). In 1999, one relief campaign was set up for Kosovo as well, which will be discussed later in the thesis. Now once the fundraising phase is finished, the TV shows are no longer needed, then the implementation phase begins. The committee for relief is set up, technically operating as a state base agency, which is then responsible for buying relief goods and providing financial assistance for affected families in the field. However, the work of the committee is not done after the telethon money is spent, and the committee usually transforms into a ‘*development agency*’ and receives more funding. The goal is then to oversee the cooperation between the organisations/charities and longer-term assistance goals such as improving secular/religious infrastructure or giving out scholarships (Al-Yahya, Fustier 2011).

The administrative cost of the committee is kept low and direct delivery is channelled either through a national branch of the Red Crescent (the more structured way) or by unofficial staff and street volunteers in a much less structured way. This procedure has a high number of advantages over the sometimes very bureaucratic state agencies in the countries of DAC (Robyns, de Geoffroy 2009)— to list some: almost all finances are used for the actual relief and assistance, the system is more flexible and willing to adjust to the receiving country situation while the receiving society recognizes the relief is coming from the GCC country. This leaves some flaws as well, such as the duplicity of relief goods, non-professionalism and, something which will be discussed in more detail, the lack of accountability.

3.1.2.4. Philanthropists and Religious Charities/NGOs

Apart from state or semi-state organised ODA and humanitarian aid, an important role is played by philanthropists, the financial elites of the GCC states, and Islamic charities of various types. The so-called '*sheikhs*' are the highest level of the Arabian Peninsula societies who are closely or loosely connected to the royal court, and the majority of them made money in the oil/natural gas extraction and processing. Their philanthropy might not be something remote from the Western traditions since especially Anglo-Saxon millionaires or celebrities are the leaders in the charitable work and, more recently, even in development assistance. But in the Gulf countries, it is something unthinkable that this social group would not give out a tremendous amount of their fortune (Guardian 2015). Some give it without fanfare, but there are also billionaires with their own philanthropy agencies which complement state assistance in a similar field and similar destination country. Salisbury, after talking to a Saudi development assistance worker, calls them '*press release sheikhs*', the men concerned more about their public image than the real influence of their money invested (2018, p. 23).

To make the system of GCC development assistance and charitable work complete, one must list the important factor - the religious organisations, charities and development agencies. While in the Western world, missionary organisations remain largely "invisible" among scholars, in the Arab world they are well appreciated. Their financial base is wider than the Christian NGOs as they often collect the yearly *zakat* from average Gulf citizens, and their political influence is bigger as they have support inside the state structures. The controversial issue discussed frequently in the development literature is the division between their missionary and development functions. While a big percentage of the Western Christian organisations try to set a border between these two functions, the GCC organisations mostly fail in this (Paras 2014). While they have to work according to the GCC national development scheme, they are major funders of everything from hospitals to mosques and allegedly also militant groups. The author will return to others, which are directly involved in Kosovo, later.

3.1.2.5. Use of Soft Loans and Unconditional Contributions

In contrast to the WB/MF model of development assistance of soft loans in the 1970s–1980s, which only indebted the countries of Global South, the Arab world mostly used grants as the direct unconditional contribution from the start. To cite the Abu Dhabi Fund (Villanger 2007, p. 232), *“We help in an unconditional manner that reflects the Islamic philosophy of helping without building in economic returns.”* This quote is based on Sharia law, where getting richer on someone’s accounts is prohibited. In practice, this means that in the Islamic banking system, interest is prohibited, so even soft loans to fellow Muslims are very questionable and might be considered against Sharia law. Interestingly, in the 1990s the GCC countries moved to soft loans at the same time the Western countries pushed for grants, and throughout 2000s the ODA from the GCC comprised 60% soft loans, even if the trend internationally was different, and the practice itself was against Islamic tradition (Rouis et al. 2010, p. 11). While it needs to be said that the author only talking about the declared ODA, the unofficial proportion is probably a much lower percentage. Regardless, the interest rates are kept low (compared to China for example) and differ by the level of the economic development of the country. In the example of Saudi Arabian interest rates, Sudan used to pay 3%, Egypt 4,5% and Kosovo little more (Villanger 2007, p. 233).

3.1.3. Controversial Issues

So far, the aforementioned Islamic system has focused on the objective differences in comparison with the Western system. Some specifics might be positive, some negative, but there is no united view between experts, and its analysis depends on the subjective assessment. That, however, cannot be said about more or less controversial issues stated bellow where the GCC countries can be challenged not by only experts. These might very well be in the contradiction of sustainable, receiver-beneficial and non-discriminatory development policy.

3.1.3.1. Geographical Scope

There is no secret that the development assistance or humanitarian aid is distributed by a certain key which is not fair to all the countries in the world. The distribution key is based on objective criteria (the level of development, natural catastrophe/war, level of democracy), on political priorities (regional security, geopolitical importance) and on historical/emotional connections (post-colonial links, ethnic origins, same religion). This creates a tremendous gap between the countries that are very well known and supported by international communities and the rest. The best example being development assistance “darling” Ethiopia, where thousands of agencies and NGOs operate in such quantities that the country is dependent on assistance in some sectors of its national economy, and citizens, when they do not obtain the grant from one agency, then there are dozen more waiting (Nol 2019). Still others such as Kyrgyzstan, by objective criteria, are in the same position as Ethiopia but politically unimportant, having no emotional/historical connection to any DAC country receive only crumbs. The GCC countries face the criticism that they are the ones that least use the objective criteria; according to experts (Villanger 2007, Al-Yahya, Fustier 2011, Rouis et al. 2010), the most important criteria is being of the same ethnic origin – Pan Arabism, being a Muslim – bigger Muslim cultural world and importance for the regional security of Middle East. According to the statistics, around 60% of GCC finances end up in ethnically similar countries of the Arab League of Nations. Historically, the biggest receivers are the states of the Maghreb, especially Egypt and Morocco, although this has changed lately, as the Maghreb is still an important region of the GCC ODA, however, since the Arab Spring and rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, the GCC (except Qatar) has become less willing to support it. In the 2010s, the main receivers were the war-torn states of Syria and Iraq. A special position is held by Palestine as an Arab “martyr” fighting for Arab “freedom” which is territory supported throughout the GCC humanitarian and development history. From the remaining 40%, 20% is spent in the South and South-East Asia majorly in Bangladesh and Pakistan, and 15% in Sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal, Mali and Burkina Faso). That leaves only 5% of the ODA and humanitarian aid for other regions such as the Balkans and Central Asia. So, it seems that if the GCC states choose a receiver from outside the Arab League of Nations, it will most likely be a country where Islam is the predominant religion. Statistics show only a fraction of the money pot being spent outside (Central Africa, India, Brazil) of the world

of Islam (Qatari Fund for Development 2020, Saudi Fund for Development 2019, Kuwait Fund 2019, Abu Dhabi Fund for Development 2019). To counter this criticism from the international community, the GCC agencies try to put blame on the DAC countries, that they underfund the Arab/Muslim world, and that this is only a mechanism to counter this underfunding and level the unfair system set up by the Western world (Rouis et al. 2010).

3.1.3.2. Sustainable Development Goals

Development assistance, in general, is focused on fulfilling the UN Development Goals. Although the goal number one is ending poverty in the world and is the ultimate target of all development agencies, when looking into the GCC agencies, the motivation to fulfil the Development Goals is not clear. Officially in their press releases, they present themselves as complying to the SDGs and fighting poverty and hunger. In the dialogues with DAC, the most recently in 2019, they talk about female empowerment and cooperation on an educational level, etc. However, the statistics do not back these statements, as the low-income countries⁵ accounted only one-quarter of total ODA of the GCC in the 2000s (Rouis et al. 2010). The situation changed recently as the percentage of low-income countries has risen but only due to Arab countries and the biggest receivers of GCC support (Syria and Yemen) dropped to the low-income category of states due to their civil war with international intervention. But even counting Syria and Yemen, the lower-middle-income economies still receive more ODA than the poorest countries in the world. If to add that to the talk of empowering women and support for civil education, which stays in the conference room and does not materialize, then the critics (Salisbury 2018, Freer 2018) of GCC assistance are correct in stating SDGs are not the real targets.

⁵ Low-income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method. For fiscal year 2019 the level is \$1,025 or less GNI per capita in 2018 (Prydz, Wadhwa 2019).

3.1.3.3. Conditionality – Good governance

The days when countries who were about to receive the development assistance had to change the whole governing system and approved neoliberal reforms forced made by the WB/MF without any understanding of local reality, are luckily over, although the DAC ODA still wants to have a say how the aid will be used and what must be done by state structures before the country is eligible. The term “good governance” is frequently used, especially by EU donors, meaning that the country must reform its system of self-government on every level and allow the decision-making system to be transparent. This is not the case for GCC donors. There are several cases where the WB/MF did not want to fund some projects because of conditions attached, and the receivers instead turned to Arab funds and received the money (Villanger 2008), as the Arab assistance was unconditional with no interference in governance or macroeconomic systems. The donor leaves all the decisions to the receiver who is free to set up their policies for the development as they please. Nor do the GCC states care about the political system, as they are not afraid to cooperate with autocratic absolute leaders and are very flexible in dealing with them. Human rights are not an issue when deciding in which country they should distribute the finances (Kharas 2015). To sum it up in the words of an Arab Fund worker interviewed by Villanger (2008, p. 238), *“democracy and governance issues are not topics that are part of the Arab aid dialogue.”*

3.1.3.4. Lack of Transparency and Accountability

As mentioned before, the GCC states are enormous donors but in comparison with the Western world, they keep rather silent about their charity. The reluctance of publishing any data and in general details about the development assistance and humanitarian aid is very well known. One undisclosed UN agency employee told Salisbury (2018, p. 7) the following story, *“You’d turn up in this village expecting people to be in dire shape, and they’d have food and medicine from some GCC aid agency, or a brand new well sponsored by a Gulf businessman while there was no record of it at the planning ministry.”* The GCC countries were criticized by nearly all involved in the development assistance field, and even the main governing body of the DAC. Numerous times concerns were presented about the transparency and accountability of the GCC assistance and an effort to raise awareness about their projects and financing

was made by the national development agencies in the new millennium — especially since most of the GCC countries agreed to share the ODA data with the DAC. So the official data, which is possible to study in detail, are the ODA statistics from official national agencies. Since the middle of the 2010s, all the biggest ODA national agencies publish the data and usually include some past overviews. Then, the aggregate data of bilateral assistance and results of telethons are published but already the supported projects and financing of the committees are in general not accessible (Qatari Fund for Development 2020, Saudi Fund for Development 2019, Kuwait Fund 2019, Abu Dhabi Fund for Development 2019, Smith 2011). Some philanthropists cooperating with the West have begun to publish their data as well, but this is rare, while, at the same time, there is no accounting of religious charities and NGOs. This means only part of the reported assistance and humanitarian aid to the countries is possible to track and only aggregate data is available for projects for the most part, and then there is still unreported secret financing.

Experts do not agree on the main reasons for GCC behaviour. Some state that the main reasons are the tradition of Arab discretion and modesty originating from the desert life most of the population practised before the oil boom. To quote the worker of the Arab Fund again explaining one of the reasons, *“the donor would not want to brag about the gift and the recipient might be offended if the donor went public”*, (Villanger 2008, p. 239). Some say the bureaucratic apparatus is kept so low on staff that it is impossible to track the finances and their redistribution. Others say it is connected with the deliberate lack of accountability, where, as mentioned before, the GCC leave the distribution up the receiver’s institutions and do not control where and how the finances are used, so they can be hands-off when the projects are controversial or unsuccessful. Finally, some experts believe that the lack of visibility is deliberate from the highest positions to cover up the use of development assistance a humanitarian aid as soft power foreign policy as well as funding spread of radical Islam and funding terrorism (Salisbury 2018, Villanger 2008, Al-Yahya, Fustier 2011, Leichtman 2017, Kharas 2011, Rouis et al. 2010).

3.1.4. Development Diplomacy – ODA as a Means of Soft Power

Once Joseph Nye (2004) described the term “soft power” as an ability to reach aims thanks to state’s attractiveness, political ideas, policy and since then, soft power has become overused by political scientists, politicians and nearly everybody. Upon close examination, ODA and humanitarian aid can very well improve the state image as well as spread political/religious ideas and implement special foreign policies. ODA serves as an information channel and raises interest about the donor country and more importantly shapes positive attitudes, including gratitude and admiration toward a donor and its values (Zielińska 2016). This is very well recognised inside the state structures of any country giving out ODA. In the US, the Office of the Secretary of State sees development assistance as a resource for so-called ‘*winning hearts and minds*’ (Luribu 2002).

So naturally, developmental assistance and humanitarian aid have been associated with soft power since the birth of the term. However, the connection with foreign policy dates all the way to the huge success of the Marshall Plan. The Plan, which as a humanitarian and development strategy, successfully served as a US foreign policy to keep the liberal democracies in Europe. The same concept was copied and used throughout the Cold War by both sides of the conflict and is very active even now. When looking at the strategic documents of the donor states, the visions often have soft power aims as well. For example, the Czech International Development Assistance Strategy calls for applying the national interests and development of political, commercial and investment relations, and economic diplomacy (Czech Development Agency 2007). Its main aims are to strengthen the image of the country, facilitate trade and give Czech companies opportunities to do business in the developing world. The GCC states are not exceptions. The Qatar National Vision for Future sees development assistance as a means of enhancing the regional role of Qatar on economic, political, and cultural levels (General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008). Saudi Arabia goes little further by tying the ODA to the exporting its goods. The Saudi Export Program (SEP) which operates under the Saudi Fund for Development essentially aims to diversify and develop national non-oil exports (Saudi Fund for Development 2018).

3.1.4.1. ODA as a Weapon

Unfortunately, sometimes development and humanitarian assistance stops being mean of soft power and starts being a means of threatening the assistance receiver. The GCC countries have a long history of using assistance for buying influence, blackmail, or as a military weapon. While a little outdated and prone to the limits of available data, an interesting analysis was presented by Eric Neumayer in 2003. Neumayer studied different factors which determined the Arab ODA in the late 20th century. By using *Heckman Selection Model*⁶, he estimated that any country eligible for multilateral Arab aid will get 68 per cent more assistance if it votes in tandem with Saudi Arabia in the UN than a country whose votes are only, on average, similar to Saudi Arabia's. This could be a strong case for charging Saudi Kingdom with corrupting less developed states with ODA in order to vote identically in the UN.⁷ Assistance and aid in hands of the GCC also became a weapon for creating alliances. In 1992, Kuwait's National Assembly decided to deny aid to countries which supported the Iraqi invasion, which was followed by all others in the GCC. In 1990s, Egypt, Turkey and Morocco - all supporters of the war against Iraq – became the three major recipients of aid (Villanger 2007, p. 247). Saudi Arabia, as the strongest political power, is not afraid to blackmail the UN itself. Recently it threatened to cut off all funding to the UN, including hundreds of millions of dollars for humanitarian projects, if its name wasn't removed from the list of countries responsible for killing children in the Yemen war (Salisbury 2018, p. 21). In general, the Yemeni war shows the averted face of Saudi assistance; Saudi Arabia threatened to cut logistical support if the areas under Houthi influence were given humanitarian relief — Saudis, who were bombing Yemen, were dictating conditions on where to use the aid. This infuriated the employees of International NGOs and UN agencies, who saw that they were losing both neutrality and ethical morale.

⁶ Heckman Selection Model is a method for estimating regression models which suffer from sample selection bias. Under the Heckman selection framework, the dependent variable is only observable for a portion of the data (Neumayer 2003).

⁷ The correlation can be as well caused by all Arab countries voting the same in the UN as they have some interests and ODA primarily going to Arab brothers as mentioned earlier.

3.2. Islamization of Development Assistance

3.2.1. Religious and Political Background

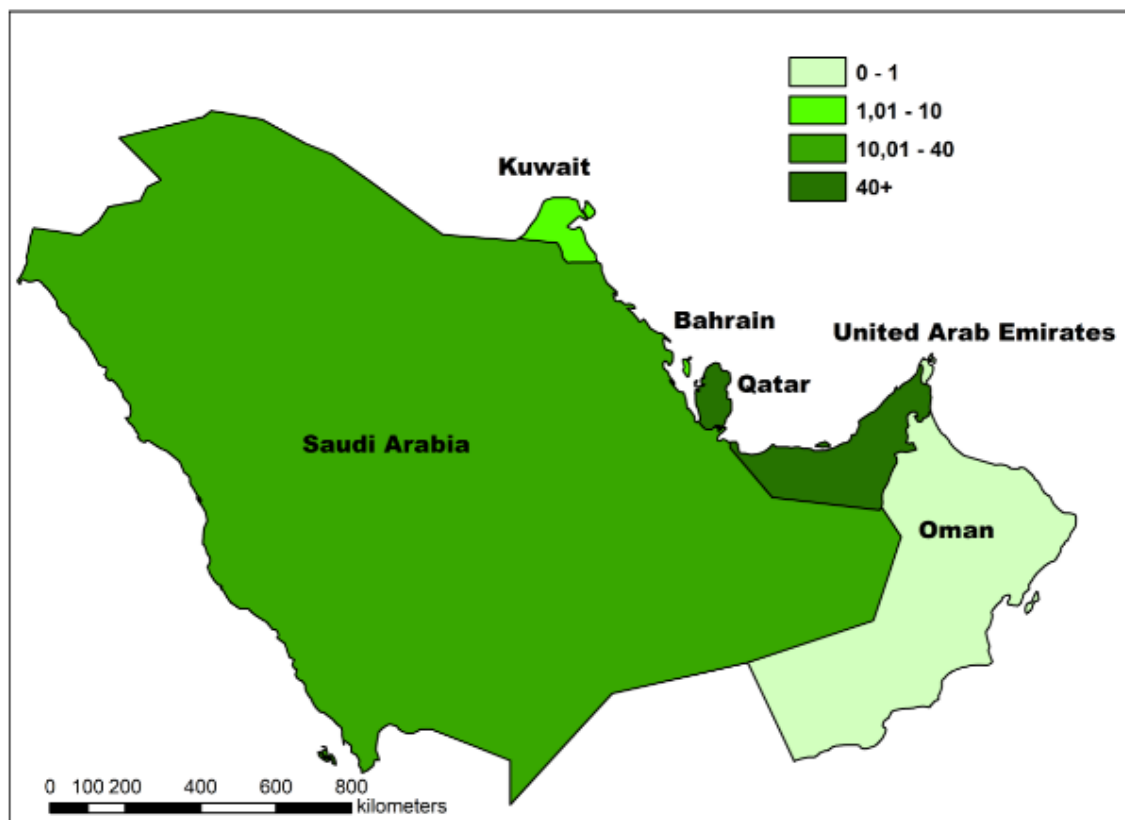
In previous chapters, the author discussed the importance of religion to the development and humanitarian assistance in the GCC. The keywords for religious affiliations in the Gulf area are *Wahhabism*, *Salafism*, and *Jihadism*. To continue to explain how they influence the field of development, the author feels that he must give a short explanation and historical background of these terms.

3.2.1.1. Salafism and Wahhabism

Salafism and Wahhabism originate in the later period of the Ottoman Empire when several Arabic religious communities felt discomfort with the direction of the Sunni Ottoman Islam, with their main idea being restoring the fundamentals of Islam as they were during the *salaf*, the first three generations of Islam. For them, Islam must return to its roots and especially to *tawhid* (oneness of God). Salafists and Wahhabists have fought against traditional practices, especially mystical Sufism, as well as modern Western liberal ideas. According to them, every Muslim should rely only on the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, while the community itself should implement *Sharia* law. All Muslims (Shia and even traditional Sunni) who somehow fail to comply with these rules are polytheists - heretics and should be subjected to the excommunication. This reasoning allowed Wahhabi/Salafi to conclude *jihad* against one's people (Stanley 2005). The two formerly separate movements merged in the 1960s to gain strength in their quest to purify Islam. This led to the conclusion that Salafism and Wahhabism are interchangeable, especially among Western media, policymakers and some experts. A Wahhabi is generally a person who follows the teachings of Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahhab originating in Arabian Peninsula's desert province Najd (central Saudi Arabia). He was a non-educated *ulama* who preached returning to the basics of Islam for Bedouins, but he was rejected by the intellectuals in the centres of Islamic thought such as the university Al-Azhar as too simplistic and heretical. It took one more century for the then-Egypt based Islamic modernists to come up with puritanical movement which called for the cleansing of Islam and returning to monotheism (*tawhid*), and thus, Salafism was born (Dillon 2009, Commins 2006). To be called a Salafi, a person does not have to follow the teachings of one individual, but it is rather a universal label.

It is as well widely used term for self-identification, in comparison with Wahhabi, which is not used by its followers. When talking to a Wahhabi, most of them would self-identify as Salafi, while no one will do the same in the other direction. The main reason why Wahhabis have rejected the term Wahhabism is that it provides the impression that the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab are a new doctrine within Islam, wherever they believe that it is merely an extension of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and the *salaf* (Bin Ali, Bin Sudiman 2016, Stanley 2005). At the same time, this also goes against their strict monotheism to be called after someone (Al-Wahhab) which they cannot worship. In this thesis, the author will mostly use the term Salafism when talking in general about the school of Islam which some of the GCC members import worldwide. This will be used as an inclusive term for just about every puritan Muslim, while Wahhabism will be used strictly only when talking about Saudi Arabia's state religion or when quoting other experts.

Fig. 2 - Percentage of inhabitants following Salafi catechism in the GCC countries



source: Izady 2013, author's adaptation

As shown on fig. 2 currently, about 45% of Qatar and the UAE, more than 20% of Saudi Arabia population consider themselves Salafists, and their numbers are steadily rising since gaining independence (Izady 2013). This steady rise can be mainly attributed to the state support of spreading these beliefs. The current Saudi Arabia ruling family of Ibn Saud (originating in Najd province) has been closely connected with Wahhabist ideas since its foundation. And despite the modernization of society and state structure in the Western model in the late 20th century, Saudi rulers have been devoted to sustaining Wahhabi religious rules and laws (Commins 2006). The UAE and Qatar became more connected to Salafism since they accepted Salafists fleeing modernistic, socialist, and pan-Arabic regimes in Egypt and other Arab countries outside of the Gulf in the 1960s. Foreign but still Arab Salafists quickly integrated into these societies and held high positions in the administrative and religious community (Dillon 2009) .

3.2.1.2. Jihadism

The movement grew stronger and stronger until the crisis in Kuwait in 1990, when Gulf countries unanimously agreed to allow the US and their allies to push Iraq out of Kuwaiti territory. This was a very problematic step for Salafists as some of their leaders called it a '*non-believers*' invasion and prolonging of Western imperialism. This is why Saudi ruling elites pushed Wahhabi leadership to call *fatwa* on the use of Saudi territory for the US army to defeat Saddam Hussein. *Fatwa* was the insufficient explanation for many and the GCC cooperation with the US led to split in the Salafi movement and dislocation of more political and militant Salafi Jihadists from the more pragmatic and less political, religious leaders (Commins 2006). Jihadists were born in the 1980s inside the international voluntary force fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and since the Soviet retreat in 1988, the movement spread across the Muslim world. It offered to alternative method to bring Islam back to its roots and purge it of foreign and modern influence. The main idea, circulating in their ranks, is belief that they can declare any Muslim (or non-Muslim) a *kafir* (unbeliever or apostate) by themselves. That is why they are called *takfiri* – the ones who accuse others of apostasy' and then call *jihad* on them. This idea and methods of using force to achieve the Salafi goals was condemned and banned by high-ranked religious leaders (*ulema*) as only the way how person or group

can be called *kafir* and excommunicated is by religious court when all other methods are already exhausted (Oliveti 2012). However, jihadism became a powerful tool for groups and individuals feeling left out from the more and more globalized world.

Al-Qaeda emerged as a representative of the movement, and while having leadership consisting heavily of GCC citizens, its goal was to overthrow the Ibn Saud dynasty and exterminate the highest ranking Wahhabi/Salafi leaders who cooperated with the Western world (Williams 2003). Wahhabism/pragmatic Salafism clashed with Jihadism and the GCC countries openly condemned the Jihadists. Since then, official policy has been always to deny any involvement with jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda (or other branches such as Al-Nusra), Islamic State in Levant etc. This became very visible after 9/11 when the GCC states needed to distance themselves from the attackers and any terroristic organisations. This does not mean that inside the society and religious community supporters of Jihadism do not exist, only they are more covered up. One country which failed to cover up its support of Jihadism is Qatar (Commins 2006). Qatar is an outlier in the whole of the GCC in the last decade, as it tried to escape the joint GCC foreign policy dominated by Saudi Arabia. Apart from keeping a good relationship with Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood, it focuses on radical Salafists and Jihadists in conflict zones around the Muslim world. This has led to a constant push to renounce its independent and controversial foreign policy, which culminated in the blockade of Qatar in 2017 by other GCC members (except Oman). This blockade lasts until today as the foreign policies of different GCC members continue to differentiate more and more (Trager 2017, Dickinson 2014). Later this thesis will return to how this has influenced Kosovo and how Saudi Arabia and Qatar clash in the Balkans.

3.2.2. The GCC Spreading of Radical Islam via Development/Humanitarian Assistance

One Western European government official said in an interview with Villanger (2007, p. 9), *“Our government and our parliament don’t necessarily think the Saudi state is involved in sponsoring a Wahhabi agenda, but there are mosques and clerics that have been funded by Saudi individuals and organizations that we find very worrying and whose agenda is questionable. We discuss this with the Saudis, but it does make us wonder what goes on elsewhere and what agenda aid*

might be used for.” This quote put lightly what experts, officials, NGO workers have been saying over the years when discussing GCC development assistance and humanitarian aid. The GCC members directly and indirectly via different channels mentioned in chapter 3.1.2. finance nearly everything somehow connected with religion, religious education, religious media channels, and other fields which influence upbringing of a new generation and the shaping of public opinion and help to promote a positive image of Salafism (and the Gulf region) in general.

3.2.2.1. All-Encompassing Islam

The GCC organisations do not care if governmental or NGOs (still closely state watched) themselves call the practice of deeply intertwined Islam and assistance/aid, all-encompassing Islam. It is no longer only about building schools, reconstructing infrastructure, distributing medicine, giving orphans a place to live, teaching kids how to read and write. Rather, an equal (and sometimes higher) level of priority has been building mosques and madrasas, preaching the Salafi way of Islam, and teaching children to memorize the *Qur'an*. These development projects very often include a religious condition such as building a mosque together with a school, or having *Qur'an* lessons together with the math/language in the school they invested in. Humanitarian aid such as clothes, food is often incorporated with a printed version of the *Qur'an*, several *hadiths*, or other religious books (Petersen 2012). Stories of villages where Western NGO workers expected nothing more than mud shacks but find out that has a brand-new mosque in Saudi style and imam that studied in Riyadh are not uncommon (Villanger 2007). All-encompassing Islam also means that not only projects need to have religious dimension, but also that the work of the whole association is influenced, such as the strict division between women and men in the workplace (usually in a different building), and the non-existence of women in managerial, project implementation positions. The organisation's goals often came via *hadiths*, like common care for orphans, as the Prophet was an orphan himself. An excellent example for our purposes is the very well known project, adoption at a distance. Together with basic care, the orphan is given religious care and his progress in religiosity, such as the ability to memorize *surah* of *Qur'an* is measured and given to the sponsor as well. They insist that this way the orphan grows up as a “good person” (Petersen 2012, p. 139–142).

The process of all-encompassing Islam has been criticized by many that it does not differentiate between the local and Salafist religious backgrounds. Organisations and charities from the GCC have been accused of not respecting traditional way of preaching Islam and (violently) suppressing anything the Salafists call as heresies, which happen to be hundreds of years old traditions or how Islam has acclimated to local conditions. The poorer country, the less it has tools (and is less willing) to resist the pressure from the GCC and the more likely are the inhabitants to replace the local variant of Islam with the Salafi version (Brown, Pierce 2013).

3.2.2.2. Controversial Practices of GCC Organisations

One practice used by GCC charities to speed up the transition is paying a sum of money in cash to a family, if its members keep practising the way of life that Salafism embraces. This includes keeping the five pillars of Islam (fasting during Ramadan, praying regularly) but also dressing in a white tunic and growing a beard for men, covering up with black burqa for women, keeping daughters at home until marriage, learning *Qur'an* by heart, and most importantly cleaning any local traditions that have adhered to the pure values of Islam. The amount is very significant as local undisclosed NGO worker in Mostar, Bosnia and Hercegovina told the author in the interview (2017), families can receive as much as one thousand euro per month. When one considers the median salary of Bosnia hovers around 400 euro and the country suffers more than a 30% unemployment rate, it is, for sure, very tempting for local families to radically change their life and embrace Salafism (CEIC 2020). There is a very low possibility they would otherwise be able to raise this amount of money in a normal job.

In more rural areas, people start to sympathize with Salafi ideas more naturally by joining cultural programmes, events and visiting the village mosques which were built with the GCC money. The number of these new mosques has grown by leaps and bounds all around the world. For example, since the breakup of the Yugoslavia, in Bosnia and Hercegovina more than 600 new mosques were built by the GCC (Villanger, p. 8). The practice used to be that a Gulf Salafi imam was sent to operate the mosque. Only a language barrier and other culture specifics did not allow him to gain widespread support, so usually during the time, he gave up his position to local imams trained in the Middle East. They gained religious education in the new madrasas as boys and then were given scholarships to study at the universities in the Gulf

and return to preach Salafi Islam in the new mosques. This process is known in all-around countries receiving GCC assistance and has a very controversial consequence. Inside of local religious hierarchies, it created tension and an open clash. The new Salafi religious group has been fighting for power over the Muslim community leadership with older traditionalist imams. The mosques in the same cities started to be hostile to each other while believers are being marked by which mosque they attend to prey (Merdjanova 2013, Morrison 2008, Brown, Pierce 2013). Some of the receiving countries which have more or less functioning administrations (Thailand, Indonesia, Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina) try to limit these practices, as they understood it creates part of society not loyal to the state's values, but to the values of the GCC countries. Liberal elites even see this process as creating a "fifth column".

3.2.2.3. The Story of IIROSA

The practices mentioned in previous chapters are controversial, but they still comply with the Salafi doctrine of purifying Islam and are in line with the official state policy of GCC states of spreading Salafism. Development assistance or charitable organisations often try to cover them up, because they might be not taken well inside the society or internationally, but they are non-prosecutable. That separates them from the most controversial and, in essence, criminal practice of financing the activities of Jihadists and terrorist groups. Some of the GCC organisations, private funds of philanthropists, religious charities or even state committees have been accused (but rarely convicted) of covering up financial transfers for Jihadists through development assistance or humanitarian aid. The first accusations especially emerged in the 90s, but it was the events of 9/11 which put GCC charities and development organisations in the spotlight. They were branded by the American secret services as a part of the worldwide terrorist network and in the framework of the War on Terror war was declared on them (Secretary of State 2009).

A very well-known example of an organisation that was linked to the Jihadists, and in particular Al Qaida, is the International Islamic Relief Organization or International Islamic Relief Organization of Saudi Arabia (IIROSA). IIROSA was founded by the Muslim World League in 1978 and theoretically is transnational NGO. IIROSA is based in Jeddah while being majorly funded by a *zakat* of Saudi citizens (Brown and Pierce 2013). There is not much transnational

(and non-governmental) in the organisation, as it must report its activities to the Saudi administration, and its system is based on branches via the countries where it operates. In particular, several of these branches have been suspected of involvement in financing terrorist activities or involvement of Jihadist in their structures and have been banned in the countries where they operated. In 1998 IIROSA Somalia branch was allegedly involved helping Somali affiliate of Al Qaida in the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania which led to several bans of the organisation in west African countries. The Albanian IIROSA branch was founded by a brother of a high ranking Al Qaeda official and in 1994 helped to accommodate Usama Bin Laden during his alleged few months long stay in the country; IIROSA Albania was closed by the government following the end of turmoil in the country in 1998 (Kohlman 2010, Petersen 2016). The head of the Indonesian IIROSA branch was a member of Al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah and the branch in the Philippines was led by Bin Laden's brother-in-law and was closely linked to another Al-Qaeda affiliate, Abu Sayyaf. This led to most serious blow for IIROSA worldwide, as in 2006, the Filipino and Indonesian branches were put on the list of terroristic organisations by the US and the UN for facilitating fundraising for Al-Qaida affiliated terrorist groups. Since then, IIROSA has been seen by other players in development/humanitarian assistance as prone to covering up the financing of Jihadists via charity work (Benthall 2018, US Treasury Department 2006). IIROSA has always denied any wrongdoing and accused the US government of a bias against Islamic religious organisations. Recently (2016), the name of IIROSA was withdrawn from the list of terrorist group and organisation cooperated with big western organisations such as UNICEF, but the allegations continue to circle it (IPT News 2008, Secretary of State 2016). However, IIROSA was not alone in being linked to a Jihadi group. Another major Saudi charity organisation, the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation (AHIF) had at least ten branches designated as cooperating with terrorists by the CIA, while two Saudi Red Crescent members in Bosnia were convicted in an attempt to blow up the US embassy in Sarajevo. In 1996, the CIA gave the US Secretary of State a report which showed that one-third of the thirty biggest GCC development/humanitarian organisations are somehow connected with Jihadi militants (Beránek, Ťupek 2008).

3.2.3. Aftermath of the 9/11 Attacks

The 9/11 attacks created a total shift in the mindset in the Western world towards radical Islam and the Middle East region in general. Immediately, every institution or organisation originating in the GCC states was suspected of support for Jihadists and the development and humanitarian organisations, funds, committees were no exception. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the US administration included them in the War on Terror as an important financial source for Jihadists. The US State Department has put 31 development/humanitarian Muslim organisations from the GCC on the terrorist list for their relations to Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, or other radical Jihadist groups. Aside from combating these “terrorist” agencies, the US Treasury Department introduced their ‘*Anti- Terrorist Financing Guidelines*’ for NGOs while the EU came up with a ‘*Framework for a Code of Conduct for Non-Profit Organizations*’. These guidelines were created to set out what the US/EU operating organisations must fulfill, how and with whom they can cooperate, and how to manage the transparency of their financial transactions. (Petersen 2012, 2016). Similar rules and measures were undertaken by partners and allies of the US/EU in the War on Terror. The governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and especially Albania closely cooperate with the US on security and uncovering risks of terrorism. The security services and police of both countries have been trying to crack the system of Jihadi organisations and a considerable amount of the GCC organisations have had to close their offices and individuals were charged in preparing or financing terrorist organisations and prisoned or expelled. In Albania, all the foreign the non-governmental organisations must be registered by an Albanian national, must operate under Albanian law for NGOs, and must periodically submit financial reports (Tesař 2004, Merdjanova 2013, Ely 2019).

3.2.3.1. Current System of Financing Jihadism via Assistance/Aid

As mentioned even Saudi Arabia was forced to enact new laws concerning the financing of terrorism and money laundering into penal code in 2003. The new law also bans transactions with unidentified agencies and gives obligation for banks to store the transaction records for at least ten years. On top of this, in 2004, Saudi Arabia created a commission for control over charitable organisations which has a right to carry out

audits to see if *zakat* donations are used in agreement with ethical standards. The organisations which want to operate abroad must register at the commission and periodically must report their activity. The control over the financial transactions in the development sector in the GCC highly improved, as accounts were frozen, several banks were banned by local governments, etc.

The gap between official assistance/aid and Salafist charities/funds began to widen, and no longer were the main agencies and organisations accused of sponsoring terrorism. The official assistance/aid cut-off itself from Jihadi militants because of external pressure and as mentioned in chapter 3.1.2.2. has been totally subordinated to state administrations. For vast numbers of development/humanitarian Arab employees, this feels not like much-needed modernization and ethical steps, but rather a subjugation to the US. Petersen (2012) states that the main sentiment inside IIROSA was that the American administration did not announce the War on Terror, but a war on Islam. The sentiment grew that Muslim charities are a casualty of this war and subjected to senseless measurements and regulations which cripple their capacities. They were right, in the sense that major players in development/humanitarian assistance from the GCC member states lost part of their financing to transnational, western organisations and to small (and often very suspicious) charities which do not follow the post 9/11 laws and rules.

This all led to a change of financing for the Jihadi groups. No longer it is possible to trace *zakat* donations via bank accounts of development organisations all the way to the Jihadists. This does not mean the development/humanitarian sector stopped being involved with financing Jihadists only their methods have changed, and their secrecy has increased. Traditional pre-modern transaction methods such as *Hawala* were reinvented, which works as a cash transaction which is given to an intermediary in one country, who has a partner in the country where the recipient lives. The partner then locates the recipient and hands him the sum of money in local currency. This makes the transaction untraceable without wiretapping (Beránek, Ťupek, p. 104).

The tighter control over the development/humanitarian field also means that small and controversial religious charities and personal funds currently often reside outside the GCC. These can arise as a very local thing inside small communities in the diaspora in western Europe or are registered in failed states where nobody can check on them. These charities collect donations given to mosque personnel during prayer and send them via *Hawala* to Jihadists in conflict zones. The donor, meanwhile, thinks he/she is helping

suffering brothers in Syria/Yemen/Palestine. The UK Home Secretary stated that the most common source of support for Jihadists organisations collected in the UK is these small, anonymous public donations (Dearden 2017).

The most serious offense charities are connected with is helping Jihadi militants join combat in the Middle East. Numerous newly built mosques operated by Salafi based charities changed their rhetoric since the resurgence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and imams preached joining Jihadi brothers in combat. The potential Jihadists even used humanitarian motives as a cover-up to be less suspicious trying to leave to join ISIL. Shanahan (2017, p. 6) gives an account of one British Jihadist, *“I would send emails to the organizations, ask questions about food and accommodation, whether videos were permissible to make in the orphan camps. I done research on how to adopt children, searched Islamic websites on the ruling of adoption. All-knowing MI5 was tracking my internet history.”*

This connection was not solely connected to the western world, Jihadists were helped by questionable charities worldwide. Since ISIL posted photos and videos of fighters of Balkan origins in combat, the Balkan states took it very seriously. The crackdown on mosques funded by questionable sources, arresting Jihad-preaching imams and the banning of a wide field of charities and development agencies followed (Demjaha, Peci 2018).

4. Methodology

Methodologically, the master’s thesis uses several principles of a case study. The case study defined by George and Bennett (2005, p. 17) as *“the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events.”* When looking at the typology of the case studies by Arend Lijphart and Harry Eckstein this research is an interpretative (or disciplined configurative) study case, as its goal is to use established theories to explain a specific case (George, Bennett 2005). The goal of the thesis is not to change the theory nor is the author’s ambition to create a new one. The main aim is to use the theory and concept of Islamization of the development assistance and describe and explain the case of Kosovo. If some specifics which do not bode well occur, it can problematize the theory a little.

As is typical for other case studies this thesis is forced to use a combination of several methods to answer the research questions and both quantitative and qualitative approaches would be very beneficial. Unfortunately, due to data unavailability of data, the use of quantitative methods is very limited, and the research is heavily dependent on qualitative methods. The whole thesis leans on the collecting of data via semi-structured interviews, which are complemented by participant observation and analysis of documents/articles/data published by Kosovo NGOs, Kosovo administrative, Kosovo media and GCC organisations/agencies themselves.

4.1. Why Has Kosovo Been Chosen?

Kosovo has been chosen for several reasons. The main reason is that it is one of only three majorly Muslim countries in Europe, and by chapter 3.1.3.1, it should be subject of much higher involvement of the GCC states in the field of development assistance and humanitarian aid. Additionally, it went through a bloody conflict in the period when the GCC states were known to give humanitarian aid to a post-war situation. Meanwhile, Bosnia and Hercegovina and to lesser account Albania are much better-researched states when talking about the involvement of the GCC states, while Kosovo is a blind spot. The research of Islamization tendencies in the development field has not been done in Kosovo yet, but at the same time, stereotypes about Kosovo and its Salafi/Jihadi radicalization are shown in media.

Other more personal reasons for this choice include the author's knowledge of the Albanian language and the possibility of conducting fieldwork in Kosovo in the spring of 2019 due to a scholarship from the CEEPUS exchange programme. The knowledge (even if not fluent) of Albanian allowed the author to understand the context, research in Albanian print media and to engage in participant observation. The CEEPUS agreement with Kosovo Ministry of Education gave the author the possibility to have a base of operations in Pristina at the university dormitory and the scholarship (from CEEPUS and from Department of Social Geography and Regional Development) enabled him to travel around Kosovo to conclude interviews and participant observation.

4.2. Analysis of Available Materials

To begin with the empirical part of the research, an analysis of available materials was done in order to prepare for conducting the fieldwork in Kosovo. Firstly, the yearly reports and any other sources available online of the GCC development agencies and charities were searched to see if they included a mention of Kosovo and any involvement there. Next came the research of online platforms of the biggest Kosovo newspapers or journals such as Zëri (*'Voice'*), Koha Ditore (*'Daily Time'*), Lajm (*'News'*), Gazeta Express, Epoka e Re (*'New Epoque'*), Kosova Sot (*'Kosovo Today'*), Bota Sot (*'World Today'*) or the state broadcaster RTK. Articles regarding any development/humanitarian projects where the GCC states were involved, were sought out and cases and controversies around the involvement of the GCC states with spreading Salafism or potentially even Jihadism were looked for in news servers. From this preliminary round of investigation, several of the biggest development projects were defined, and several cases/controversies were selected as the basis for fieldwork.

During fieldwork, the author was given even more materials such as reports and articles published by several Kosovo NGOs dealing with national security. In particular, the ones written by security experts Isa Blumi, Lulzim Peci and Agon Demjaha from Kosova Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED) proved very beneficial in answering the last research question on Jihadism in Kosovo. In addition, the governmental documents were released officially or secretly became available to the author via the interview respondents. Out of these, the strategies on prevention of foreign extremism and domestic radicalism published by the Office of Prime Minister stand out and helped to sort out the action taken by administrative/government against spreading of Jihadism in Kosovo.

4.2.1. Data Availability and Sources

The lack of data in the development assistance and humanitarian aid field is a usual occurrence. The receiving country's statistical office normally does not collect data about the received development assistance and other sources, if they exist, do not cover the country as a whole but only a certain field or region. Kosovo, even if it is not a typical Global South country in terms of receiving assistance, is no exception and general statistics regarding ODA or any other assistance/aid does not exist.

Normally, however the researcher can count on statistics and in general information from donor's agency. The problem that this is only valid between DAC countries. Unfortunately, in the case of GCC states, as mentioned in chapter 3.1.3.4., a huge problem is the lack of transparency. National funds/agencies publish yearly reports, but they include only very brief statistics of big projects, and since 2015 they have started to disappear. For example, Qatar or Abu Dhabi Development Funds only publish a fifteen-page document with their ten or fifteen most important projects. In some cases, other agencies/organisations/charities publish yearly reports or some statistics on the website but, in many cases, do not have any data at all. Aware of this problem with data availability the author sent a request to some agencies/organisations operating in Kosovo. Unfortunately, he has largely not received any answer or if so, in two or three cases, they were negative.

Since knowing that the data for quantitative analysis will be mostly unavailable for the author, the statistics serve only as a supplement. Development assistance data from the OECD Development Statistics portal as well as from the national agencies such as USAID or Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation were used. For additional contextual statistics such as trade balance, direct foreign investment etc. online statistic portals of the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Central Bank of Republic of Kosovo or Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA) were consulted. A sidelight of sources are reports of the US Secretary of State taken from the Wikileaks portal.

4.3. Participant Observation

Participant observation has been a method often overlooked in the field of geography, although for anthropologist and ethnologists it has been a very good source of collecting data in qualitative research studies for many years. Marshall and Rossman (2010) defined observation as *"the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study"*, (p. 79).

The observation is a method very beneficial in understanding the context of the case study, getting the reality under one's skin with all five senses. This can very nicely complement other qualitative methods by observing people in their natural setting, doing everyday routine without letting them feel unnatural. Observation includes methods such as active looking, informal interviewing or constantly taking notes

(DeWalt, DeWalt 2002). Crucial for successful observation is being able to remove yourself from the setting and not to intervene. This way, through distancing, a sense of objectivity can be maintained. Bernard (2006) sees it as a process of establishing rapport within a community and learning to act in such a way as to blend into the community so that its members will act naturally.

4.3.1. Course of Observation in Kosovo

During the five weeks the author had for fieldwork in Kosovo, he dedicated several days for participant observation. The observation was concentrated on the everyday life around the mosques which have been built since 1999 and financed by organisations, agencies, or charities from the GCC states. The goal was to better understand what kinds of local people visit these mosques, what are their reasons, and, in general, what an average day around mosque looks like. The author kept a diary, took photos (see appendixes) and tried to memorize everything useful for this thesis.

Since his arrival in Pristina, the author has been searching for observation object – a mosque which was built with the help of the GCC development assistance since 1999. Naturally, the author searched out some of the more suburban newer neighbourhoods of Pristina. The one that best suited the purpose of observation was found in the southeast suburb Mat. In the end, not only the life around Mat mosque (*xhamia* in Albanian) was observe – research was conducted around the following three mosques, while others (see fig. 4) were visited but not observed carefully:

a) Xhamia “Mat1” – brand new (2017) mosque in mixture of Ottoman and Middle East style financed by Qatar Charity investment (appendix no. 3)

b) Xhamia "Shaban Jashari" in Skënderaj financed by Saudi Joint Commission for the Relief of Kosovo and Chechnya built in the 2000s in a typical Saudi style (appendix no. 4).

c) Xhamia “Bashkim Sukaj” in Prizren financed by funds of Qatar Prime Minister Sheikh Eid bin Mohammad al-Thani built on the outskirts of Prizren in a classical style (appendix no. 5).

Typical observation at the Mat mosque started early in the morning to catch worshippers leaving after *fajr*, the first prayer of the day. It continued via the mid-day prayer *dhuhr*, then the author left to get lunch and conduct an interview in the afternoon.

Sometimes the author returned at the sunset for a time around the fourth prayer, maghrib. In Prizren, the author stayed overnight so he did the same routine, while to Skënderaj he was commuting, so the author did his observation around the afternoon. The author mainly stayed outside the mosque carefully examining how the believers were dressed, how they acted, what was their age/gender composition. To keep his distance, he usually sat in a nearby *café*. This gave author a good disguise, as it seems to be a typical thing for Western Balkan men (author's observation). In a *café*, the author had several non-formal conversations with locals and mosque visitors on everyday topics as far as author's knowledge of Albanian permitted. The author did not feel the need to interfere with the actual prayer inside the mosque, as these were for the community and not visitor-friendly mosques. This is why the author did not have a chance to talk with mosque personnel neither to listen to the prayer in any of the three aforementioned mosques. The possibility to talk informally an imam only arose in Bujanovac, in Albanian speaking southern Serbia.

Aside from mosque observation, the author had a chance to observe a few days inside the community in Mitrovicë where the author was invited by one of the students of the Hasan Prishtina University. This gave a lot of context on how more traditional families coexist and how the religious traditions there are practised during the holy month of *Ramadan*. In general, participant observation helped a lot to provide a context and understanding every day, especially the religious routine, as the author was not that aware it from his previous stays in the Western Balkan region.

4.4. Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the best fitting qualitative method as they can combine the advantages of structured and non-structured interviews. They allow profound qualitative research while having a basic structure, so the interpretation is not that demanding. On the other hand, it enables a certain freedom of adaptation according to the respondent. This is very important thanks to the very wide spectre of respondents in the research (Hendl 2005). As the researcher was conducting the interviewing in person, he also benefited from several advantages of the use of semi-structured interviews. According to the anticipated knowledge of the respondent could emphasize certain topics and more importantly he was able to react to the answers and ask questions that were not pre-prepared.

According to Hendl (2005), the key parts of the interview are the beginning, where a researcher must break the barriers and gain the trust of a respondent, and the end, where the respondents veer to informal conversation. The following informal conversation might be a great source of information as well. Both proved true during the fieldwork for this research.

4.4.1. Selection of Respondents

The selection of the respondents was a complex process. At first, the respondents were chosen on the basis of the analysis of key segments of Kosovo civil society. NGO, governmental agencies, academic sphere, journalists, religious leaders were identified to cover the whole picture as best as possible. Unfortunately, this method had to be changed before the actual fieldwork due to several difficulties, as it was impossible to reach and agree on an interview with people from the identified organisations/agencies, the main reason given that Kosovar society works little different than that in Central Europe. The key was personal acquaintances and direct conversation via phone while email conversation was not a very useful tool. Learning this the hard way, the method needed to be changed to snowball sampling.

4.4.1.1. Snowballing Sampling

Snowballing sampling is a nonprobability technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects among their acquaintances. This process continues until data saturation (Burns, Grove 2005). In general, this might be an efficient and cost-effective method to access people who would otherwise be very difficult to find, however the technique has several disadvantages, with the main one being the possibility of ending up with a homogenous sample. To prevent this from happening in this research, when asking for contact to already interviewed subject, the already identified organisations/agencies were mentioned and the respondent tried to contact an acquaintance working there.

Upon arriving in Pristina, the two starting subjects were two academics. They are employees of local universities; one is based on the state Hasan Prishtina University and other on private AAB College. One of them was a well-known figure inside Kosovar society and he provided the author with contacts to a local politician and leader of the religious community. Through the second, the author gained access

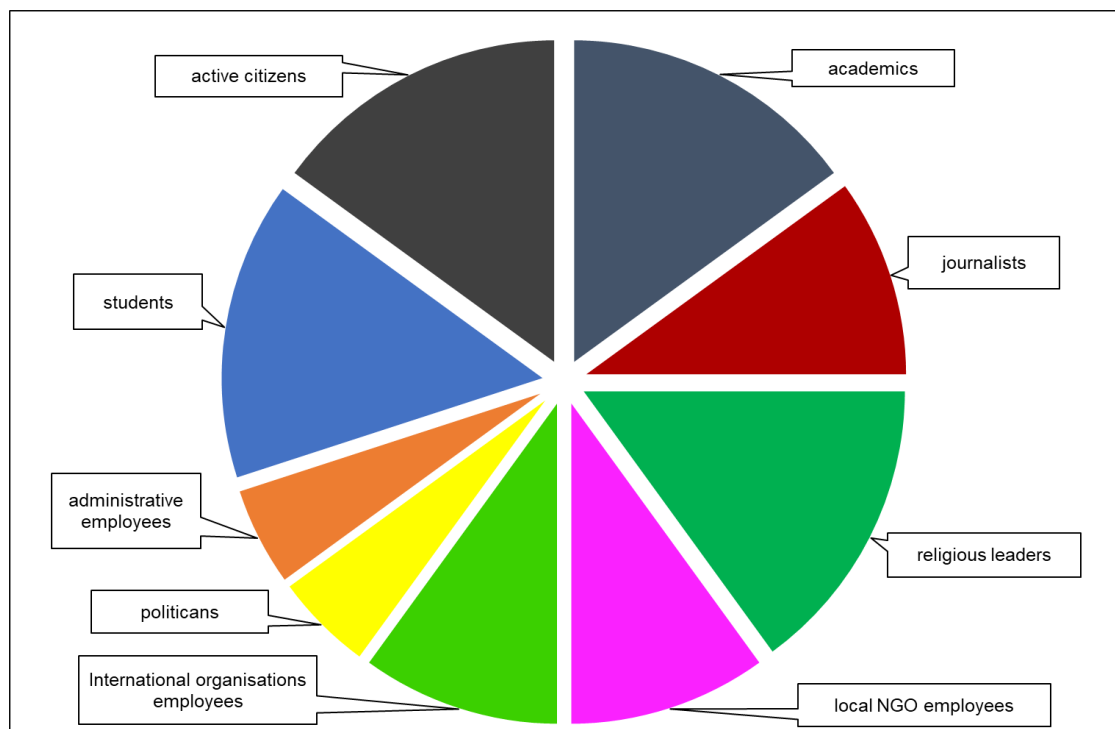
to the community of students of geography at Hasan Prishtina University and a journalist. From there, the snowball grew bigger and bigger. In the end, 20 interviews were conducted.

4.4.1.2. Getting in Touch with Respondents

As mentioned above, getting in touch with potential respondents was quite a challenge. At first, official emails were sent to addresses of selected organisations/agencies and their employees whose email addresses were obtainable on their websites. Only three emails came back, all, in general, requesting that when the author arrives in Kosovo, he should contact them again. So the strategy had to be changed and gaining some acquaintances through different sources was important. Thanks to the Albanian PhD. student, a first contact with a professor at a private university was made and thanks to CEEPUS program another one was gained as well.

Kosovo Albanians are a very direct people who are not fond of formalities such as email conversation. So, from the first subjects, the author received phone numbers and the first contact was via phone. The conversations about the date and time of the interview were communicated even more unofficially via social networks such as Messenger, Viber or WhatsApp. Even though 20 interviews were conducted, not all the groups of the civil society are well represented. While the academic, or religious sphere is represented well enough, the voices of employees that work directly in development assistance are missing. Unfortunately, these voices were unobtainable during the period of the five-week fieldwork due to the non-responses from the organisations and the imperfections of snowballing sampling. As mentioned, snowballing sampling is not an ideal technique of collecting subjects, when the respondents do not have an acquaintance in the field needed, then this field stays unrepresented in the final group.

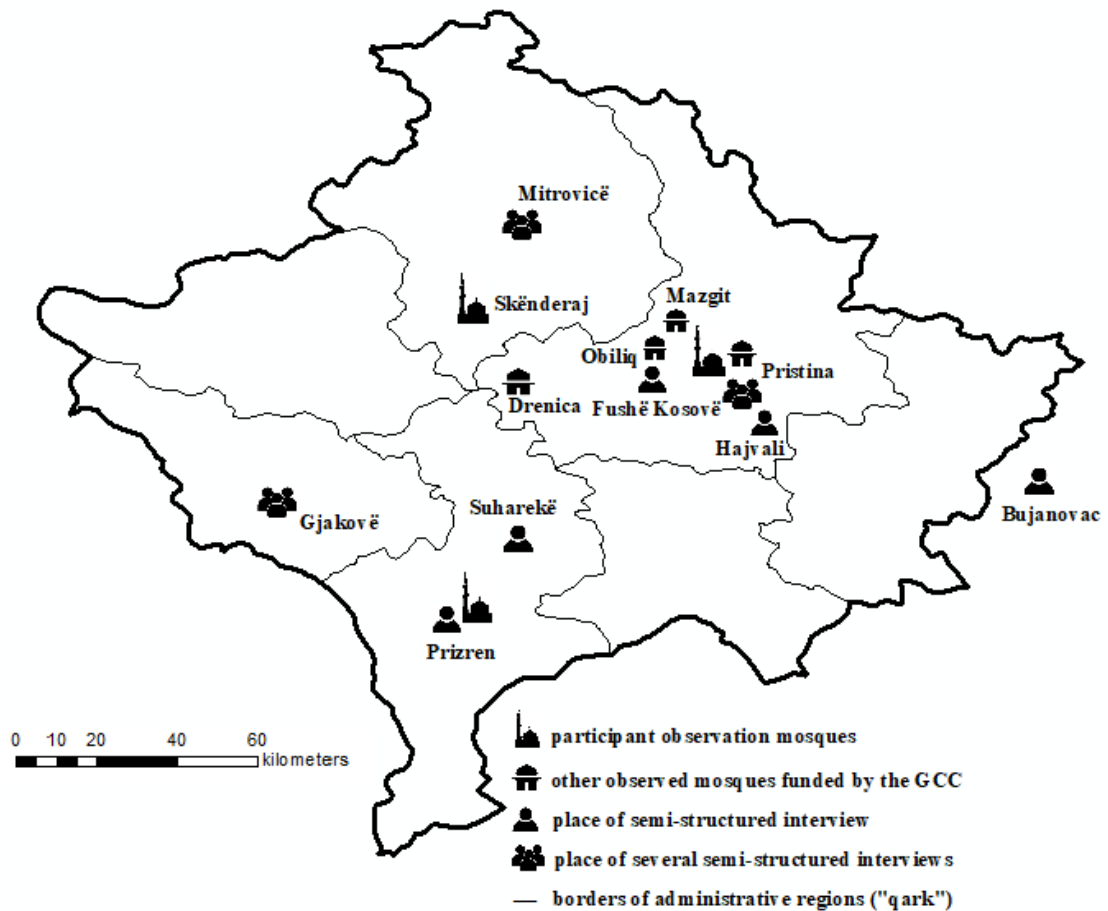
Fig. 3 - Respondents of the semi-structured interview by category



source: author's research

The final list of respondents is following; academics (oriental studies, geography, social sciences), journalists (public broadcaster RTK, newspaper Zëri), NGO employees (head of Kosovar Center for Gender Studies, KIPRED researcher), religious leaders (Gjysha; head of Teqeja e Madhe Gjakovë, imam of Hadum Xhamia Gjakovë, an IT officer at Bashkësia Islame – Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK)), international organisations employees (OSCE National Political Officer Pristina, OSCE employee Bujanovac), the leader of opposition in Gjakovë, (currently a member of parliament), director of Department for Economic Statistics at Kosovo Statistical Office, students of Hasan Prishtina University (from Pristina, Suharekë and Mitrovicë) and several active citizens (an IT worker from Mitrovicë, a hostel owner from Prizren, a bus driver from Hajvali). As seen on the following fig. 4, the respondents were dispersed all around Kosovo as regional proportionality was considered. Four out of six biggest cities (Pristina, Prizren, Mitrovicë, Gjakovë) in Kosovo are included.

Fig. 4 – Map of Kosovo showing sites used for the field research



source: author's research

4.4.2. Course of Interviews

Eventually, the interview was planned for approximately 40 mins, which was on average normal length in practice as well. Of course, some respondents had more to say, some less. The longest took over one and a half hour. Sometimes challenging was the language barrier. The Albanian of the author is not sufficient to explain everything as the author would love to, so to prevent misunderstanding, the preferred language of interviews was English. This, on the other hand, created some misunderstanding because of the lesser fluency in English of several respondents. In that case, a mix of English and Albanian was used. Twice a third person was present to translate as the respondent was not confident in his/her English skills. Interviews were held in the most convenient places for respondents so mostly either in working place of respondents or the key places for Balkan style of life in *cafés*.

The interview started with broad explanation what the author is doing in Kosovo, explaining the goals of thesis and that the author is not part of any organisation or agency and that the fieldwork is solely for purpose of student research. The respondents were familiarized with a notion that their responses will be anonymized, and their names never mentioned. Meanwhile they were asked if the interview can be recorded. Unfortunately, more than half of the respondents said, they would prefer not to record it. The author respected their wish as it is understandable as some might feel uncomfortable being directly quoted even though the author promised and will keep strict anonymity. Generally, the first question asked was how they would explain and rate the development assistance/humanitarian aid process in Kosovo since 1999. Through the incorporation of the general picture and all-important players such as EU states, US, Turkey at the beginning, the interview smoothly reached the position and importance of GCC assistance. The core of the interview were questions aimed at the Islamization of the assistance, on the practices of all-encompassing Islam or towards Jihadi radicalization and response of the administration. At the end, questions turned to the soft power of the GCC states, what is the view society towards the Gulf and what is expected in the future. Through the ending question, the whole interview non-violently returned to the main goals of thesis and respondents had one more chance to stress how they approach it. The structure of the whole interview can be seen in appendix 1. In general, the interviews took place in a pleasant and homey atmosphere as it typical when meeting with Western Balkan people.

4.4.3. Assessment of Interviews

The assessment itself was preceded by a transcript of all recorded interviews and all written notes from non-recorded interviews to the virtual form. Besides, all the notes and other materials from participant observation were added. Interpretation of the interview was done by the method of coding (Šedová, Švaříček 2014). From the transcripts and notes key quotes and ideas were chosen for each of the main structure points of the interview. These were transferred to Microsoft Excel using abbreviated codes. In the following steps, new categories emerged based on frequency, similarity, and context. These categories and the relationships between them are shown in fig. 8 in chapter 7 and the categories, based on the most common links, have been analysed in more detail in the thematic areas. This interpretation was supplemented

with citations of individual respondents and discussed with theoretical knowledge. To ensure the anonymity of the respondents, codes were created according to their classification into several groups (fig. 3). These codes indicate the individual citations in the text. Codes for individual groups of respondents based on chosen categories are given in fig. 5.

Fig. 5 - Codes indicating classification groups to ensure the anonymity

profession	code	number of respondents
academics	AD	3
journalists	J	2
religious leaders	RL	3
local NGO employees	NGO	2
international organisation employees	IO	2
politician, administrative employee	PA	2
students	S	3
active citizens	AC	3

source: author's research

4.5. Transcription

The transcription of Arabic names to English is based on studied literature and internet resources that have covered a complete list of names in the work. The transcript of the names of the GCC organisations and agencies are taken from their website or other internet resources and stable transcription are used commonly.

In the case of using local organisation/agencies names or geographical toponymical names, the situation is very complicated. Kosovo, as it stands, has two official languages. Each organisation/agency and each toponymical name have Albanian and Serbian equivalent. In this case, to avoid duplicity, all existing English transcriptions are used. While in the case where there is no stable transcription, the original Albanian term is used. The reason why the author chooses this, is that Albanian is the majority spoken language in all places mentioned in the text and all respondents were Albanian speaking.

4.6. Limits of Used Methods

As already mentioned, the case study in geography supports both qualitative and quantitative approach. In the case of this research, only qualitative methods of collecting data were used; due to quantitative data unavailability or unwillingness of organisations/agencies to share with the author, only very basic descriptive statistics could have been used. No explanatory models or spatial analysis were possible. This means that especially the first research question could have not been answered properly as it lacks the data evidence behind it. The author accepts the answer is more orientational and may not show the complete truth.

The research leans heavily on semi-structured interviews as interviews are a very important method of data collection and very often are very beneficial in understanding the main features of the case study (McGrath et al. 2018). This, however, does not silence the criticism if twenty interviews are representative enough of a sample to draw some conclusions, especially since the snowball method of collecting subjects for interviews may have caused underrepresentation of some key actors. Most importantly, the development agencies and charities workers voices absent are due to their unwillingness to meet with the author and are probably not heard enough. The author asserts that he did his best to stay objective and include all views. However, he understands that the conclusions can be questionable and that this research cannot be used to any generalization.

Meanwhile, other limits emerged include the lack of fluent knowledge of Albanian, lack of respondents from Serbian and other minorities in Kosovo, and the chronological period of field research— the holy month of Ramadan. The author's knowledge of Albanian is limited to a street conversation, which is why he was not able to conclude the interviews one hundred per cent in local language which could have caused some misunderstandings as well as a barrier between author and respondents. More importantly, the author surmises that this could be considered the reason why some key actors did not want to participate.

Considering the lack of minorities, unfortunately, the snowballing sampling did not provide any possible respondents that could have been interviewed. Especially in the case of especially the Serbian minority, the researcher has no ambition of including their community as it lives separately and deals with very different features and different

challenges. So, the conclusions drawn might as well not be valid for administrative zones with Serbian population.

One of the limits of this thesis' participant observation was the time of the year when the fieldwork was concluded. The author was in Kosovo during the holy month of Ramadan when the religion in Western Balkans rises to the surface and gain bigger importance in the everyday life of a Balkan Muslim. In that case, the author might have been influenced a bit by that when dealing with the everyday religiosity.

5. Historical and Political Context

5.1. Kosovo Statehood

Before going further into the topic, the author understands that the issue of statehood in case of Kosovo is very controversial one and feels an explanation is needed in order to use the terminus independent state/nation when talking about Kosovo. Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia on 17th of February 2008. The recognition of state independence has been an issue ever since. Serbia has never recognised this step but since the Brussels Agreement (2013), it has normalised its relations with Kosovo. In 2018, Kosovo reacted on Serbian provocations by imposing 100% taxes on Serbian goods and two sides broke off relations again (Rudic, Isufi 2018). The breaking off of relations in 2018 proved very costly for Kosovo, as Serbia was able to campaign and persuade fourteen states to withdraw its recognition of Kosovo independence. As of 30th of June 2020 only half of the UN members, 97 out of 193 recognise Kosovo as an independent state. Fortunately for Kosovo, those who withdraw were mostly smaller African and Oceanian countries on which the recognition of statehood does not depend, since all G7, most EU states or key neighbours still recognise Kosovo as an independent nation. Key for the author was the use of *independent state of Kosovo* and not *Autonomous Province/Region of Kosovo and Metohija* as per Montevideo Convention (1933). Kosovo fulfills all four criteria which define a state as a juridical person in international law. It has defined territory (even though there are talks of a territory swap with Serbia), has a clearly defined population, a democratically elected government, and it lively interacts with other states even the ones that do not recognise its independence, such as Slovakia or Belgium.

The author understands, that while claiming *de jure* statehood might be controversial for some, Kosovo clearly fits inside the definition of *de facto* statehood as identified by Scott Pegg (1998)⁸.

5.2. War in Kosovo (1999) as a Trigger for the GCC Involvement in Kosovo

“Arabs were not here before the war. There might have been some scholarship programs but very little and otherwise we were part of Serbia and no Middle East organisations could operate here.”, said (RL). Almost all respondents agreed that only the results of war enabled the GCC organisations/agencies/charities arrival in Kosovo. The destruction of infrastructure, housing, mass displacement and in some cases lack of basic things needed for survival were original reasons for GCC states’ involvement in Kosovo. The author is not going to explaining in depth the events of 1999 but will only give short explanation of its roots and the important players while focusing on how the war has affected citizens, infrastructure and territory as whole when the GCC charities arrived in autumn of 1999.

5.2.1. Roots of the Conflict

Historically Kosovo has been a very multicultural territory. Aside from smaller ethnic minorities such as Turks, Bošnjaks (Slavic Muslims), Aromanians and Roma (in Albanian speaking world self-identified as Ashkali or Egyptians) the two main ethnicities are Serbians and Albanians. For both nations, Kosovo holds a symbolic place in national history and mythology. For Serbian nationalism, Kosovo is a territory of the first Serbian kingdom Raška and more importantly battleground of the battle of Kosovo Polje (1389) where Christian forces⁹ led by Prince Lazar clashed with Ottomans led by sultan Murad. The successful (battle ended in a draw) resistance was (and still is) used by Serbian nationalism as a historical precedent of a successful fight against Muslim oppression. While Albanian nationalism stands on the argument

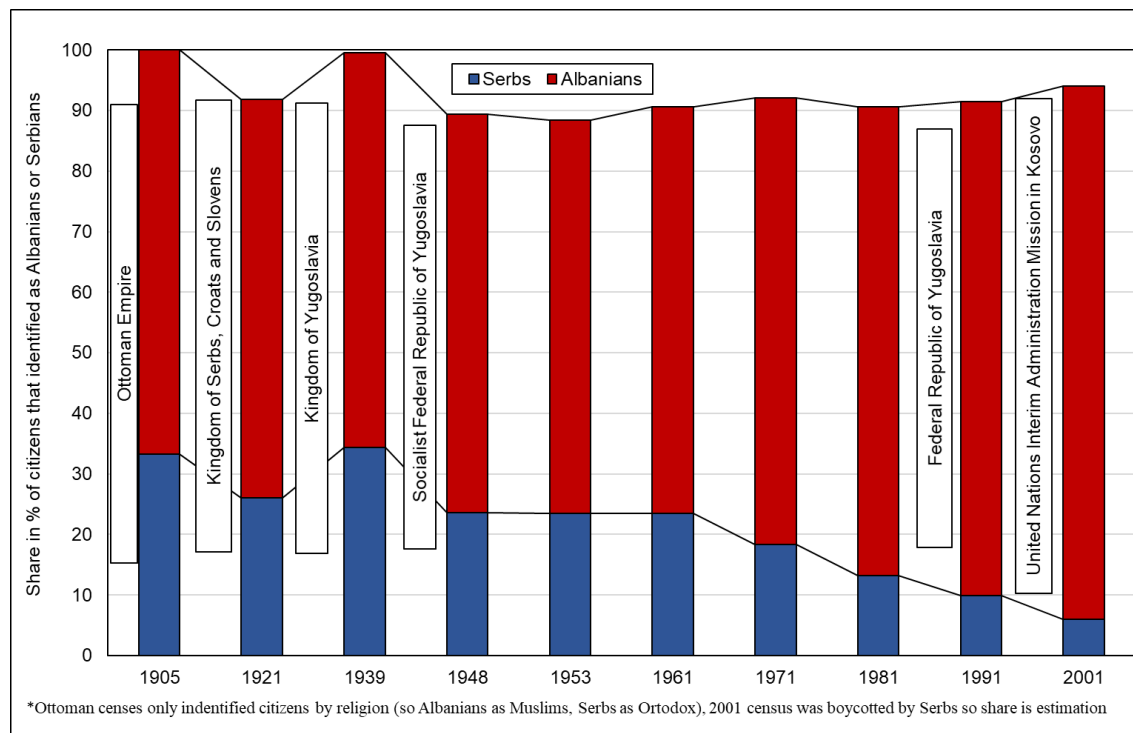
⁸ The *de facto* state is a secessionist entity that receives popular support and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a defined territorial area, over which it maintains effective control for an extended period of time (Pegg 1998).

⁹ Serbian nationalists very often forget that Christian Albanians fought on their side as well.

that Albanians are indigenous inhabitants of Kosovo and more importantly in Prizren (1878) first *'proto-state'*/political alliance (League of Prizren) of all Albanian lands was constituted (Volný 2017, Judah 2008).

The conflict from its roots in the 19th century became more visible since Kosovo was incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbia during the Balkan Wars. Ever since Serbians were ruling elites (except WWII period when Kosovo was part of Italian protectorate of Greater Albania) even though the territory was majorly Albanian since 19th century (see fig. 6) The suppression of the Albanian element in Kosovo started to loosen due to Tito's policy towards ethnic minorities in the late 1960s. Albanians were admitted into the cultural and political life of Yugoslavia and slowly but surely educated Albanian elites arose. In 1974, in the new constitution, Kosovo gained autonomous status which allowed it to have its own assembly, constitution, and more economic independence, making Kosovo almost equal to other Yugoslav republics (Malcolm 1998, Elsie, Destani 2018).

Fig. 6 - Share (in %) of citizens of Kosovo territory that identified as Albanians or Serbs.



sources: Magocsi 2018, Ocić 2008, author's adaptation.

Tito died in 1980 and the fragile national coexistence started to break up. In 1986, a *Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts* was issued where Dobrica Ćosić wrote that the Serbian nation is subjected to injustice in other Yugoslav republics

and, in Kosovo, even genocide. Generally since the 1960s, the percentage of Serb population in Kosovo has been shrinking as seen in fig. 6. However, the explanation is not genocide but higher levels of fertility of Albanians and the emigration of Serbs to Belgrade for better job opportunities. The text of the memorandum was widely criticised but became a key document for the policies of Slobodan Milošević (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts 1993). The turning point from where there were no steps back was Milošević's speech on the 600th anniversary of Kosovo Polje battle, where he insisted that Serbs are laying claim to Kosovo (Milošević 1989). The autonomy given by the Constitution of 1974 vanished, the assembly was dissolved, and local self-rule was restricted. The Kosovar Albanian population was fired from all-important state administrative jobs, the Albanian language was banned from higher education, and many other restrictions in spheres of social security and health were put upon Kosovo Albanians. When considering that in early 1990s economic situation of whole Yugoslavia was disastrous and every second Albanian unemployed, this naturally led to deep dissatisfaction among the Kosovo Albanians which constituted more than 80% of Kosovo population in 1990s (Ronayne 2004).

The Kosovo Albanian resistance in the 1990s grew, first in a non-violent form led by literary historian, and head of only existing Albanian political party Democratic League of Kosovo (DLK), Ibrahim Rugova. The movement around DLK established a shadow government and parallel social system to provide education and health services to the Albanian population which were excluded by Belgrade or for those who decided not to use it on purpose (Judah 2008). Rugova managed to internationalize the Kosovo issue but the actual economic, social position of average Albanian citizen did not improve (Malcolm 1998). From the frustration and dissatisfaction from Rugova led to emergence of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

5.2.2. Kosovo Liberation Army

The Kosovo Liberation Army was founded in the early 1990s in the Drenica region as an organization whose main goal was the liberation of the Albanian population from Serbian rule. Drenica traditionally has been a place of violent resistance against any rule since Ottoman times and is a rural and very traditional region where old customary law of Kanun (such as blood feuds) was kept until 1990s and personal freedom is valued

the most as the author observed himself during his visits of Skënderaj and Memorial of Adem Jashari in Prekaz.

The KLA's strategy was to carry out attacks on the Serbian security forces and then present the atrocities which Serbian forces did in retaliation attacks. This way KLA were gaining more and more support and in several years evolved from a small guerrilla group of friends from Drenica to an organisation with as many as around twenty thousand guerrilla fighters. Following the Prekaz massacre¹⁰ it gained wide support of citizens and some elites who felt non-violent resistance is not enough, and thus the KLA stopped being only a guerrilla organization and gained political power as well (Malcolm 1998, Perritt 2008).

International media sources (The New York Times, The Scotsman) brought news that KLA might be involved with Jihadists (News from Kosovo 2008). However, this seems to have never proven to be true. The respondents (A, RL, J) said KLA never allowed any foreign Jihadists into their ranks. They were, by nature, Albanian secular nationalist, not religious, and guerrillas. As one (AD) said, *"KLA had a mentality that they are fighting as Albanians against Serbs, not as Muslims against Christians."*

In same time the United States pushed KLA to distance themselves with any potential contacts with Islamic terrorists or the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. *"KLA was aware of the negative popularity of Mujahedeen in Bosnia and Hercegovina and wanted to restrain from being accused in western media as a religious organisation. That is why Chechen or Arab mercenaries were refused while several citizens of western Europe countries could join."*, said (J). KLA leaders could be classified as terrorists and can be charged with war crimes by Hague Tribunal but could not be accused of dealing with the GCC finances, organisations, or personnel in the structures of KLA (BBC 2020).

5.2.3. Prelude of War

Due to international outrage as to how the previous conflicts in the former Yugoslavia ended up, Kosovo situation was followed closely by the international community

¹⁰ Fifty-eight Kosovo Albanians including small kids were killed during the tank and helicopters siege of village Prekaz where one of the leaders of KLA Adem Jashiri resided with his wide family. Today several houses riddled with bullets are kept as Memorial Complex Adem Jashiri. Jashiri meanwhile became folk hero of Kosovo Albanians and his name holds even International Airport in Pristina (Judah 2002).

since 1997. The Contact Group¹¹ tried to solve the growing crisis via diplomacy throughout 1998, but the clashes between KLA and Serbian security became more and more intense. By September, already 250 000 of Kosovo Albanians were forced to leave their homes (Ronayne 2004, p. 61–62). Later in the year, due to the fact that Milošević allowed unarmed OSCE verification mission to Kosovo to monitor, document, and publicly report violations, the situation began to quieten down, only to escalate again in January after the Račak massacre¹² which created international outrage and condemnation from most of the Western politicians (Judah 2002). Bill Clinton commented it, *"this was a deliberate and indiscriminate act of murder designed to sow fear among the people of Kosovo"* (James 1999).

Against the backdrop of threatened NATO military action, the negotiations set in Rambouillet in February 1999, presented the Yugoslavia government and the Kosovo Albanian delegation (both DLK and KLA) balanced agreement on interim self-administration for Kosovo. It was long thought that Kosovo Albanians would not sign the agreement giving them only substantial autonomy but they did on 18th of March while the Yugoslav government delegation retreated from any previous commitments and the Yugoslav army and Serbian irregular forces launched a major offensive in Kosovo (Judah 2002, Kaufmann 2002). What followed was the very well-known response from Javier Solana, NATO's secretary-general, who in consultation with Allies, directed US general Clark to initiate air operations against Yugoslavia, without awaiting approval from the United Nations Security Council. This controversial, and by international law “illegal”, step was backed up by argument of genocide prevention (Kritsiotis 2000). The question if it created precedents for future interventions is not the topic of the thesis.

5.2.4. Operation Horseshoe and Mass Expulsions

The main goal of the Milošević offensive was to implement a plan to crush the base of KLA support among the population and forcibly to expel a large portion of Kosovo's Albanian population. The plan code-named Horseshoe had been drawn

¹¹ Informal grouping of great powers that have a significant interest in policy developments in the Balkans. The Contact Group is composed of the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia (Ronayne 2004).

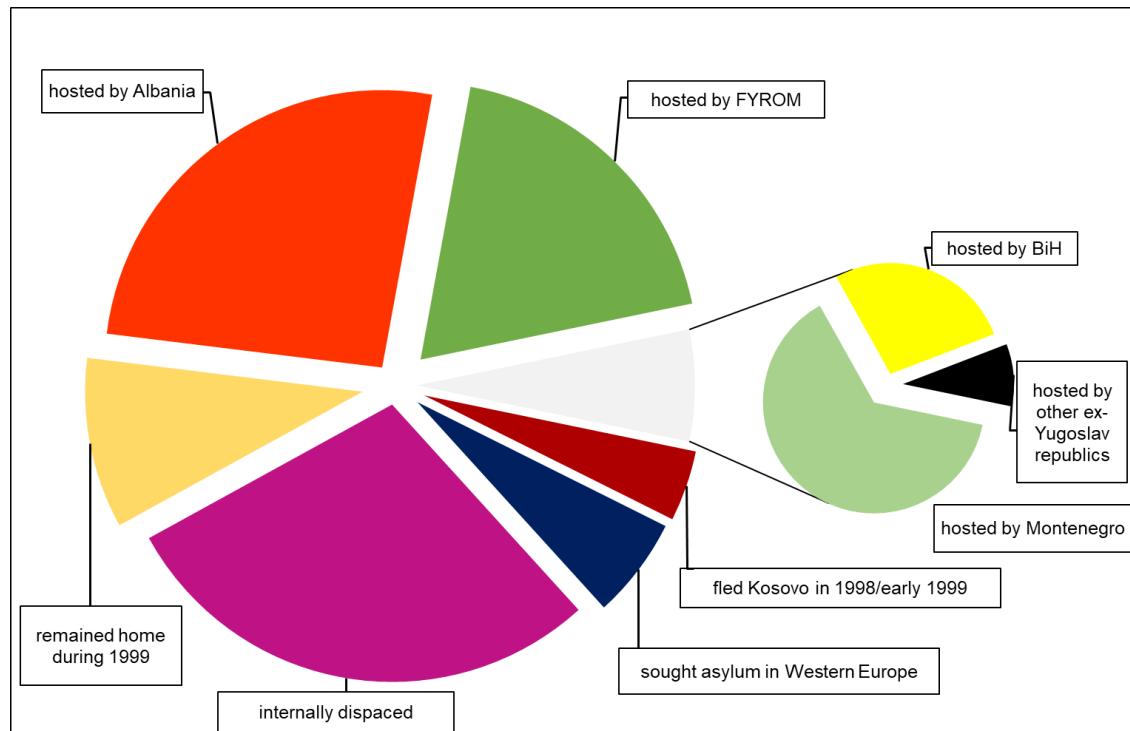
¹² Mass killing of 45 Kosovo Albanians, from only 9 were suspected KLA members while others were unarmed villagers (Judah 2002).

for several months by Yugoslav intelligence service with a clear goal to create majorly Serbian Kosovo. Knowledge of the plan was supposed to be given to NATO by Bulgarian intelligence service (Novinite 2012, Ronayne 2004). Yugoslav/Serbs government never acknowledged the existence of such a document, but the campaign of ethnic cleansing was clearly happening. Within three weeks of the start of the war, 525,787 refugees from Kosovo had flooded the neighbouring countries, according to the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (Abrahams 2001). Slovakian war correspondent Andrej Bán wrote about it in his memories (2019, p. 45), *“We were waiting on the Albanian side of the border close to Kukës as we were not allowed to enter Kosovo. Everyday tens of thousands of refugees were arriving on the border on foot, on waggons, on tractors or in old Mercedes’s. Their accounts of what happened did not differ much, they were told by Yugoslav army or police to leave immediately and that their houses will be burned or inhabited by Serbs.”*

Per Human Rights Watch since the end of the conflict government forces expelled more than millions of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo while several hundred thousand more were internally displaced. As seen in fig. 7, Kosovo Albanians mostly escaped to Albania or Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) which have the biggest Albanian communities but also to other parts of Yugoslavia and to Western Europe as well. These statistics are generally supported by results of participant observation when most of the locals said that during 1999, they were expelled and took refuge in neighbouring states and provinces, the furthest being Zagreb.

Kosovar Albanians were not only subjected to mass expulsion but to killings, rape, and other atrocities. Approximately 10 000 (many of them educated elites or OSCE co-workers) were killed between March and June. The mass graves are still waiting to be found and bodies are still being returned to Kosovo as killed Albanians were taken out to the Serbian mainland to be buried (Borger 2010). Sexual assaults were common and not only isolated acts committed by army individuals. One of the respondents (S) remembers a situation, when two Yugoslav soldiers came to the apartment and asked for the respondent’s sister or they will kill the whole family. When the respondent’s father said rather kill me than touch my daughter, respondent remembers the Yugoslav soldiers, who were still very young, became scared, rather backed up and left.

Fig. 7 - Results of Kosovo Albanians ethnic cleansing, March – June 1999.



source: Human Rights Watch – Abrahams 2001, author's adaptation¹³

In June, the NATO airstrike campaign started to prove beneficial, Yugoslav infrastructure was in ruins and army supplies were running low. Milošović was forced to sign an agreement of withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo and putting the territory under UN protection with significant oversight and monitoring. Nearly all the displaced Kosovo Albanians returned to the province following the war (Ronayne 2004), only to find that their homes were burned or at least looted. In several regions (especially Drenica), whole villages were destroyed. In figures from Human Rights Watch, out of a total of 237,842 houses, 45,768 were heavily damaged and 46,414 were destroyed, so almost 40% of all houses in Kosovo were in a state where the owners could not reside there. Civil and religious infrastructure was affected as well. Shops, small businesses were looted, 155 mosques and numerous *tekke*¹⁴ burned or destroyed, while the hardest hit were schools from which more than 60% were destroyed (Abrahams 2001).

¹³ Total amount of Kosovo Albanian in 1999 is estimation based on the population growth from the last census in 1991

¹⁴ Place of gathering for Sufi brotherhoods, more chapter 6.1.1.

Kosovo was in ruins and its population on the brink of famine. Over 900,000 people needed everyday food provisions and protection against significant outbreaks of disease (Demjaha, Peci 2016). Most of the respondents described the situation as total chaos where KLA was engaging in a vendetta against Serbian population (and non-violent DLK opposition) and every other citizen was struggling to live day-to-day. Kosovar society was very vulnerable when the war ended, as all with whom the author talked recalled. *“The situation was dismal, and everyone was just so happy the help is coming, and it really did not matter from which side.”*: recalled (IO). *“People did not care if they get food and clothes from the US, Germany, Turkey or Saudi Arabia. They wanted to eat no matter if that was a hamburger or something else.”*, said (AD)

5.3. The UN Mission Interim Administration in Kosovo

The Interim Administration by United Nations (UNMIK) was set up based on UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which was passed in June 1999. Its goal was to, *“to provide an interim administration, the peacekeeping role – to reach out to all communities and the status process role – to facilitate the process, while not conducting it”*(UN Security Council Resolution 1244). In other words, it was provisional administration to ensure normal and peaceful life while focusing on four main issues; creating the justice system, the public administration, overlooking democratisation process, and enhancing the economy (Haxhiaj 2018).

Due to its statutes, UNIMK had several limitations and obviously could not be a substitute for the state structures which Kosovo was only slowly building up. Many of the respondents claim that various flaws in Kosovo society until today are UNIMK’s responsibility. Even though part of the mandate was to coordinate the humanitarian and disaster relief of all international agencies, there were very few regulations on which international and foreign governmental or non-governmental organisations could operate in Kosovo, no regulations on which religious or political agenda could spread and a lack of monitoring of financial flows. *“Kosovo had no say on which organisations will operate here”*, said (RL). (J), (IO) point out that the justice system was in the UN hands and to prosecute Islamic radicalism was not a priority. Kosovo did not have its secret service

as KFOR mission was responsible for internal security. *“Jihadi nets could have been knit without the interest of security services”* (NGO).

It is easy to judge UNIMK as a failure and responsible for the spread of Salafism in Kosovo, but the situation was extreme. Every state structure had to be built from scratch as continuation was not possible because the last time an administration functioned with Albanians in higher positions was during the communist regime which was already (then) ten years ago. At the same time, the priority was a reconstruction of the territory and reconstruction of communal relations between Albanians and Serbs. It is natural other fields and issues were neglected. Based on the interviews and participant observation it can be said control over development/humanitarian sector was one of them. Nearly every organisation/agency/charity from any part of the world (except sanctioned Iran (AD)) could come, bring any organisational personnel they want, redistribute whatever they want, build or restore any building and fund any activities.

6. Religious Context

“First is a nation and only then a religion”, “For the Albanians’ faith is Albanianism!”¹⁵, are phrases the author heard numerously in Albanian speaking world while during the fieldwork was something, which all respondents and just everybody he talked to including some of the religious leaders, agreed on. *“We are all Albanians and only then we differentiate between Muslims or Christians.”*, explained one of the (RL) during an interview. The Albanians are historically divided between Christians and Muslims ever since a significant part of the local population converted to Islam after Ottoman conquest. While in Albania, Christianity is widespread, in Kosovo almost 95% of Albanians are Muslims. Christian and Muslim blocks are not unified; Catholicism, Orthodoxy (minorly Protestants) are both practised by certain communities of Albanians, while Muslims are a mix of Hanafi Sunni Islam and several Sufi mystic orders (Judah 2008).

Thus, since the beginning of the Albanian national awakening in the late 19th century when every other Balkan nation constituted itself on a base

¹⁵ The quote originating from Albanian revivalist Pashko Vasa (Krasniqi 2011).

of religion, the Albanian revivalists opted for a secular Albanian national identity based on cultural and linguistic unity (Blumi 2005). The event that symbolises the unity the best is Congress of Manastir¹⁶ (1908) where all the religious communities agreed on the use of Latin alphabet as a transcription method of Albanian language. Throughout the 20th century, the national movement remained very secular with a very good inter-religious relationship. While the 1990s and series of Milošević repressions brought complete inter-religious unification of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo to achieve one national goal – liberation (Demjaha, Peci 2018). As one of the (RL) said, *“Everyone is together because without homeland you cannot have religion.”*

6.1. Traditional Islam and Sufi Orders

Historically, Islam has been very diverse in the Albanian-speaking world. It merges the ideology of Hanafī school of Islam brought by Ottomans and mystic Sufi *tariqas* (brotherhoods, barring some similarities to Christian orders). The main purpose of a mystic is to approach God as close as possible, ideally merge with Him and remain in Him. This state of mind can be reached by ecstatic rapture via complicated methods of mental procedures. What had been an eccentric peripheral curiosity became respectable teaching in the tenth century, as mystics gained followers and a relationship developed between the master – *sheikh* (in Albanian *baba* – father) and his pupils – *dervishes*. Compared to Christian brothers, *dervishes* do not have to leave their profession, they can have families and only arrive at ‘*tariqas homes*’ for gatherings (Engelthaler 2006), (Kropáček 2003). These complexes only vaguely resemble Christian monasteries as it is broadened house of a *sheikh*. In the centre is building designed for Sufi gathering - *tekke* and around *sheikh* personal room, his harem, house for *dervishes* and pilgrims, hammam and sometimes the village mosque is included in the complex (Engelthaler 2006). Young *dervishes* living in poverty often journey the Muslim lands to spread the ideas of the brotherhood. Since the Ottomans conquered the Western Balkans, *dervishes* toured, settled, and created new communities in Kosovo and compared to the Slavs who converted to Islam and have taken up traditional Sunni Hanif Islam, the Albanian Muslim population became widely influenced

¹⁶ Macedonian city currently known under name Bitola.

by non-conformist *tariqas* (Birge 1937), (Peza 2017). Currently, the Association of Dervish Orders recognises twelve Sufi orders as ‘authentic’ (Duijzings 2000).

6.1.1. Bekhtashi Dervish Order

The most influential brotherhood in the Ottoman Balkans has been the Bektashi Order. Named after its legendary founder Haji Bektash Veli, a religious philosopher from Persia living and teaching in the Rum Sultanate in Anatolia, the order became codified only in the beginning of 16th century at the request of Ottoman sultan Bayezid by Bektashi Sufi Balim Sultan (Peza 2017). The reason for this step by the sultan was an effort subjugate the Order under state control, as already in that time, a majority of elite Ottoman units - *Janissary Corps* were practising Bektashis. *Janissaries* originated from non-Muslim families (often Albanian) and were taken as infants to Anatolia and raised in rural areas where they took up Bektashi teachings. To not infuriate Janissaries, the sultan had to tolerate the spread of Bektashism even if Shia Islam was otherwise suppressed in the Ottoman Empire. Since the dissolution and mass execution of *Janissaries* in 1826, Bektashi Order has been suppressed in Anatolia and most *tariqas* left for south-western Balkans (Birge 1937). Since 1925 and the ban of Sufi brotherhoods in Turkey, the International Bektashi leadership moved to Tirana where it remains up to now (Elsie 2019).

Teachings of Bektashism stay firmly on the Shia principles of Trinity – *Allah, Prophet Muhammad* and *fourth caliph Ali*. They also celebrate all *Twelve Imams* and consider themselves as descendants of sixth Imam Jafer Sadik. Unlike Sunni Muslims, Bektashi pray only twice a day at sunrise and dawn and as in other Sufism based branches the importance lay in the inner experience of religion so instead of mass prayers, Bektashis prefer to pray at home in an arranged room for prayer – *meydan* (Engelthaler 2006, Peza 2017).

Bektashi women can attend the gatherings and ceremonies with men uncovered and are considered as equal *sisters* to *brothers*.¹⁷ Traditionally *sisters*, when they arrive in Bektashi community, are initiated with men who then protect their honour like a real brother would (something closer to Kanun traditional law than to religion).

¹⁷ The legend says it is because of Kadincik – a woman that helped Haji Bektash when he first arrived in Anatolia.

Meanwhile more liberal Bektashis drink alcohol and some even eat pork meat. Albanian Bektashism except for Muslim holidays also commemorate some of the Christian saints and keep Easter and Christmas as important days of the year (Elsie 2019, Gjysha of Gjakovë tekke 2019). This has led to the perception of both world Sunni and Shia Muslim leadership to consider Bektashism as heresy. The highest representative of Bektashi Order in Kosovo *gjysha* ('grandfather') of Gjakovë tekke to the author explained (2019), "*Iran says we are not Shia, Saudi Arabia says we are not Sunni, they say we do not belong to Islam.*" This does not prevent Bektashi to as he says: "*living our ecological way of life, in the respect of Gods words without caring what the world of Islam thinks about Bektashism.*" Gjysha confirmed that Bektashi believers are typically not interested in Muslim transnationalism but they are Albanians and support local nationalism.

6.1.2. Homogenization Efforts in the 20th Century

In the interwar Yugoslavian state, Albanian Muslims became a '*double minority*'. In the efforts to surpass the nationalism of minorities, the Yugoslavian state pushed for religious identification. All Muslims communities were subordinated to the Independent Islamic Religious Community (*Samostalna Islamska Verska Zajednica*) no matter the teachings or language (Krasniqi 2011). The Tito regime followed up on these policies where the the power to represent all of Yugoslavia's Muslim communities was given to the Islamic Community in Sarajevo under several Bošnjak *ulama* loyal to the regime. One of the first steps of the Islamic Community was to ban Sufi brotherhoods and close non-conformist '*non-licenced*' mosques, tekkes and madrassas. The goal was to condense complicated religious life into one single mechanism/institution which would directly report to communist elites in Belgrade (Blumi 2005).

The Islamic Community during the 50s and 60s carried out a campaign of sending Bosnian-trained imams to preach Muslim '*unity*' among all Muslims in Yugoslavia by convincing Albanians of the moral bankruptcy of local Sufi *sheikhs*. Sufi brotherhoods were called reactionary and a barrier to the expansion of proper religious life (Duijzings 2000). Although in cities the campaign proved to be very successful due to police control and strict enforcement shutting down unsanctioned mosques/tekkes/madrassas, in rural areas, an underground Sufi movement thrived.

Since the new constitution 1974 vastly improved the situation, the Association of Dervish Orders (*Bashkësia e Rradhëve Dervishe Islame Alijje*) was established and the *sheikhs* recovered their importance in the religious life of Kosovo communities. However this proved to be true only in rural areas of Kosovo; in Pristina or Prizren the attitude that they are “*thing of past and barrier of development*” prevailed (Blumi 2005).

Sufi *sheikhs* have historically served as the moral authority for local communities, solved disputes between people and provided moral support. That is why Sufi orders in the 1990s played a key role in the resistance to the Milošević regime. These were very active in providing parallel educational, social and self-government systems in rural areas (Duijzings 2000). Brotherhoods as the foundation of Albanian society were targeted heavily by Yugoslav security services in the late 1990s and during the war: Sufi *sheikhs* were frequent victims of killings and *tekkes* and village mosques were very popular targets in rural areas for the Yugoslav army. The vast majority of brotherhoods were forced to leave and when they returned, they found their libraries burned, facilities destroyed and *sheikhs* missing (Demjaha, Peci 2016).

6.2. Internal Reasons for Islamization

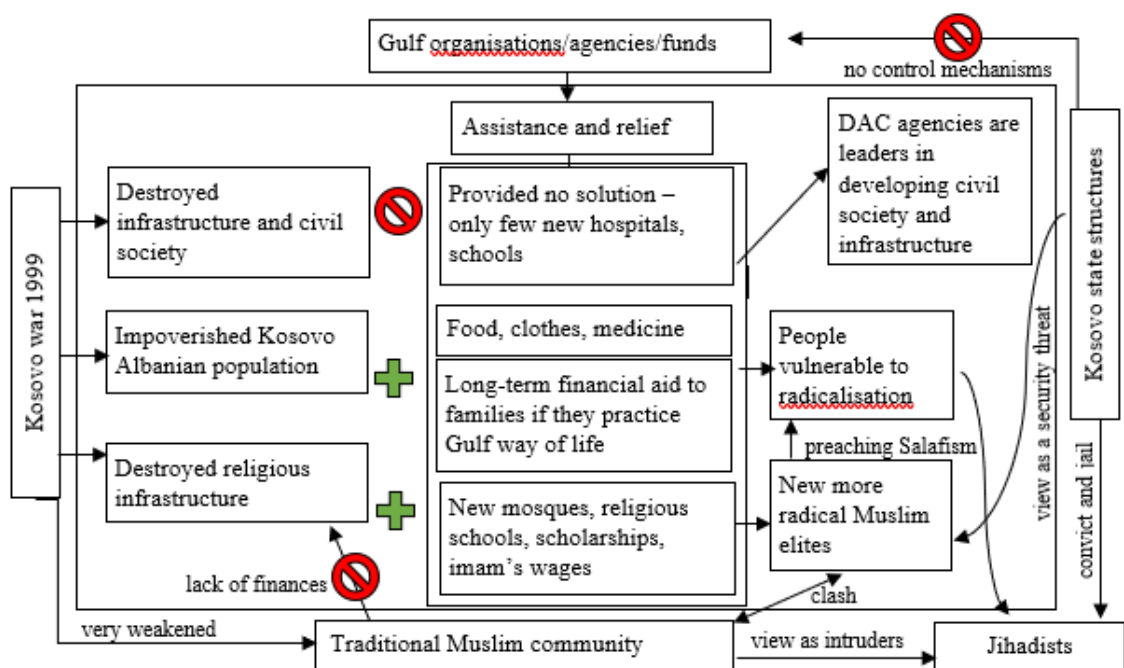
The process of religion gaining importance in society since the fall of a communist regime is a very well documented phenomenon in the whole east and south-east Europe and it would be mistaken to see Kosovo as something special. The liberalization of society has allowed religion to gain much bigger access to everyday life and into several spheres which were usurped by the atheist communist regime. Kosovo is unique only because of ten-year delay caused by the Milošević regime and its struggle for liberation. Only after the war was over did the process start to become visible. Even though international charities and organisations are vastly responsible for the expansion of the process, there are several natural reasons behind that as well.

The main factor was due to societal disorientation in the ‘new’ world, rising levels of poverty, economic weakness, high unemployment and a political void which caused a need for spiritual reassurance for people that everything will be all right. This has been widely misused by humanitarian/development organisations with a religious and political agenda (Demjaha, Peci 2016).

Another factor is the growing role of the Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK - Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës) which slowly started to rebuild institutionally and distance itself from the heritage of the federal Bošnjak-led Islamic Community. Madrassas were reopened and a new Faculty of Islamic Studies as an institution with university degrees was opened. ICK also undertook the huge task of revitalizing and reconstructing mosques destroyed during the war to allow everyday liturgical rituals to take place once again. Currently, ICK manages most of the religious duties in Kosovo and oversees some 700 mosques. It is a very centralised association and without its permission, major religious projects cannot happen (Mardjanova 2013).

7. GCC Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid in Kosovo

Fig. 8 - Scheme of the relationship between the key players and the key categories which arose from the semi-structured interviews.



source: author's research

7.1. The Relief Campaign (1999-early 2000s)

As mentioned in chapter 5, Kosovo was in ruins, population lacking basics and administration was very weak when the development assistance, humanitarian aid organisations/agencies arrived. Compared with numerous US, EU, Switzerland relief organisations, the Gulf presence was the strongest. All respondents agreed that the GCC charities were the first ones in the field, and they were very effective in helping people to survive first days, weeks, months and for some even years of misery without basic needs.

7.1.1. Saudi Joint Committee for the Relief of Kosovo and Chechnya (SJRCCK)

During the war, Gulf states stood aside not, supporting either side but concentrating on humanitarian relief for refugees. *“Saudi relief plane flew aid daily to Tirana with tents, blankets, carpets, food, and medicine. There Saudi Embassy personnel unloaded it and distributed to refugee camps”*, (NGO). Until the end of the war, Saudi Arabia opened 10 health stations in the refugee camps across Albania and FYROM. Meanwhile, the UAE set up one of the biggest refugee camps where 10,000 Kosovo Albanians received meals, basic amenities, and had the opportunity to visit a field hospital. Kuwait also contributed enormously as a telethon was set up in the national media, raising up to seven million USD (Osmandzikovic 2020, Information Office 2002).

Since the war was over, people returned home, and better aid cooperation was needed. The umbrella organisation for the relief campaign in Kosovo for Saudi Arabia proved to be a committee created on the basis of a public campaign (see chapter 3.1.2.3.). On April 16th, state-based Saudi TV ran a telethon with an aim to fundraise for a humanitarian relief campaign in Kosovo. How much exactly was collected is not known, Osmandzikovic (2020) says at first 17 million USD was collected, Al Yahya and Fustier (2011) present a sum of 22 million USD. To oversee the spending of money King Fahd issued a decree creating Saudi Joint Committee for the Relief of Kosovo and Chechnya (SJRCCK).¹⁸

¹⁸ The second area of conflict in the Muslim world in late 1990s where Saudi Arabia sent relief and aid.

The goal of the Committee was to coordinate the relief, oversee the Saudi organisations and charities (most of them already been active in Bosnia and Hercegovina and only shifted some of the personnel) and to provide a financial base for the transfer of money from Saudi Arabia. As the head of the Committee was appointed banker, billionaire, and philanthropist Suleyman Abdul Aziz Al Rajhi (Burr, Collins 2006, Krasniqi 2019). In five months since the telethon SJRCKC managed to collect 45,5 million USD in cash, supplies and services (Burr, Collins 2006, p. 135), to which King Fahd himself donated 5 million USD himself (Information Office 2002).

Besides immediate relief, the SJRCKC funded health and educational projects, and for several years supplied Kosovo hospitals and clinics with medical supplies, funded reconstruction medical school for nurses in Pristina and gave scholarships for medics to study in Saudi Arabia (Information Office 2000, Nielsen et al. 2012). While in cities and towns the SJRCKC's importance was quickly overtaken by Western organisations and agencies, for more than decade it stayed as a key partner for local communities in rural areas. As mentioned before, rural areas were especially hard hit by the war and, at same time, reconstruction there was going very slowly, thus these areas became especially dependent on international aid and assistance (Blumi 2002). (S, RL, IO, AC) all acknowledge SJRCKC efforts there as very beneficial at least in first years since the war. *“SJRCKC was able to restart village life again, they reopened village schools. They did what state (or UNIMK) could not manage back then”* (AC).

The focus on rural areas is a general principle seen in the GCC aid and assistance in Kosovo. As it appears the suffering village communities need for life necessities attracted Gulf funds way more than slowly awakening civil society of cities which already aimed for more complex needs. In addition to the SJRCKC, the Kuwaiti based Kosova Aid and Development (KAD) funded several health clinics in rural western Kosovo and offered micro-finance loans without interest (Krasniqi 2019). Several other charities such as al-Haramian, al-Waqf al-Islami helped, especially in healthcare, but compared to religious-based aid/assistance (on purpose neglected in this chapter) their small activity in healthcare is almost negligible, in general (Zaatari 2017).

7.1.2. Relief Distribution Methods

"I was walking on the pavement and car stopped next me asking if I do not need anything", said (AC). There were no rules on helping people at first. Everyone could randomly bump into someone who worked for some (especially Gulf-based) charity and was given food, blanket, shirt, or paracetamol confirmed (PA). Other respondents and people the author met during observation confirmed that they had a similar experience from the months following the end of the war. Overall, it was chaos, the agencies competed for beneficiaries and territory where they could operate. UNIMK neither new administrative managed any coordination even though they tried (Van Brabant 1999).

This changed soon after a few months as the GCC organisations found their niche and moved to rural areas. (J, NGO) agreed the Gulf charities specifically choose lower rural social classes to target certain groups of the Kosovar Albanian population. Sooner or later disadvantaged, vulnerable families such as the ones who had lost the men who provided the finances for living were set as a priority for the relief/aid. It might be said the GCC oriented themselves quickly and it can be said they helped the people that needed help the most, however, their motives were not as pure as it might seem (more chapter 8.1.).

For the respondents, the relief is connected to several specific features and especially food which was not used in Kosovo much before 1999. (PA) remembers, *"All the organisations and charities which cooked for hungry people usually made very thick soup with 'fidhe'. So 'fidhe' has become a synonym for Arab relief."* 'Fidhe' in English known as orzo pasta is small-grain, short-cut pasta. Especially if it is over-cooked it makes the soup very thick and very filling which was useful for feeding as much as possible for a small cost. Even more typical for GCC food relief in Kosovo are the dates, one of few fruits native to the Middle East and as well very filling (Agroweb 2020). *"Albanians requested 'hurma' while Arabs were very offended to this proposition"* (J). It is obvious why Arabs were outraged by Albanian claims as Albanian word for dates is 'hurma' while in Bedouin Arabic 'il-Hurma' is a wife (McLoughlin 2002). Of course, not only positive memories remained with respondents. A thin layer of Kosovo 'businessmen' managed to get rich on the aid/relief. Due to contacts, they were able to acquire large packages of food or medicine and then

resold them on the black market. Several especially local 'NGOs' then served as empty boxes for money laundering from illegal activities (PA).

7.2. GCC Development Projects (2010-Onwards)

In 2008, Kosovo moved into a different stage of the post-war reality, as relief was no longer needed. The long-term development has overtaken short term aid, and the author's analysis of Kosovo newspapers discovered a few projects financed by the official GCC development agencies in the last decade. These represent a very small percentage of development projects constructed in Kosovo in that time and two of the biggest ones are not yet finished. Usually, these projects were medialized severely beyond their importance and the actual amount of money spent on these projects. Most of them are health sector-related and construction-based projects and there are very few traces of support for good governance, strengthening civil society, NGO sector or other modern methods of development assistance. The following are the most significant projects which were also in the memory of the respondents.

In 2015, the United Arab Emirates agreed to give 22 million USD to build a brand new and modern paediatric hospital which Kosovo lacks (Express 2019). Kosovo newspapers reported the deal stood on the long-lasting friendship between the then-president of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, and the 'mother of the UAE' Fatima bint Mubarak¹⁹ (Telegrafi 2015, ONUP 2016). The construction of the hospital has been accompanied by several difficulties and the project completion is few years behind schedule (Kasapolli-Selani 2018). *"The building the paediatric hospital has not started, it is just a plan. Media is making a big thing of it"*, said (NGO).

The United Arab Emirates are also behind another health development project. *"They gave money to build Vushtrri hospital and then to its rebuilt. The UAE KFOR unit was stationed there for a while"*, said (J). In 2016 UAE gave a donation of 7 million USD for the reconstruction of the Hospital of Sheik Zayed in Vushtrri, 30 km northeast of Pristina. As the name suggests, the UAE were involved since its construction as the agreement between Vushtrri municipality and the UAE state, whose units were and still are stationed in Vushtrri, was struck in 2001 and the hospital

¹⁹ The third wife of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder and inaugural president of United Arab Emirates (Shërbimi Spitalor dhe Klinik 2019).

was opened shortly after in 2003 (ePortal City 2015, Shërbimi Spitalor dhe Klinik 2019). This development project was probably the most known between respondents, more than half mentioned it and added about other activities of UAE in Vushtrri, “*giving a lot of humanitarian aid after the war, food, clothes...*”, (J).

Saudi Arabia’s biggest development project is connected to the building of a highway from Pristina to Mitrovicë (Lajmi.net 2017). In particular, respondents from Mitrovicë are very welcoming of the stepping in of the Saudi Fund for Development, who agreed to give 15 million loans to Kosovo to finish the construction of a highway which now ends before Vushtrri. “*Finally!! After twenty years a highway would be connecting Mitrovicë to the capital. I am thankful to Saudi Arabia*” (AC). The agreement (2017) between the then foreign minister Enver Hoxhaj and Saudi Fund for Development says besides the highway, another 50 million USD in loans to the construction of health facilities is agreed (Zëri 2017, Balkan Insider 2017). These 50 million are already mentioned as an ongoing project in the Report of Saudi Fund for Development of the year 2018. However, thus far, the amount has not been spent and which hospitals could get the money is not known.

Out of smaller development projects, Qatar Charity gained a prominent position between GCC organisations in recent years. Their report shows that in 2018 they implemented 373 projects – mainly small water sanitation projects, teaching aids, home construction (Peninsula 2019). Their Infinite Qatar Training Center in Pristina offers requalification courses, training, and language courses every year where (S) have acquaintances learned Arabic. Meanwhile, even from author’s own observation, Qatar Charity was clearly most visible out of all the others and it is as well most transparent – as on their website everyone can choose a project in Kosovo and give a donation which goes directly into this specific case (Qatar Charity 2020).

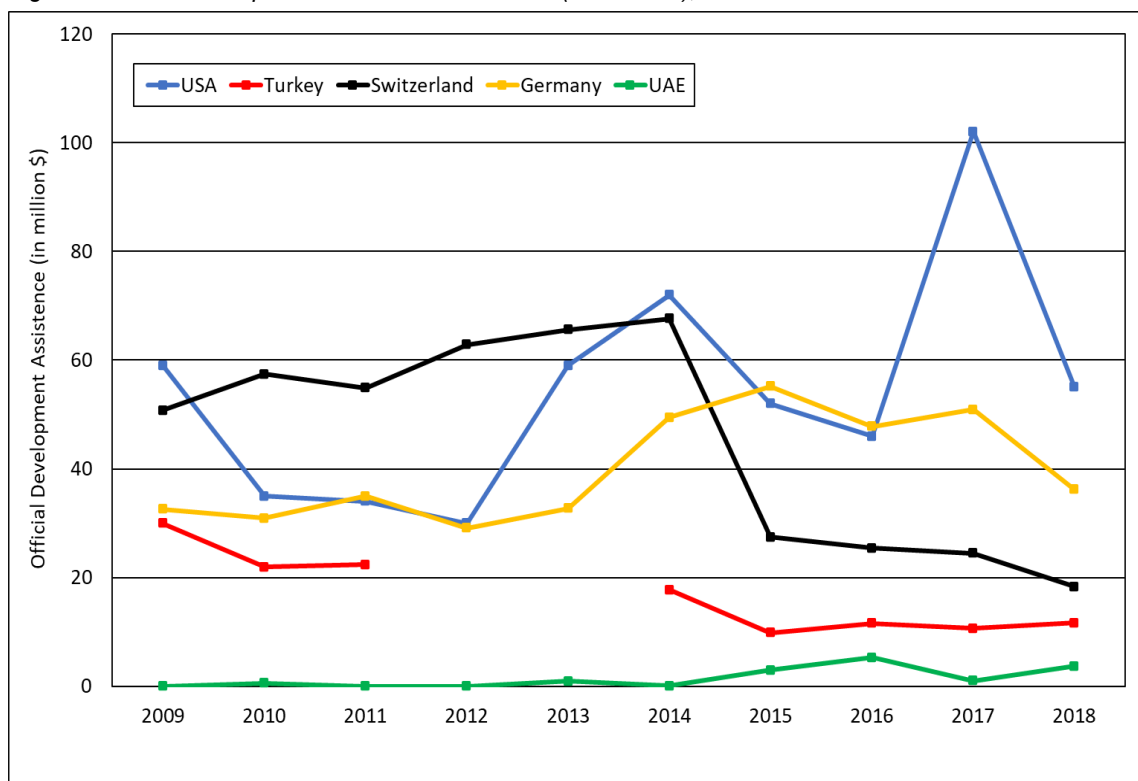
7.3. GCC Assistance/Aid in Comparison to DAC Involvement

While during the first years, when the main need of the Kosovar population was immediate relief, the GCC played an important role comparable to other DAC countries. However, as seen above this ended with that period and the GCC states were not ready to support Kosovo society with new challenges that arose. There is a clear lack of commitment of the GCC states to foster civil society and towards strengthen and innovating in the economy which can be seen in comparison with other countries

involved in development assistance in Kosovo. If one was to compare it to the USAID, which in 2018 in Kosovo spent the most on the programs helping Kosovo improve good governance principles (Transparent, Effective and Accountable Municipalities and Local Effective Governance), then the GCC clearly does not aim to follow the trends in the development assistance in Kosovo (USAID 2020).

If one were to investigate the numbers, Qatar Charity is probably the most visible and most transparent but its total projects cost only 1,65 million USD (Peninsula 2019). In comparison, the relatively small civil society program Engagement for Joint Action of Swiss Development Agency dealing with participatory shaping of public affairs have the estimate cost 3,5 million (Swiss Development Agency 2020). On a bigger scale, the difference is huge. If one is to look at fig. 9 showing ODA statistics of the main donors such as Switzerland, Germany, USA, Turkey compared to the UAE, then the UAE plays in a different league. There are several explanations: A) the statistics of OECD are totally false B) the development assistance of UAE in Kosovo is secret, non-official or directed to fields which the official ODA does not cover. C) It is true that the UAE is not interested in Kosovo development and, in general, is not interested in Kosovo as it is small and geopolitically unimportant.

Fig. 9 - Official Development Assistance in Kosovo (in million \$), 2009–2018.



source: USAID, Swiss Development Agency, OECD, author's adaptation.

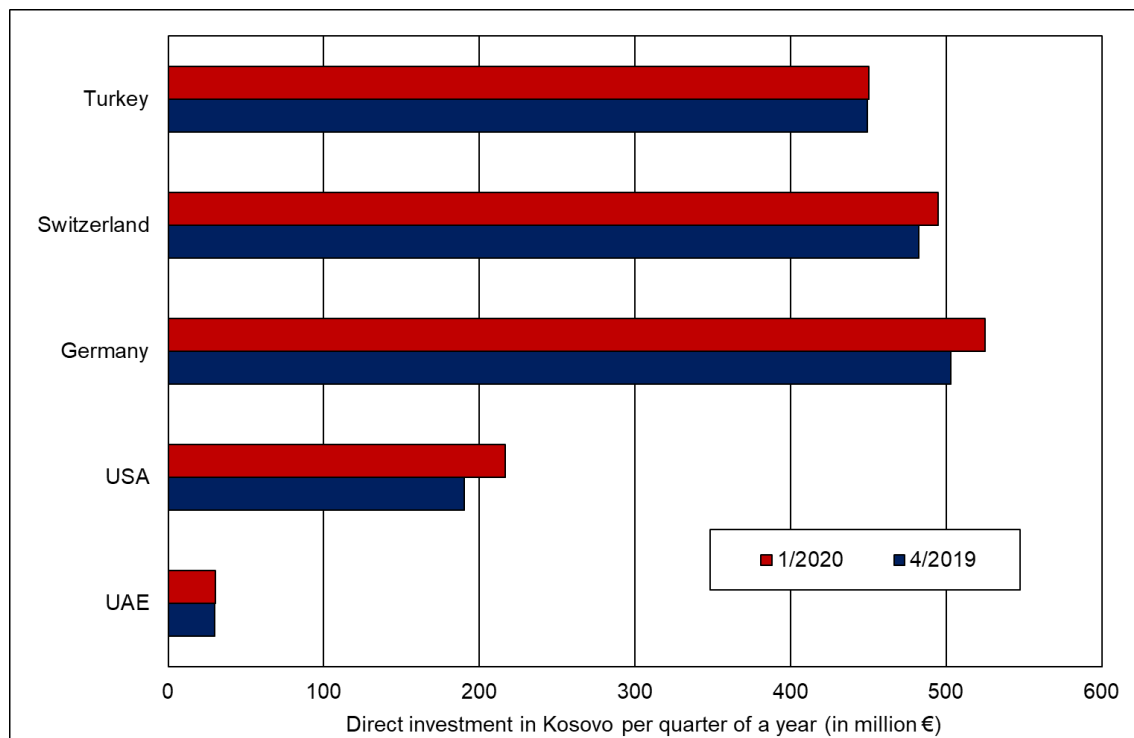
Based on the analysis of materials and fieldwork, the author assumes that all three explanations are partly correct and respondents of interviews confirmed this.

Ad A) The UAE agreed to report to OECD in 2011 but ever since the accountability of these data is questionable (Smith 2011). There is a lack of clarity of what ODA means for the UAE officials. The reason Saudi Arabia and Qatar are not mentioned is that they promised recently to report but, so far, official OECD servers do not show any data from them.

Ad B) The lack of clarity about ODA is intentional, while the UAE (and the GCC as a whole) post very low ODA numbers on purpose to cover the donations/aid/loans coming to Kosovo with political and even more likely religious agenda. *“The economic relations, healthcare, schools for sure, but they 90% put into religious stuff”* (PA), which would explain why there is a total lack of transparency and useful data for this topic. As (J) said, *“Investments and official donations are really low while non-official ones are very hard to track.”* The author can only confirm this but will continue investigating in the next chapter.

Ad C) *“Saudi Arabia and in general Arab investment is close to zero, maybe some grants to study there but no direct investments”* (J). If to look on fig. 10 it is not only lack of ODA, but the direct investments are low as well.

Fig. 10 - Direct Investment in Kosovo per quarter of a year, 4/2019–1/2020.



source: Central Bank of Kosovo 2020, author's adaptation

As mentioned above, the lack of commitment to funding infrastructure, industrial, civil society projects compared to DAC donors is obvious. This might be connected to the geopolitical status of Kosovo, its insignificance economically and the lack of political ties between the GCC states and Kosovo elites. Most of the respondents agreed that they think Kosovo, even compared to its Balkan neighbours, is not important in international relations as they are seen in the Gulf. They (J, NGO, AC) offered an alternative explanation. To keep good economic relations with Serbia, the UAE (and other GCC states) keep their distance from Kosovo. The UAE is currently the third biggest economic partner of Serbia and its leadership is very close. The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi recently said, *“We [the UAE] believe in Serbia, we believe in our friendship.”* They cooperate in several sectors (military, transport etc.), while the UAE just recently bought the Serbian missile system ALAS, a stake in national airlines, thousands of hectares of arable land in Serbia, and allegedly is dealing with Israel via Serbia (Donaghy 2015, Bieber, Tzifakis 2019). Emirati investments in Serbia amounted to about 4 billion USD (The National 2019). The author is aware of a nationalistic anti-Serbian discourse of respondents, but it is hard to argue when direct investments are around a hundred times bigger in Serbia than in Kosovo.

8. Islamization of Development Assistance in Kosovo

In a previous chapter, the author has attempted to display the GCC's development assistance and humanitarian aid without a religious perspective. This turned out to be challenging. The results show that it makes little sense to evaluate the GCC's charitable/development field without Islam, as the theory of all-encompassing Islam of Petersen (2012) (chapter 3.2.2.1.) can be observed in Kosovo. This is not regarding whether or not it works, but without it, there is almost no GCC development assistance and humanitarian aid whatsoever. Since the author had no respondents from inside the organisations/agencies, this research must leave out practices used inside of the organisations and will entirely concentrate on practices in the field and those visible in society.

8.1. Practices of All-Encompassing Islam

8.1.1. Public Enlightenment

As mentioned, the relief campaign was largely appreciated by the respondents and was done mainly to help. However, already in 1999, the first principles of all-encompassing Islam were visible. The respondents claim that together with food and blankets, people were given materials to read about what Islam can change for better in their lives. (AC) remembers that materials showing pictures of life in the Gulf looked quite unusual for Kosovo Albanians. *“It looked like from a different world. Nobody was aware of what does it mean to live as a proper Muslim.”* The GCC states were active in translating classical Islamic literature into Albanian and distributing it to the public. Just in 1999, 200,000 copies of *Qur'an* were handed out to Kosovars (Krasniqi 2018, p. 39). This worked for current Kosovar authors, academics, journalists as well. They were encouraged to publish books, scientific articles, news with a positive image of puritan Islam content and were given grants for it. *“Just short preface or last paragraph praising Wahhabi teaching would be enough to be given funds to publish your book, research”*, claim (NGO).

In addition, the GCC organisations tried to influence public space as well. In the early 2000s banners, signs, commercials flooded streets with powerful quotes and *Qur'anic* verses (NGO). The GCC organisations organised seminars, workshops for a local population about topics such as the role of woman in Islam, pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca and other topics previously unknown or practised differently in Kosovo society. The GCC organisations has been also funding locals to give speeches and persuade others to change their religious/family behaviour (IO). Every evening in SJRCKC headquarters in Dardania quarter of Pristina, seminars for women were led by local Salafi women on the superiority of Arab culture and the need to return to original behaviour of *salaf* period (Blumi 2005, p. 12). They lobbied for religious-based topics in parliament and were active in public campaigns such as demonstrations against the law which forbids wearing a headcover in schools. *“In that campaign, there was a lot of hate speech from the GCC funded organisations and individuals towards liberal Kosovo women.”* (NGO). The GCC organisations also played down the criminal acts of gender violence and abuse of Kosovo women. *“Several years ago, there was a case of the University of Pristina student who wanted to get divorced, so her husband shot her in the centre of Pristina. The religious authorities paid by the Gulf were saying*

she deserved that.” Not only did they legitimize the murder, but they also lobbied for the husband not to get convicted, as under *sharia* law he only kept the family pride (NGO).

8.1.2. Education

One of the main principles of all-encompassing Islam is the unity between religion and education. Religious education has been one of the priorities of the GCC organisations and agencies in Kosovo. It is known that around 100 schools were reconstructed or built from scratch with funding from the Gulf (Blumi 2005). Rural areas were clearly in need of them and without their help, one entire generation of rural Kosovo Albanians would be without primary education. What has been much more problematic is that the skills and knowledge acquired there was not classical general schooling but religious-based education. Pupils were given lessons in Arabic culture, way of living and importance was given to memorization of the Qur'an. Locals the author spoke to in Skënderaj during participant observation also remembered one school like that in a nearby village and complained that it was useless. They allegedly did not teach kids anything which they could use in the 21st century Kosovo. For most of the kids, it has brought close to nothing for their life while few of them broke relationships with their parents and community and have started to take religion very seriously (author's observation 2019). A common practice on these primary schools is the method of following apt pupils and selecting them for further higher religious education at a GCC paid madrasas in Kosovo (AD).

The GCC organisations did not only fund their schools in rural areas. In cities, they organised private language schools of Arabic and after-class Quranic schools for boys and girls. Recruiters visited schools and offered free Arabic lessons. Since kids started to learn Arabic, they were given a path to follow-up with Qur'an lessons (S, AC, AD). For the most talented and hardworking later studies at madrasas and higher education at universities in the Gulf has been funded by the GCC money. *“They came to my school and have chosen several kids in our class. I was chosen because my name is originally Arabic and most of the other kids have Albanian names. I later dropped out as I am not into Islam that much, but my friend studied in Abu Dhabi and now is an imam in Istanbul”*, (AC) told to the author. These influences

of Salafi teaching on harms Kosovo youth and un-naturally changes the system. For example, the forced segregation practices at some of these schools is a very new thing and even in rural areas which are historically conservative, it never has been an issue to let girls and boys go to school together (Blumi 2001, author's observation 2019).

Scholarships to students willing to become preachers and imams have the longest tradition of any involvement of Gulf states. The first Kosovo Albanians moved to universities in Arabic-speaking world in the late 80s (Blumi 2001). But only since the end of the war, the scholarships became widespread and few hundred Kosovars were trained in Saudi Arabia, the UAE or Qatar. They then followed many different paths, some never returned, some are currently voicing ideas of Salafism but others after seeing Gulf reality came back warning against the GCC influence. *"I am in contact with my former student who went to study in the Gulf and despite that he was very religious, he never got used to Middle East reality. He said he hopes Kosovo will never become like that"* (AD).

8.1.3. Financial Subsistence

As practices mentioned above may have been controversial but still can be understood inside of the concept of all-encompassing Islam as something which naturally complements humanitarian aid and long-term development assistance, or at least as how it is understood in the Gulf. Giving out direct subsistence to families and individuals under conditions, which include fulfilling Salafi teachings, is beyond ethical standards of humanitarian/development assistance field, especially since the most vulnerable groups of society were targeted. Those families in rural areas who lost male members, a roof over their head or were without income, were prime targets. However, just about anyone could have been asked randomly on the street in bigger cities especially in the early 2000s (IO). From all respondents, three (S, AC, IO) have direct experience either by themselves or from their family members. Several others heard it from their friends/acquaintances and others said these are alleged rumours. Two respondents (AD, S) directly opposed it as only "Serbian" propaganda.

The most common conditions for financial aid were all of the family's children attending Quranic schools, wearing a headcover for women, and praying/visiting a local mosque regularly. The recipients must also renounce all the traditions, rituals which

are not according to the Salafi Islam, if they adhered any. They must also cut off ties with local Sufi sheikhs and others involved with brotherhoods. For men, it was often a necessity to grow a beard, while usually Kosovar Albanians shave regularly and having your own barber is historical tradition, even in rural areas. Sometimes the compulsory Gulf-style clothes in black are provided to families/individuals. Given that wearing *Burka* and growing a beard are displays connected with foreign influence, these were such symbols that quite a substantial percentage of respondents and other people author directly talked, link the subsistence from the GCC organization with anyone wearing a *burka* or having an unusually long beard. They say before 1999 it was so rare and basically non-existent in society that the sudden rise in the popularity of these displays must be somehow connected. (AC) said, “*they use people to be a promotion or a commercial for other Kosovo citizen how to behave.*”

In his book *Islamist Extremism in Kosovo and the Countries of the Region* (2019) Kolë Krasniqi wrote that attendance of a kid in Quranic schools/clubs was 50 euro per month if he/she remembered certain verses of *Qur'an*. Other individuals were given 150 per month if they “*demonstrate their religious devotion to the doctrine of Salafism.*” Additional money could be acquired by wearing full body Gulf clothing and having a Salafi beard (Krasniqi 2019). Money was allegedly given in cash by SJRCKC employees. The only respondent (AC) who was willing to talk about certain numbers said a family could earn as much as 300 euros per month, while an individual could receive as much as 200 euro per month for fulfilling certain conditions mentioned above. There are no stats and nobody from the respondents was able to say how many people were involved. However, some said in rural areas this was not exceptional and in a certain period (till 2005-6) it was one of the very few opportunities to have a piece of bread on the table every day.

When considering in 2006 the average wage was still below 200 euro per month (Tradingeconomics 2020), then 150 or 200 per month for living Gulf lifestyle and practising Salafism could have been a very attractive offer for lower classes of Kosovar society, especially since the unemployment was sky-high. Since the average wage has started to rise since 2008, more job opportunities have appeared, this proposal has stopped being as tempting. Eventually, this practice disappeared, according to what the respondents say, and the author believes them, given that since 2014 the control over this sector tightened (as will be mentioned in chapter 8.3.2.).

This is a good example of how the GCC organizations overstepped rules and especially ethics of assistance/aid and used the fragile situation and widespread unemployment to spread their religious (and political) agenda.

8.1.4. Religious Infrastructure

Demjaha and Peci (2016) estimated that the Gulf agencies and organisations have invested around 800 million of USD in Kosovo mainly in rural areas. Excluding direct relief, public enlightenment, healthcare projects, new schools, financial subsistence takes a bit from this sum but still, a huge portion remains. These financial resources have been invested in reconstructing the whole religious system which was in ruins in 1999. The GCC brought imams, paid the wages of religious personnel, funded projects of ICK and most importantly, funded the building of new mosques. The exact number of mosques which have been built with the help of Gulf finances is generally unknown. If one were to estimate that before the war ICK administrated around 500 mosques, out of which 155 were completely destroyed, and currently, it supervises around 700. Even if one assumes that all 155 have been rebuilt, an extra 190 new mosques must have been built (Mardjanova 2013). Out of these 350 mosques, a significant part must be subtracted as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) is also involved as well and some were funded by ICK itself. This leaves roughly 250 where GCC financial aid was involved which is still more than one-third of currently operating mosques and the author must confirm by his personal feeling from fieldwork, it sounds about right. There is a significant difference between approaches to keep heritage and atmosphere.

TIKA is mostly aiming at keeping Ottoman heritage intact and is trying to reconstruct or rebuilt mosques in their original appearance, while the GCC states were never keen on keeping Ottoman heritage and architecture. The architecture of these mosques is significantly different from the style used in Balkans and usually copies current style in the Gulf, typically such as tall minarets, green coloured windows and a feel of modernity (author's observation 2019). Due to not respecting the cultural heritage, the majority of respondents are dissatisfied with their look and consider them an alien element in the public space. Even the regular visitors, with whom the author talked close to these new mosques, admitted they are dissatisfied

with the appearance. Apart from the foreign look which may be considered as a superficial problem, especially in the 2000s a controversial was set up and coordination of construction. The construction often did follow any spatial planning principles. In the talks with local municipalities, the GCC agencies exerted pressure or used blackmailing techniques. ICK also struggled with coordinating these efforts, there were no plans/manuals on where the biggest need for mosque construction is. In first years also permission from ICK was not needed. This changed and nowadays a construction of a new mosque must go through the approval process in ICK and in local municipal council (NGO).

“They just arrived at our village and asked do you want a mosque?” (RL) Without any previous communication with the local council, they arrived and wanted to start building in a couple of days. They were just interested in which land can be used for the construction and architectonical plan they had. They copied the same example over again almost every village mosque was supposed to look the same (RL). Another respondent (J) said in the village of his relatives they arrive as well without previous communication. They were in a hurry for the start of the construction. However, when they have seen the reconstruction of *tekke* in-process and local population strongly in favour of local Sufi *sheikh*, they left the village soon after. They were more successful in a neighbouring village where the local population was less connected to local brotherhood (J). These and several other stories illustrate that the construction was at best questionable.

Regardless, when the mosque has been constructed then then question arose as to who would be responsible for taking care of it and preaching the word of *Allah*. In the early 2000s, the GCC organisations often held the strongest cards and won if there was any dispute between the GCC organisation, the local community and the ICK. The number of Albanians who studied in the Gulf and were willing to return and preach Salafi Islam was not very big, so the GCC citizens and other puritan preachers were employed and directly paid for by the Gulf. (NGO) said Gulf organisations could have paid as much as 2.500 – 3,500 USD per month, to attract preachers as the new mosques lacked imams. According to Blumi (2005) the SJRCKC also sent more than three hundred missionaries travelling across the country following the conflict in order to help imams in spreading the puritan Islam message. The practice of foreign imam in time changed as Albanians returned from their studies. Today respondents say there are basically no foreign imams, nearly all of them have Albanian-speaking national

origins. The practice of imposing imams on certain mosques is gone as well now that ICK is responsible for allocating imams and, in best practice, consults with the local Muslim community (NGO).

8.2. Salafism/Jihadism Scene and GCC Organisations

“Not everyone who studied in Medina or Abu Dhabi is Wahhabi as not every GCC organisation is responsible for recruiting Jihadists” (AD). It would be too easy to blame the GCC for being a hundred per cent responsible for everything. Most of the respondents said they do not necessarily connect the most known current Kosovo Salafi preachers with certain GCC states, organisations, or charities. These helped with the creation of a breeding ground for it, but the most influential propagators of puritan Islam operate independently.

8.2.1. Salafi Community in Kosovo

(AD) considers the three most influential non-traditional preachers following: Enes Goga (grand imam of Pejë), Shefqet Krasniqi (imam of Xhamia e Mbretit in Pristina) and Enis Rama (grand imam of Mitrovicë). All originally benefited from scholarships provided by the GCC states, climbed the hierarchy of ICK in the 2000s and are currently popular media personalities (RadioFreeEurope 2014). (AD, J, IO) agreed they are quite influential personalities in Kosovo society and influence its religious atmosphere. The author himself watched the YouTube videos of Enes Goga, Shefqet Krasniqi and can argue they are very convincing. Both imams have a good understanding of how to work in the 21st century and how to deliver the message to believers: their demeanour is cultivated, they refrain from using hate speech so the author would not have considered them radicals just based on the videos. (AD, J) disagreed with the author, pointing out that their preaching in their respective mosques and their appearances on various channels such as Peace TV has been according to Salafi ideas and included hate speech. They have also allegedly usurped power in ICK and are behind the death threats to Sufi brotherhoods and *sheikhs* (NGO).

These preachers oversee a group of alumnis of GCC universities and local young imams who feel that Kosovo Islam must be purified. The group behind might not be the most numerous in the structures of ICK might not be the most popular one between

local religious communities but is clearly the most politically able and visible in official and social media. Due to high position of Goga, Krasniqi or Rama in ICK, this group had managed to influence the direction and had ostracized opposition of the Salafi ideas. The official channel used to voice their beliefs has been Kosovo brand of international Islamic TV – Peace TV, where Enis Rama has been program director of Albanian language program for years. Peace TV is a well-known network founded by Indian cleric currently living in Malaysia Zakir Naik. The channel is concentrated on missionary purposes and it is well-researched that it has been a source of radicalisation for many Jihadists over the world (Indo-Asian News Service 2019). The channel was banned in many countries in the world, in May received in the UK record fine £300,000 for inciting murder and broadcasting hate speech (Harley 2020).

None of the respondents was particularly interested in Goga or Krasniqi. They mostly ignored these figures but at the same time understand their charisma and personalities. What has been common (except S, RL) that the younger imams were condemned as not understanding the complicated religious system of Kosovo, respect to other religions and spreading foreign ideas. They were disregarded as (RL), “*Salafi preachers usually drop out from our madrasa, they are not good enough to become proper ‘hoxha’ (imams)*”. Little differently are seen by people the author talked in front of mosques during participant observation especially ones who visit the mosque regularly. They praised especially Krasniqi as a thoughtful preacher and even though agreed young imams sometimes do not understand Kosovar Albanians priorities.

8.2.2. Kosovo Jihadists

Krasniqi, Goga or other well-known figures of religious life are preachers standing behind Salafi values but not necessarily following *takfir* Jihadi policy. However, their influence and leadership has brought the whole Kosovo Muslim community closer to the approval of using violence in the Levant. University of Pristina orientalists Rexhepi and Jakupi (2019) analysed the Friday religious lecture ‘*khutbah*’ which was read in all mosques across Kosovo in July of 2012. This lecture was an official document of ICK signed by the Grand Imam of Kosovo and calls for action to overthrow Bashar al-Assad. The whole text compares the situation in Syria to Kosovo in 1999 and al-Assad to Milošević. The aim of ICK is clear - to raise funds for opponents

of the regime and to find people who can to give a helping hand, “...it is our obligation to help; brothers, it is our obligation to respond as much as we can” (Jakupi, Rexhepi 2019, p. 73).

The Arab Spring and the start of Syrian conflict mark the highest approval of ideas connected to radical Islam inside the ICK and Kosovo Muslim community in general. In 2011 association with vague name the *Institute for Contemporary Culture and Studies* was founded. Its goal was to created parallel system religious structures and during the peak it included 73 Salafi imams and allegedly was funded by Kuwaiti prince himself (Zëri 2017). ICK distanced itself from this initiative and against any connection to anything happening in Levant (RL). The preaching for joining the war in Syria slowly disappeared from mosques and only certain especially rural mosques led by *takfiri* imams continued with this approach. The most known *takfiri* imam is Zekerija Qazimi from Ferizaj, currently serving a 10-year prison sentence for recruiting for terrorist organisations and of inciting hate (Leposhtica 2016).

According to the report (2015) of Kosovar Centre of Security Studies (KCSS), the mosques are not hotbeds of Jihadism in Kosovo. From interviews with former fighters in Syria, preaching in a mosque was a minor reason to join Jihadism. Much bigger influence has underground ‘*flat seminars*’ organized by people not connected with ICK neither with the GCC organizations. They target young men living in dormitories either as students or blue-collar workers. These vulnerable young men, from very poor families or ones with a broken family relationship, who do not have a religious background are easier to be persuaded that *takfiri* teaching is the only correct one (Kursani 2015). The KCSS analysis (2017) of FB pages, which are used for staying in contact with other potential Jihadists, shows Kosovo ISIL recruits do not differ much from Western recruits. They follow the translation of official ISIL channels, call for Jihad, support terrorists’ attacks, show displeasure with democratic processes, and voice their hate towards the West, Kurds, Jews, Alevites (Kelmedi, Balaj 2017).

Stories of Kosovo Albanian fighters actively participating in combat are diverse. What they have in common is that the idea of Muslim transnationalism and feeling of humanitarian support to victims of Syria as solidarity with the war, say the study of UN Development Program (UNDP) studying push and pull factors on the interviews with returnees (Xharra, Gojani 2017). Ones like Albert Berisha coming to Syria with a romantic idea of the liberation movement against the Assad regime are common (BBC 2018).

(NGO, IO, PA, AD) agreed that the important motivation was financial as well. *“People corrupted by money went to Syria, there is a business of brainwashing people”* (NGO). What ISIL and other groups pay to foreign fighters’ is better than any wage for unskilled workers in Kosovo. Plus the benefits which recruiters promised fighters could get during the conquest of *kafirs* sounded marvellous (Xharra, Gojani 2017). The respondents believe that *takfiri* preachers and recruiters used economic situation, high unemployment rate and very unpromising future to persuade them to join the Jihadi groups. While Salafism might structurally change of religious life of Kosovo then Jihadism is a borderline issue caused by the low quality of life especially in rural areas.

8.2.3. Support of Jihadism from GCC Organisations

As discussed earlier, there is no doubt the GCC organisations and charities played a role in the rise of Salafism. They have funded religious infrastructure, educated local population on religious principles of Salafism, or provided financial aid. However, are they responsible for Kosovo Albanians joining Al-Qaeda in the 2000s or ISIL in the 2010s? If one is to rely just on Kohlman’s testimony (2010) or other Balkan security experts (Trifunović 2008, Shay 2017) they have been funding Jihadi cells, Jihadi preachers, and recruiters in Kosovo. But if one is to focus on the reports of UNDP, KCSS, KIPRED or answers of respondents the situation is more complex and differ in different periods of time.

“UNIMK police raid a house in Pristina, rented by SJRCKC. The house was rented by Wael Hamza Julaidan, one of the founders of al-Qaeda, and is discovered to be an al-Qaeda safe house” (Center for Grassroots Oversight 2000). The period between the end of the war till 2002-3 was an *“El Dorado”* for organisations connected to Jihadism (NGO). The UNIMK administration was weak, social structures were still developing, and the GCC states were only starting to be pushed to distance themselves from Jihadists. Several Gulf organisations and charities connected to radical/terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda operated in Kosovo. The most notable was the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation (AHIF) as mentioned in chapter 3.2.2.3., sanctioned as a terrorist organisation by the US administration. AHIF, whose budget comes from various sources in several GCC countries,

was per (AD) a tremendous source for practices of all-encompassing Islam but often went further. Allegedly, it funded local Jihadi groups and cells, helped to recruit new fighters, and provided safe shelter to internationally wanted terrorists (IO).

When AHIF was banned from operating in Kosovo, Gall (2016) in her story wrote that she has sources that staff and equipment from AHIF shifted to another GCC-backed organisation Al Waqf al Islami (AWAI). This could not be verified by the author. But the now-defunct organisation was most active in the late 2000s until 2012, it when invested around 10 million USD. Allegedly only seven per cent of the budget was used for charitable and development purposes and other ninety-three percent on funding Salafi and *takfiri* imams, creating Jihadi networks etc (Gall 2016, Krasniqi 2019).

From the early 2010s when the issue of Jihadism became more widespread, the probably most ingloriously known is the local Pristina-based organisation Nektari-He. This GCC funded but locally administrated organisation was regularly and publicly voicing hatred towards other religious communities in Kosovo. Their main activities were online lectures and seminars led by *takfiri* imams. *Takfiri* preacher Zekerija Qazimi often hosted these seminars where the hosts were figures such as the leader of ISIL brigade Ridvan Haqifi. Nektari-He had several branches, one of the most active in Han i Elezit, (southwest border town, per UNDP report (2017) has highest rate of Jihadists per capita in Kosovo) which still has open FB group. This gave the author a good overview of how this organisation worked and what kind of language used. Even though it is dead since 2014, when Nektari-He was banned, still seen are Quranic quotes, group photos of gatherings (men of various age groups in Gulf clothes), lectures of Gulf imams with subtitles and videos of *takfiri* preachers (the most recent one ‘explained’ “*what Muslim sect is loved by Israel and West*”). What the author has not been able to spot is call for Jihad and ISIL recruitment texts which could have been blocked, deleted, or most likely never appeared in public FB group (Nektari-He Han i Elezit 2010-2020).

In the early 2010s similar local Jihadi NGOs appeared, funded by different sources mostly through the untraceable ‘hawala’ system. However, since 2014 when Kosovo state structures started to focus more (chapter 8.3.2.) on the security threat of Jihadi groups, the vast majority of them were banned. The respondents said since then the influence of foreign Jihadism is slowly disappearing. “*Foreign Jihadi groups are not interested in Kosovo that much anymore*” (J) and that has been sentiment common

for most of the respondents. What (AD, NGO, IO) believe is that the level of operation of these organisations/groups is low compared to France, Belgium or the UK which are preferable regions for Jihadists.

8.3. Response to the Islamization Processes

“When it comes out in 2012 that Kosovo Albanians went to Syria, high state officials were surprised. However, people knowing civil society, were not surprised at all, that it is a case in Kosovo” (J). The respondents agreed that it was no secret what is going on in rural areas, what is going on inside the Muslim community. They knew about spreading of Salafism/Jihadism and journalists wrote about that, KIPRED (Blumi 2005) made analysis. Only the state structures did not take the threat seriously (IO, J, NGO). Until 2012-13 the state was concerned with developing institutions, getting international recognition and the judicial system was concerned about Serbian crimes and making a case for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (J). While the revelation that Kosovo Albanians joined ISIL was for the state, awakening, then when in July 2014 Kosovo joined anti-ISIL coalition the whole topic suddenly has gained importance and approach of state structures changed suddenly.

8.3.1. Muslim Community

The rapid rise of Salafism since the war very quickly started to cause conflicts in the whole Muslim community. The differences between Salafism and traditional Kosovar Albanian Islam were impossible to overcome. For Salafi preachers, Sufi *tariqas* are something very heretical, what has nothing to do with the official Islam of *salaf* period. The Sufi brotherhoods were not only left out of GCC aid and assistance but were often targets of hate speech, verbal and sometimes physical attacks (NGO). SJRCKC also funded the destruction of historical Sufi sites deemed to encourage ‘*idolatry*’ (Blumi 2005). Typical are stories when the local village *sheikh* was forced to close local *tekke* because supporters of new Salafi preacher threatened him (NGO).

The conflict was not restricted only on the animosity between Salafism and Sufi brotherhoods. Early in the 2000s traditional imams formed opposition dissatisfied with new teachings which they have seen as foreign and incompatible

with local Kosovo Hanafi Islam. (J) told the author story, which went viral in Kosovo social media, which very well summarize the incompatibility of the two religious worlds. In Drenas (Drenica region) one local traditional imam was about to close the mosque but once again young men under Salafi influence, were insisting they must stay. The imam lost his temper and shouted at them: *“leave immediately, find a job and do something meaningful not only wander in the mosque.”* For traditional Muslims in Kosovo, while the mosque is a place to pray it is definitely not a place to stay the whole day. They see Salafists as the ones who think that life is only about praying (J).

Criticism of the growing influence of Salafism in the Muslim community and its infiltration in the structures of ICK rose and created clashes. The followers of Salafi preachers verbally and even physically attacked its critics (IO). They did not hesitate even from attacking well-known and respected imams like imam Mullah Osman Musliu, a close friend and spiritual aid of national hero Adem Jashari. Musliu, after publicly criticising of the spread of Salafi ideas in Kosovo and indoctrination of whole ICK, was beaten on the street by young Salafists during daylight (J). Krasniqi (2019) lists several other incidents when the traditionalists opposing foreign religious influence were beaten by masked Salafists. These crimes were never properly investigated by the police.

This is leading up to the reaction of the Islamic Community of Kosovo (ICK). It has already been said that ICK was happy to increase the influence of religion over society. In the same time, the Salafist wing of community arise and the whole religious system was challenged including ICK. Since then leadership of ICK is under constant pressure from both Salafi and traditionalist wing. While in early 2000s traditionalists were a majority, in late 2000s till 2014 Salafi wing held stronger cards as seen on the *khutbah of 2012*, now with help of state traditionalists try to wrestle the power back. The whole ICK is regionally diverse as well. According to Demjaha, Peci report (2018) several regional councils (Podujevo, Suharekë) managed to withstand the Salafi pressure of the centre in 2010s and keep young Salafis out of their mosques. These regions have also the lowest rate of extremism and Jihadists in Syria.

The opinion on the role of ICK varies quite a bit between each of the respondents. Some call them very opportunistic, some corrupted, some that they are trying best they can, some that they have been taking care of the issue much better now. The author understands that ICK plays a controversial role in society and the responses heavily depend on personal emotions. The author himself had two very different

experience with two of employees of ICK. In Gjakovë, the respondent clearly did not want answer questions and referred me to Pristina headquarters saying that he is not entitled to speak about that. The IT worker in Pristina was even able to lightly criticize his employer.

But from what is known, the ICK is definitely quite opportunistic in dealing with the GCC organisations and in recent history gave hundreds of permissions to build mosques, operate schools, train imams and yielded when GCC organisations wanted to appoint a certain imam to a certain mosque (NGO). ICK used to be also quite corrupt, and some personalities in its leadership expanded their bank accounts considerably (PA). Per Demjaha, Peci (2016) ICK used to have an annual budget of around 6 million euros but there is no transparent account and except its leadership, nobody knows where the finances went. A quite substantial part of the budget then used to come from the GCC states at least before 2014.

The year 2014 is a landmark in the changing approach of the state towards the ICK. Formerly, the state did not intervene at all into religious issues. However, the sudden push for deradicalization was targeted at ICK as well. The state has been pressuring the ICK leadership to ostracize Salafists and prioritize traditionalists when choosing imams for positions. The state has also ordered ICK to use only traditionalists for prison services. ICK then reformed the whole selection process for imam positions so that nowadays it is much harder for a foreign organisation to influence it. The ICK has considerably restricted the influence of GCC organisations on religious schools, madrasas and, in general, how religion should be taught in schools. In the interview with Demjaha, Peci (2016) the Grand Mufti of Kosovo Naim Ternava said that *“ICK is engaged to introduce religious instruction in public schools of Kosovo because it is convinced that this would contribute to the proper education of Kosovo youngsters, away from influences of any foreign ideology.”* The respondents (RL, AC, S) feel that the atmosphere inside ICK is different and the approach towards the influence of GCC religious practices changed as well. Even though Salafi preachers continue to be influential, Salafi Shefqet Krasniqi is the most visible ICK imam in Kosovo (250 000 FB followers), ICK has started to understand the threat of uncontrolled activities of the GCC organisations and charities.

8.3.2. State Structures

As mentioned, the summer of 2014 was the key turning point for Kosovo. By joining the anti-ISIL coalition, the government identified Jihadism as a state enemy and Salafism as a threat to the peaceful development of the state and society (Office of Prime Minister 2015). As the military help to the coalition in Syria was more symbolic, the full scale 'combat' on 'internal' enemy inside Kosovo is hardly comparable to any European country. Kosovo security service units carried out a two-month campaign of arrests on former fighters in the Levant, Jihadi recruiters, *takfiri* imams and even some Salafi preachers while banning most of the organizations spreading extremism.

More than 40 persons returned from the Levant and 30 imams were arrested (AD). Of those accused of traveling to Syria or Iraq since 2011, an overwhelming majority got at least two-year sentences based on a new law punishing anyone from joining foreign military units (Krasniqi 2019). Out of the religious figures, few of imams (Zekerija Qazimi) with direct links to ISIL were convicted for prison terms, and prosecutors were not able to collect enough pieces of evidence against Salafi Shefqet Krasniqi, Enis Rama or Enes Goga and had to release them (AD, Leposhtica 2016). This is seen by the respondents as a little failure but in general, the majority were satisfied that the state has taken a much more pro-active approach. Nowadays, the Kosovo intelligence service is closely cooperating with CIA and Turkish intelligence services and everyone who is suspected of travel to Syria is detained and sentenced. As seen in the example of Albert Berisha, even seven days without seeing a battlefield, is worth prison term (BBC 2018). The whole process does not end up with prison terms. Kosovo created a state agency, Division for Prevention and Reintegration, which manages a systematic reintegration system from the detention centre to counseling to rehabilitation for its citizens returning from Syria or Iraq (Sahinçya et al. 2020). Women and the children of fighters who died in combat go through a long state- overseen process of reintegration and deradicalization (NGO). This enables Kosovo to be one of the few states to take back every citizen from ISIL detention camps in Syria/Iraq. International security experts praise these efforts and consider them as an example of good practice (Sahinkaya et al. 2020). The respondents across all professions appreciate the work of state structures,

secret service on this issue and feel proud that their young state is managing something better than democracies of western Europe, which have existed for hundreds of years.

Since the summer of 2014, the laws overseeing foreign organizations, agencies and funds went through a significant overhaul. Under the former rules, the organization had to be simply registered by a court. Currently in the Penal Code of Kosovo, there is a law that if an organization is propagating extremism, its license to operate in Kosovo is taken and this organization is banned (NGO). Additionally, the organization must have a local executive director and periodically submit all financial flows and plans as to how the money will be used to state structures (RL). Based on these rules and the recommendation of the intelligence service, around thirty organizations/funds/charities were closed for lack of transparency, accountability, working against the Kosovo Constitution and promoting extremism and religious hate. Out of those mentioned above, Al Waqf Al Islami and Nektari-He were the first ones to be banned from operating in Kosovo (Krasniqi 2019). The respondents agreed that currently the GCC based and funded organizations/charities have disappeared from the streets, from public spaces and it is a successful advance in cleansing Kosovo from foreign influence. Even the operation of official Qatar Charity was suspended in 2018 for allegedly promoting extremism (Arab News 2018, Al Arabiya 2018). (IO) said that Qatar then threatened Kosovo to withdraw its recognition of statehood if their charities will not be allowed to operate in Kosovo. And by using development assistance (chapter 3.1.4.1.) as a weapon, Qatar succeeded in prolonging the license for Qatari Charity in Kosovo. Currently, Qatari Charity still operates in Kosovo as of June this year, it brought 300 000 USD worth anti-COVID aid (Qatar Tribune 2020).

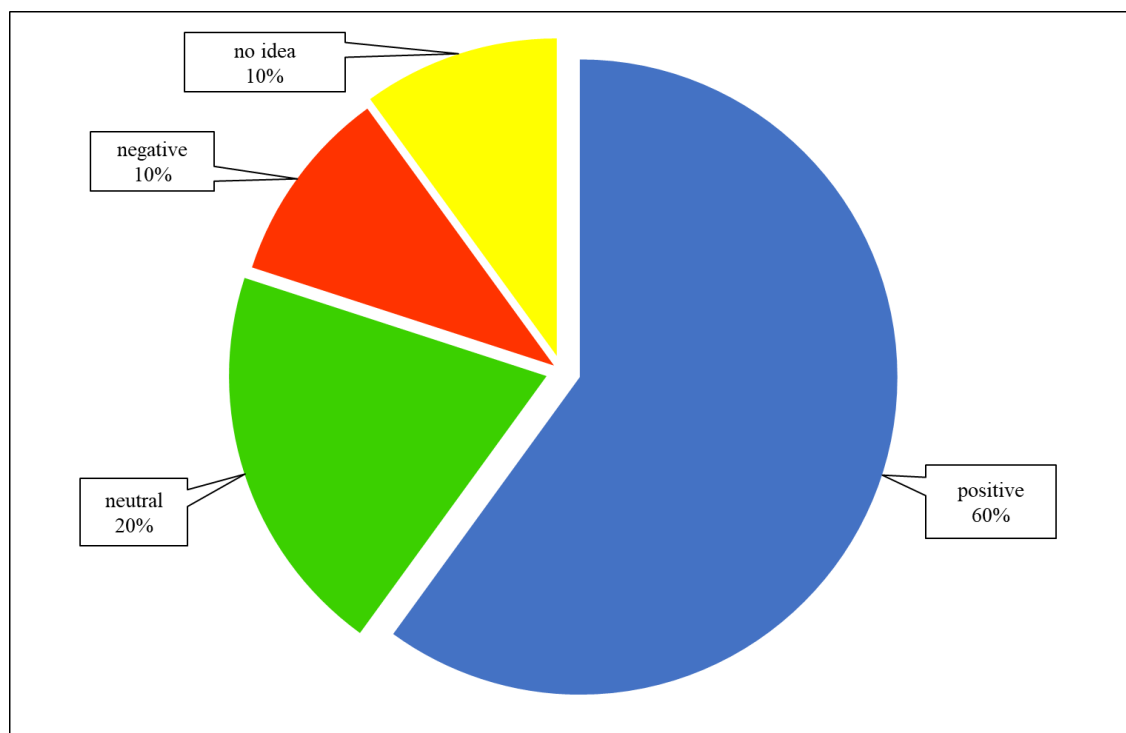
The practical steps which were taken in 2014, were followed by an overhaul in administrative structures and their division of tasks. Department for NGOs was created under the Ministry of Public Administration to oversee the development in the NGO sector, Anti-Terrorist Office²⁰ under Ministry of Interior was set up to oversee the de-radicalisation of society and the work of the system of reintegration. In early 2015 the *Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalism Leading to Terrorism (Strategjia për parandalimin e ekstremizmit të dhunshëm dhe radikalizmit që shpie në terrorizëm 2015-2020)* was issued by the government.

²⁰ The author contacted current officer but unfortunately did not manage to interview her.

This document following an older *National Anti-Terrorism Strategy* (2012) brought clarification into cooperation between administrative offices, government and security units and international organisations maintaining peace and developing democracy in Kosovo (OSCE, KFOR, UNDP). Two of the key strategic issues were mentioned in the last paragraphs, while others include also already mentioned de-radicalisation of religious structures, supporting traditional Islam, education programs targeting rural areas etc. Under this strategy, the government financially supports madrasas and religious institutions teaching traditional Islam. It gives a space to explain religious issues to traditional imams such as Drilon Gashi (religion theoretic from Pëjë) in state-based media (AD).

Not all issues have been handled particularly well, for example, the transparency regarding organisations operating in Kosovo is still lacking. The attempt to have online register (www.cso-ks.org) of NGOs licensed to operate in Kosovo is not working and probably was a failure already a decade ago, since, in 2011, Nilsen et al. wrote they could not open it. But as shown on the graph (fig. 11) the overall attitude towards the state steps since 2014 is very positive. The respondents agree with the current approach and praise the efforts of all involved in the state structures.

Fig. 11 - Answers of the respondents on the question, "What is your attitude towards steps taken by the state administrative or the government concerning deradicalization since 2014?"



source: author's research

8.3.3. Society

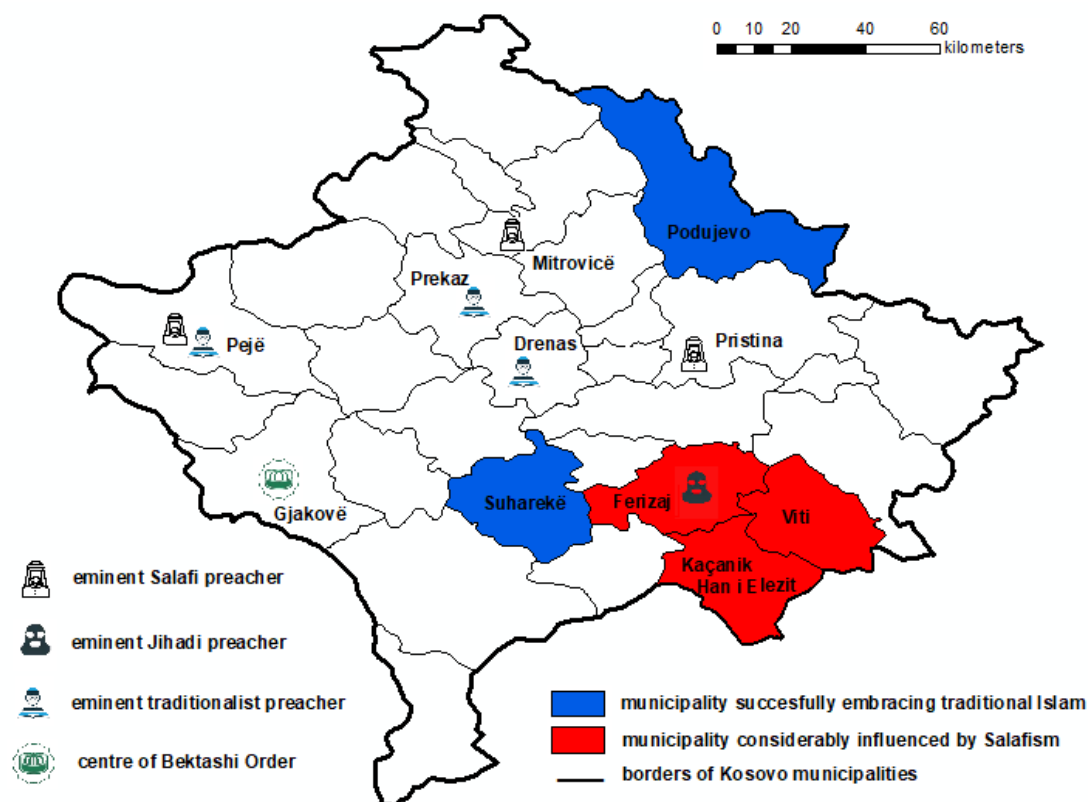
“... here was a football field. We are not necessarily against mosque but against the mosque at this place and against funding it by Arab money ... nobody asked us citizens of this village. Foreign Arab funds have the economic power and they suffocate every village around ... in the absence of law, we have to take the law into our own hands and protect our village”, explained local inhabitant to Zëri newspaper (Selimi 2016). The quote is coming from the protest (with Kalashnikovs) of inhabitants of small village Lumbardhë in northwest Kosovo against the construction of a new mosque funded by the GCC donation. In the end, inhabitants managed to stop the construction and the mosque was never built (J). This shows that the rural areas have not taken the role of a passive onlooker and conformed with Salafism. There are hundreds of cases of dissatisfaction with the methods used by the GCC charities and donations in rural areas, people complained about teaching methods, religious practices, construction of mosques (IO, PA). Local communities not only complained but together with municipalities and local traditionalistic Muslim imams presented an alternative to the foreign GCC religious education. The local Muslim community prepared school programmes, seminars, free-time activities promoting traditional values. The municipalities and local politicians denied construction and together with police monitored the activities of the GCC charities/organisations.

Of course, there are municipalities like Suharekë or Podujevo which were more successful than others like Han i Elezit, Kaçanik or Viti in keeping traditional values and standing up to the foreign threats (more on the geographical distribution in fig. 12). That does not mean some areas are totally Salafi (Demjaha, Peci 2018, Kursani 2015). The respondents said there are no strictly Salafi villages, there are no ‘no go’ zones where police cannot enter. While even for a foreigner there are no villages where he/she would feel unsafe and unwelcome because of its origin. The author himself felt regional differences which were exaggerated by the holy month of Ramadan. In Mitrovicë clearly more conservative and slightly more Middle East version of Islam is practised. During Ramadan, it is very hard to acquire alcohol and a vast majority of the population keep the fast. In Pristina, on the other hand, the relationship towards religion is very relaxed and wearing ‘veil or beard’ is considered foreign.

In cities, the situation is different, and civil society is much stronger there which greatly helped to promote non-Salafi values (less traditional and more European liberal),

especially in Pristina, there is a wide range of NGOs working to stop spreading of foreign ideas and teachings, helping to promote democratic principles and certain standards of personal freedoms and rights. Local NGOs often funded by programs of DAC countries help to make sure that extremist ideas are identified and pushed outside of the main discourse in media in the society (NGO). For example, a strong system of anti-Salafi interreligious women network is successful in fighting gender discrimination, exclusion or marginalisation (NGO). Their goal in the words of their leader, Besa Ismaili, a professor at Faculty of Islamic Studies, is “*women’s empowerment within religious institutions and their greater inclusion, institutional visibility and representation in society at large*” (Kaiciid Dialogue Centre 2019).

Fig. 12 - Map of municipalities more/less influenced by Salafism and geographic distribution of traditionalist/Salafi/Jihadi preachers across Kosovo.



source: Demjaha, Peci 2018, Kursani 2015, author’s research.

8.3.3.1. Opinions about the GCC States

In the interviews, the author was interested how the respondents see the Gulf in general: What is the image of the Middle East, how successful were the GCC organisation successful in not only spreading a positive image of Salafi Islam but a positive image of the Gulf region as a whole? The respondents remember and describe the means of soft power were used by the GCC states. Gulf music has been played by radios, Gulf soap operas have been shown on TV and other cultural things were exported. However, in same time, music, movies, culture coming from the US and Turkish soap operas could resist these pressures. So while (S) says he has a good friend who learnt Turkish by just looking on TV, the Gulf shows and culture, in general, is not something popular and soft power of the Gulf is close to zero outside of religious teachings.

“There is no united view of the Gulf, opinions differ very much. It is very dependable on how religious you are” (IO). Your personal level of religiosity and activities (and media coverage) of Gulf activities matter the most. There are slight differences of view between states, interestingly it is otherwise than explained in the chapter 3.2.1.2. The respondents consider Qatar as a lesser supporter of Salafism and less dangerous than Saudi Arabia or the UAE. It can be explained as Qatari charities which operate in Kosovo are not publicly connected to spreading Islam as much as Saudi/UAE's. Qatar is more known as an IT giant and a friend of Kosovo.

Collectively the Gulf region is losing against Germany, Switzerland, the US, or Turkey. These countries are considered the best friends of Kosovar Albanians, a destination for work, to start a career, to study, to emigrate. Nobody from the respondents sees any reason to leave for Qatar, Saudi Arabia or the UAE. Neither anyone knows anyone who moved there except on the scholarship to study Islam. In their opinion, the same can be said about the GCC citizens as they do not see Kosovo as an attractive destination. While in Bosnia and Hercegovina the influx of the Gulf tourists is significant, there are close to no visitors from the GCC states in Kosovo. The disinterest is mutual.

8.3.3.2. Opinions on Future Development

To close the research, the author took several quotes, regarding how the respondents see the future of the GCC involvement in Kosovo and the process of Islamization of society. The responses were generally optimistic and several reasons behind the positive view of the future were stated:

“As long as, the government will remain secular while the economic and social situation will improve then I see no way how this issue could be important in Kosovo” (AC).

“We expect that GCC will be less and less interested – that Salafism will be on the decline. Already they are backing up mostly” (J).

“We have a totally different environment than other Muslim states, we love the United States. They are our heroes and we owe them independence. The soft power of the US values is super strong in Kosovo. There is no way we will become a Salafi country” (PA).

“If the US has a good relationship with Gulf countries than it is not a huge problem. Depends on the direction of the US. The US is important” (AD).

9. Discussion

In the end, the author will try to put at least part of the thesis in the context of current research on the topic of the GCC development assistance, its Islamization and response of society/state. Since the master thesis uses several principles of a case study, the technique of comparison with other case studies are beneficial in better understanding the main scheme and Kosovo example as well. In the following pages the author will very briefly compare some results with similar researches in Kosovo, in the Balkans and other world regions. In the region, the obvious comparison is Bosnia and Hercegovina, which is historically, geographically, religiously close

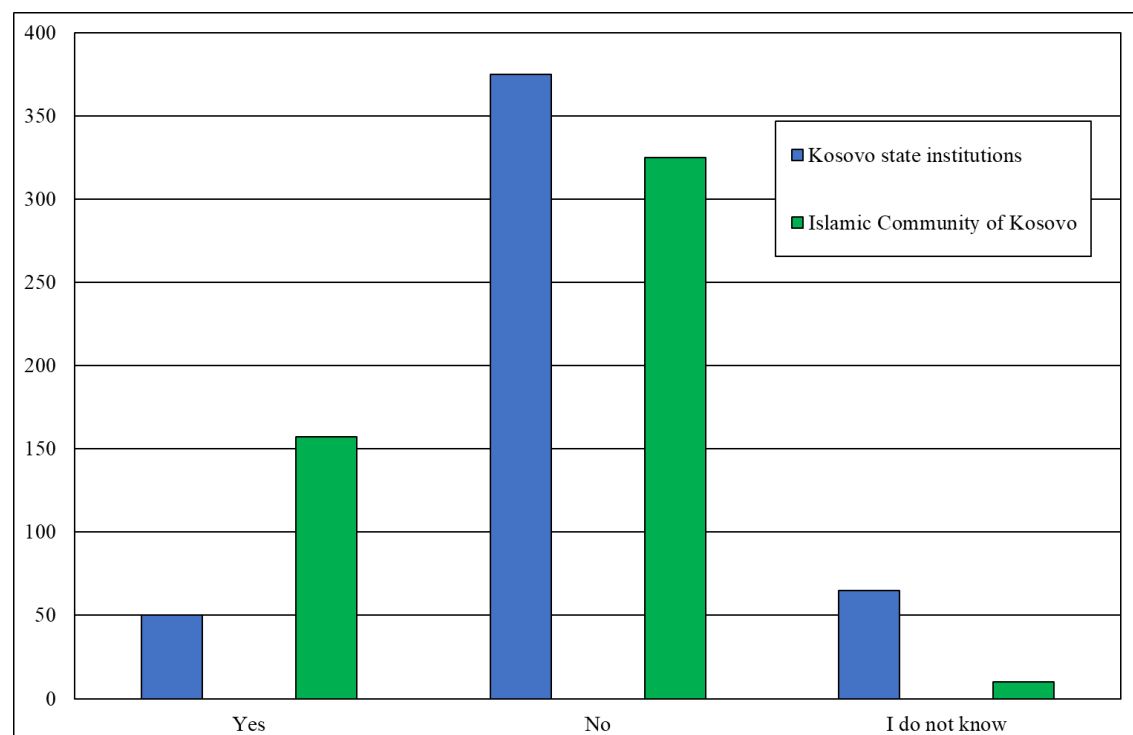
to Kosovo and genuinely more researched and medialized example. It is as well a case on which the respondents of the interview refer to when compared the situation in Kosovo with another country.

9.1. “Indoctrination by Takfiri Ideology” – Ilir Berisha

First of all, the author will shortly discuss and compare the results with the research of associate professor of Gjilan FAMA College Ilir Berisha. In his research (2019) *“The indoctrination of religious practitioners by the takfiri ideology and the current situation according to citizens' survey in Pristina”* he surveyed opinions of Pristina population concerning several issues discussed in the thesis as well. Berisha’s research has an advantage over this thesis in potentially much higher representativeness as it works with 492 authentic questionnaires. However, looking more closely, 75% of respondents have a university degree while in Kosovo population only about 10% holds a tertiary degree. This shows that the research has targeted (maybe unintentionally) Kosovo elites and the generally similar group as the respondents of author’s interviews.

Regardless, Ilir Berisha’s survey asked several questions targeting opinion on the steps taken by the state administrative and ICK. To be concrete one was formulated, *“Are you satisfied with the measures undertaken by Kosovar institutions to prevent destructive ideologies?”* While the other was in a similar tone asking on satisfaction with the contribution of ICK in the prevention of ‘destructive ideologies’ (Berisha 2019, p. 19). As the graph (fig. 13) the respondents were unsatisfied with the measurements taken by state structures while also generally unsatisfied with the steps of ICK but in the lesser majority. ICK steps were had a higher response with clear opinion showing the ICK steps might be more controversial. This corresponds well with the results of the author’s interviews where the ICK position was rated mostly negatively, and their steps were seen as ambiguous. What does not correspond with the results of the author’s research are views of state institutions. The respondents were in general positive with steps taken following 2014 and praised the effort of the government. When to compare with the author’s graph (fig. 11) the results are opposite.

Fig. 13 - The results of the opinion survey on the satisfaction with the contribution of ICK and state institutions towards preventing spreading of destructing ideologies, Kosovo, 2019.



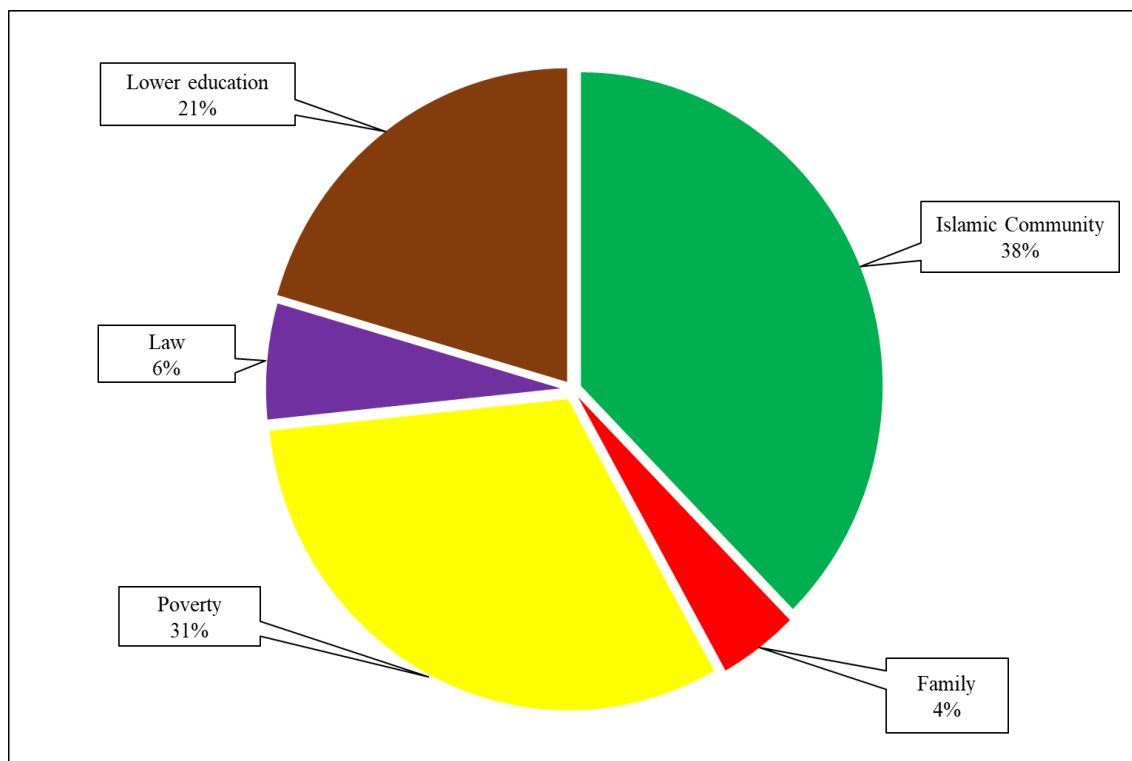
source: Berisha (2019, p. 9), author's adaptation.

When looking further, 67% of respondents disagreed with a notion that current laws and measures positively affected the spreading of radicalism. In the same time, more than 75% agreed that the radicalism is decreasing in recent years and the security situation in Kosovo regarding Jihadism is very good. This indicates that the respondents of Berisha's survey are in general very sceptical towards state institutions, state strategies and laws. Only a minority give the credit to official structures and instead focus on society as the key and main element responsible for the de-radicalization and decreasing influence of the *takfiri* teachings. 41% sees societal enlightenment about *takfiri* practices and classifying them as non-Islamic as the main reason. While 20% consider family ostracization of Jihadists as the most important. Change in the language of ICK and preaching in mosques consider 18% as the reason while law enforcement and implementation of anti-radicalization strategies only 17% sees as key. The author never asked directly on the main reasons for success in suppressing Jihadi ideas but feel the results will be slightly different more towards the effort of the state.

Ilir Berisha shortly also touches what he calls, who is 'guilty' of spreading *takfiri* ideas in society since 1999. Here the author must state that

he disagrees as to how the question was asked as well as what categories were used. According to the situation, it is wrong that the GCC agencies and charities are not mentioned as a category. Which leaves as the only religious influence ICK. In addition, the author does not understand what ‘law’ category means and feels like ‘lower education’ is no reason while unemployment is. There has been no correlation between education and Jihadism as mentioned in the thesis, many university students are known to join fighting in the Levant (Demjaha, Peci 2015). The graph (fig. 14) has not much to say on what are real opinions on what real reasons had played the main role. To thoughtfully investigate the opinion of Kosovo society a better method of collecting data should be used. Rural areas where most of the Jihadists came from should be included.

Fig. 14 - The results of the opinion survey on, “who do you think is guilty of spreading destructive religious ideologies in the Muslim community after 1999 in Pristina?”, Kosovo, 2019.



source: Berisha (2019, p. 11), author's adaptation.

9.2. GCC Organisations in Africa and South-eastern Asia

To put in context activities of the GCC organisations and agencies in Kosovo and in other countries around the Muslim world, the author will use researches mentioned in chapter 2 – ‘Related literature’²¹. In 2009 Chanfi Ahmed in published research about *‘Networks of Islamic NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa’*, concretely concentrates on in Kosovo very well-known Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation (AHIF). Ahmed describes the system the GCC organisations as not serving its purpose of helping the people in need. “...(observers) believe the charitable dimension of the work of these agencies to be a mere cover for the second and much more important goal of spreading the Gulf version of Islam” (Ahmed 2009, p. 247). In other words, the organisations fail to keep all-encompassing Islam as a mean of the working process. It has become the aim of their work and mission is to serve as missionaries of Salafism. According to Ahmed (2009), AHIF in Tanzania/Kenya operated educational institutions that only transmit religious Salafi knowledge and totally sideline secular education. This shows that practices AHIF used in rural Kosovo are typical for the whole organisation as such. In the case of the western Africa AHIF did not use vulnerable society after the war but vulnerable discriminated Muslim minority. Both communities needed badly schools and AHIF was able to provide that only that learning *Qu’ran* has totally overshadowed Math’s lessons. AHIF has been operating similarly in Tanzania as in Kosovo. There has been no adaptation to local traditions, traditional religious system or the local legal system. AHIF pushed away all that in their perspective was not according to their will or Salafi teachings (Ahmed 2009). The same what AHIF or Al Waqf al Islami did in Kosovo until 2014.

The GCC organisations acted very similarly in Thailand as well. Brown and Pierce in their research *‘Charities in the Non-Western World’* (2013) state that IIROSA failed to adapt on local traditions and specifics of Thailand Islam. The researchers see several issues worsening in south Thailand, most visible the position of women. The same issues as in Kosovo rural areas arise such as schools separating girls and boys or fierce debates over headscarves. IIROSA and other GCC organisations through enlightenment and education try to persuade girls and their families that it is the ‘correct’ practice. Tensions between traditionalists and Salafists rise similarly as in Kosovo as local

²¹ The author understands that it is very subjective selection, however it serves the purpose.

Islamic traditions identified and targeted as heretical (Brown, Pierce 2013). “*The main interest of the charity was in the building of mosques*” (Brown, Pierce 2013, p. 255). According to the researchers, money, that the GCC organisations acquired from *zakat* of the GCC citizens, has not been spent majorly on the charitable purposes but on the construction of new mosques and madrassas. This confirms the results of this thesis that expenditure on religious purposes sharply exceeds expenditures on development purposes such as infrastructure, employment possibilities, technological facilities.

To sum up both pieces of research back up the results of the thesis and provide proofs that in other parts of the world the GCC act similarly. The author could go on and list similar issues caused by the GCC influence but would only repeat the main message. There is not a will to develop countries and improve the living conditions of their people but change their religious behaviour. This might not be true for the whole world but for these three countries it is. What Thailand, Tanzania and Kosovo have in common? They are on the edge of the Muslim world and are not a key partner of the GCC countries.

9.3. Comparison with Bosnia and Hercegovina

There is one important detail the author carried from the participant observations and interviews. That the people on the street and the respondents wanted to stress out that there is a fundamental difference between Kosovo and Bosnia and Hercegovina. They said that the author should completely forget, what he knows about Bosnia and Hercegovina, and see the reality in Kosovo with different eyes. The key message from all of them has been, “*Kosovo society attitude towards Salafism, Islamic extremism and in the general role of Islam is different than in Bosnia.*” From their perspective, it is a much smaller issue and the problem in Kosovo than Bosnia and Hercegovina.

There have been even several opinions on the reason behind that. The author himself thinks there might be some truth behind them but there are faults of argumentation as well.

a) (J), “*Bošnjaks are much more easily taken up the Salafi ideas than Albanians, Bošnjaks are an Islamic nation, we are predominantly Albanian and then only Muslims or Christians.*”

b) (IO), *“In Kosovo, there is more liberal background than in Bosnia and we also have the tradition of Sufi brotherhoods which is why the Gulf countries see Albanians suspiciously.”*

c) (PA), *“It is Serbia’s PR that situation in Kosovo is bad, in Sandžak they have a much bigger problem.”*, (AD), *“Be careful about the propaganda, Kosovo is not in a bad position, it is only Serbs who tried to portray as Salafists.”*

d) (AC), *“I am not sure about how Bošnjaks feel about the US but we feel they are our brothers and attacks against them are attacks against us.”*

As seen all the arguments stay on the background information mentioned already in the thesis. ‘*Albanianism*’ might still play a sufficient role as by the recent (2015) survey almost 70% of Kosovo Albanian Muslims consider themselves first Albanian and only then Muslim and Muslim transnationalism is still a foreign idea to most of the Kosovo Albanians (Demjaha, Peci 2015). The strong pro-American attitude in Kosovo might play a role as well as the American soft power overplays the soft power of Salafism. While Serbian propaganda (and Kosovan as well) exists in the media/international relations but is not the topic of this thesis.

It would be very interesting to compare the two cases properly and examine differences and similarities in practices of all-encompassing Islam, in reaction to state/society. If in Bosnia and Hercegovina Salafism and consequently Jihadism is more widespread and the GCC organisations in development assistance are more involved. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope and length of the thesis. However, if to venture in the topic briefly, the author can quote Andreja Mesarič, who has been conducting research on religious practices in Bosnia and Hercegovina for the last decade. Taking, for example, the topic of Islam, national identity and nationalism. Mesarič explains how Islam has been used by the state as an element of nation-building model. Politicians began using traditional Arabic greetings and ostentatiously fulfilling Islamic daily practices. Meanwhile, this is not a 100% effective scheme, as there is a significant group of pious Muslims who oppose nationalism as something non-Islamic and believing in faith-based communities (Mesarič 2017). Neither of this is common in Kosovo. Paradoxically faith-based community is concept discredited by the common Yugoslav Bošnjak-led Islamic Community which was very unpopular in Kosovo and currently is viewed as something foreign. At the same time, Islam is promoted neither by the state nor by ICK as an element of national identity. This perhaps, is probably one of the reasons for a higher

success rate of Salafism in Bosnia and Hercegovina then in Kosovo. Mesarić (2020) in her accounts of interviews with local women in Sarajevo, expresses that several neighbourhoods are strictly Salafist. There are none in Pristina, even Dardania, as the centre of the GCC influence and former headquarters of SJRCKC, cannot be considered Salafi (author's observation 2019). The author understands he is slipping to oversimplification and that is where he wants to finish the comparison. If he will ever return to the topic, there is a great opportunity to compare these two case studies.

10. Conclusion

Have the GCC money and influence transformed Kosovo into a front of Islamic extremism and a pipeline for Jihadists as Gall (2016) suggested? The answer is yes and no at the same time. The thesis proved that this notion must be separated into two parts. Did the GCC try to spread the Salafi/Jihadi ideas? Did they succeed, did Kosovo become a hotbed of Jihadism? For answering these the thesis brings several arguments leaning to one answer. The author will summarize them as well as all other results and try to answer all the research questions which help to fulfill the main goal of the thesis, understand, how big a role plays a religion in development assistance and humanitarian aid in Kosovo. While investigating in which forms the process of Islamization of development assistance occurs, how civil society and state cope with it.

From the theoretic framework of the thesis, the scope, principles and system of the GCC development assistance can be understood well. The GCC agencies and organisations are an enormous force in the Muslim world especially. So the author had big expectations in terms of GCC development assistance and humanitarian aid in Kosovo. The results show that this proved to be only partially true. The GCC organisations and agencies were very active in the post-war situation, when they provided immediate relief and proved to be very beneficial in reconstructing the rural areas of Kosovo. Since then, their financial and material assistance has dried up. The statistics of ODA and the study of known development assistance projects shows very little activity by official GCC organisations and agencies. The few projects in healthcare are negligible compared to big donors such as Turkey, the US, Germany or Switzerland. The GCC organisations are not interested in helping

to develop the local economy, infrastructure, possibilities of employment or raising levels of quality of life of Kosovo citizens as much as other donors. However, that does not mean the GCC organisations, charities, agencies have not been investing money in Kosovo. Only transparency of these transactions is non-existent and purpose is very questionable in terms of etiquette of development assistance. The total amount of finances used by the GCC organisations in Kosovo is estimated in several hundred millions of USD and the majority been spent on religious purposes. Islam plays the key, and probably the only role, in GCC assistance/aid in Kosovo.

The GCC agencies/organisations themselves admit that their assistance/aid is connected to religion and that this is natural, due to how the system of collecting donations in Muslim countries works. In the terminology of Petersen (2014) used for the thesis, ‘all-encompassing Islam’ and its practices in Kosovo were researched by the author. The GCC organisations support public enlightenment of topics connected to the Gulf way of living and practising of Salafi Islam. They have been very active in providing education. Especially in rural areas, new schools were constructed and the GCC provided education with a strong influence of Islam. Controversially the religious element was stronger than Math or Albanian language. Even more controversially the GCC agencies were giving out financial subsistence to vulnerable families to comply with Salafi teachings and rules. The most of finances then end up in mosque (re)construction. Allegedly as much as 250 mosques could have been funded by the GCC funds. Together with scholarships for locals to study Salafi Islam at the GCC universities and programs to fund wages of Salafi preachers in newly constructed mosques, this shows that the GCC not only used religion as mean of aiding people but to directly spreading Salafism in Kosovo.

This financial assistance has led to the creation of religious personnel, who follow Salafi teachings, and to the existence of mosques preaching Salafism. The religious situation in Kosovo is very diverse and traditional and Sufi ways of understanding Islam are popular among the population as explained in the chapter about religious context. Salafism sees traditional Kosovo Islam as heretical, which created clashes and even now the Islamic Community of Kosovo is divided between followers of both teachings. In the rural areas, the activities of GCC organisations were stronger and targeted vulnerable families still recovering from the war and additionally were supplemented by organisations supporting Jihadism. The research confirmed that the charities operating

in Kosovo such as Al-Haramain or Al Waqf Al Islami funded from the Gulf were spreading religious hatred and allegedly helped local Jihadi recruiters.

However, this is information from the past. Currently, none of the known organisations connected to Jihadists operate in Kosovo. All were banned following the change of attitude of the Kosovo government since it joined the anti-ISIL alliance in 2014. Organisations connected to radical Islam were closed, preachers calling to join Jihad arrested, returned fighters from the Levant sentenced to prison terms. The state created strategies to handle the issue of spreading radicalism in Kosovo and has one of the best systems of handling with citizens returning from the Levant. A new law concerning NGOs is in place so their activities and financial transfers are followed by state structures and at any moment they can lose the license to operate in Kosovo due to supporting Jihadism. In the same time, society did not stand and just watch. Since the 2000s the protests against mosque construction, against spreading foreign ideas in education were held in rural areas. Together with traditionalist imams, the local population in certain regions tried to withstand Salafi teachings by promoting traditional Islam in public spaces, schools. In cities liberal civil society is developing, new NGOs warning against the influence of the Salafist has become more and more heard. Women have stood for their rights. Even the leadership of the Islamic Community of Kosovo, undergoing a struggle between Salafi and traditionalists, under pressure from the state changed their policy and now tries to help the state with de-radicalization.

To sum up, the author would like to use words of former Kosovo ambassador in the United States Vlora Çitaku (Nawas 2016) reacting on the article by Gall (2016) *“...story is accurate but it only tells half the truth and two years late.”* The GCC organisations have used development assistance and humanitarian aid to promote their religious values, teachings and change the religious (and daily) life of Kosovo especially rural areas. However, first society reacted and did not allow Salafism completely to change rural life. And since 2014 took legislative and operational measures to protect its citizens from Islamic radicalism. The GCC organisations lost their power and resources to influence the Kosovo society. Salafi and even more Jihadi tendencies are currently on the decline while in future this trend is expected to continue.

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Appendixes

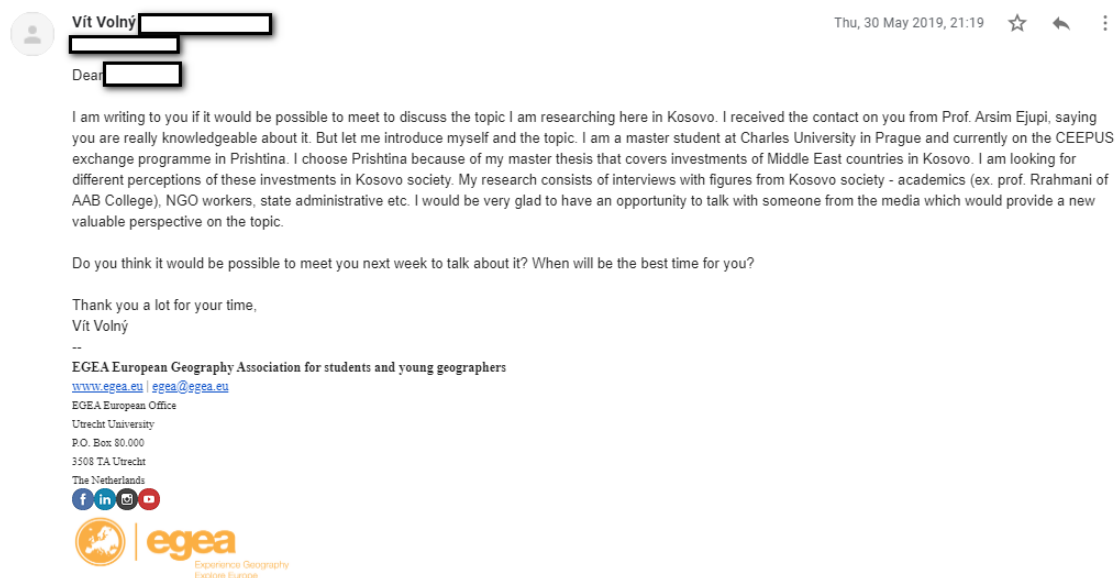
Appendix 1 – Structure and general questions used during the semi-structured interviews.

1	General Situation	How would you explain the situation concerning development assistance and humanitarian aid in Kosovo?
		Where in your opinion stand the assistance/aid of the GCC states in comparison to the US, Turkey, Germany or Switzerland?
2	Beginning of the Involvement	When did you start to recognise that the GCC states became involved in Kosovo?
		Would you say war in 1999 was key event for development assistance in Kosovo?
3	1999 War	Were you forced to leave Kosovo in 1999? If yes where?
		How do you remember the situation after the war? Were you in need of basic goods?
4	Immediate Relief	What do you remember from the GCC relief campaign following the war?
		Were there some typical features/activities of the GCC organisations compared to others?
5	GCC Development Projects	Which project financed by the GCC organisations/agencies in recent years you know?
		Were there some controversies surrounding this project?
6	Kosovar Islam	How would you describe the religious situation in Kosovo?
		What is traditional Kosovar Islam in your opinion?
7	All-encompassing Islam Practices	What practices of the GCC organisations concerning religion have you heard of?
		Have you heard of financial subsistence given by the organisations if you keep practising the Middle East way of life?
		Do you know any event/activity which promoted Salafism in schools?
		Do you know any mosque rebuilt or newly constructed in your neighbourhood?
8	Salafism Jihadism	Do you know any Salafi/Wahhabi preachers? Do you think they are influential in the Muslim community?
		What is your opinion about the approach the Islamic Community of Kosovo has taken towards Salafism?
		Do you think some of the GCC organisations support Jihadism in Kosovo?
		Do you know any stories of Kosovo Jihadists and their reasons to join the fight in the Levant?

9	State Administrative Response	What is your attitude towards steps taken by the state administration or the government concerning deradicalization since 2014?
		Can you explain some of the steps taken by the state and how they decrease the security threat?
10	Society Response	Do you know how the society responded to the spreading of Salafi/Jihadi ideas?
		Do you know about some protest, petition against the GCC involvement?
11	Attitude Towards the GCC States	What is your general opinion towards the GCC states?
		Do you feel the GCC are attractive options for Kosovo citizens to live, work or study?
12	Future	What is your opinion about the future development of GCC involvement in Kosovo?

source: author's research

Appendix 2 – Example of the email which was sent to the potential respondents of the interviews.



source: author's archive

Appendix 3 – Example of notes taken during the interview.



universität
wien

Q-women office

organisations - to speak about burkas

translate book, publish research

special thanks

x

study visits

scholarships to Middle East - even women

soap operas from SA

against coercion - the petition a

secular schools → not possible

Kosovo politicians - pro coercion (decision is by women)

there is wahabist movements in women

Besa Shabla - women in Islam community that fight
Wehrlatsun.

joined places → they are

brainwashing of people because of the money involved.

legitimation of violence → because gender violence

human trafficking - young Dubai

Capital investment are not oriented by this thought

Imams legitimise the violence on women.

univie.ac.at



→ Strategy is successful

source: author's archive

Appendix 4 – Photos of Xhamia “Mat1”, Pristina





source: author's archive

Appendix 5 – Photos of Xhamia "Shaban Jashari", Skendëraj



source: author's archive

Appendix 6 – Photo of Xhamia “Bashkim Sukaj”, Prizren



source: author's archive

Appendix 7 – Text calling for parents to register their children in the madrassa in Prizren.

**NJOFTIM PËR REGJISTRIM
NË MEDRESENË E PRIZRENIT**

NËSE DËSHIRONI QË FËMITË E JUAJ TË JENË TË SIGURTË
ATËHERË JU PREFEROJMË QË T'I REGJISTRONI NË MEDRESE.
MEDRESEJA "ALAUDDIN" PARALELJA NË PRIZREN I
NJOFTON KANDIDATET E INTERESUAR (DJEMË DHE VAJZA) PËR
REGJISTRIM NË VITIN SHKOLLOR 2019/2020 SI VLIJON:

PARALELJA E MEDRESESË "ALAUDDIN" NË PRIZREN, ME
DY DEGËT E SAJ; PËR DJEMË DHE VAJZA, E CILA FUNKSIONON
NË KUADËR TË MINISTRISË SË ARSIMIT TË KOSOVËS, ËSHITË
SHKOLLË E PËRGJITHSHME (SIKURSE GJIMNAZI SHOQËROR).
ATY NXËNËSIT AFTËSOHEN SI NË SHKENCAT FETARE-ISLAME,
ASHTU EDHE NË ATO TË PËRGJITHSHME.

POS LËNDËVE FETARE (ISLAME) SI KUR'AN, TEFSIR,
HADITH, AKAIÐ, FIKH ETJ. ATY MËSOHEN EDHE: GJUHA SHQIPE,
GJUHA ARABE, GJUHA ANGLEZE, GJUHA TURKE, PASTAJ,
BIOLOGJI, KIMI, FIZIKË, MATEMATIKË, INFORMATIKË,
PSIKOLOGJI, SOCIOLOGJI ETJ.

PAS MBARIMIT TË MEDRESESË, NXËNËSIT STUDIMET
MUND T'I VAZHDOJNË NË DISA UNIVESITETE TË BOTËS SI NË:
EGJIPT, LIBI, TURQI, MALEJZI, BeH, ARABI SAUDITE,
AUSTRI, GJERMANI, SHBA ETJ.

NDËRSA NË KOSOVË, POS FAKULTETIT TË STUDIMEVE
ISLAME, EDHE NË FAKULTETIN E MJEKËSISË, JURIDIKËS,
EKONOMIS, NDËRTIMTARISË, ARKITEKTURËS, NË SHKENCAT
POLITIKE, NË FILOLOGJI ETJ. ME NJË FJALË; NË TË GJITHA
FAKULTETET, SIKURSE ME GJIMNAZ SHOQËROR.

POS MËSIMEVE, MEDRESEJA OFRON AFTËSIM NË
KOMPJUTER, OFRON NJË SHUJTË USHQIMI CILËSOR DHE NJË
NUMËR LEHTËSIMESH TJERA.

PËR INFORMATA MË TË HOLLËSISHME DREJTOHUNI NË
PARALELËN E MEDRESESË NË PRIZREN, OSE NË KËSHILLIN E
BASHKËSISË ISLAME - PRIZRERN, PËRKATËSISHT NË
TELEFONAT: 029/223-682; 044/410-594.

MIRË SE VINI!
PRIZREN - PRILL, 2019

PARALELJA E MEDRESESË
PRIZREN

source: author's archive